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Every Contact Leaves a Trace: An Investigation into the potential of ceramic and print process to extend understanding of the temporal, material and transient in landscape.

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of Bath Spa University for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

School of Art, Film and Media, Bath Spa University

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This study was approved by the Bath Spa University Ethics Panel on 02/02/2021. Should you have any concerns regarding ethical matters relating to this study, please contact the Research Support Office at Bath Spa University.

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All images are my own unless otherwise stated.

Every Contact Leaves a Trace: An Investigation into the potential of ceramic and print process to extend understanding of the temporal, material and transient in landscape.

Abstract:

This interdisciplinary, practice-based research investigates the material and conceptual connections between art making and landscape, through ceramic, print, and alternative photographic processes, centred on the Mendip landscape where I live. The methodological framework is indexical and processual rather than mimetic, taking the form of an iterative network of enmeshed and repetitive practices, predicated on the proposal that material engagement, memory, and historical inquiry operate as methods for thinking through time and place (see Methodologies chapter). The thesis adopts a polyvocal form, moving between research-based, autoethnographic and poetic registers of writing, reflecting the mutable relationship between walking, writing and material practice.

Grounded in repeated walking, dwelling and field-based experimentation, the work responds to what I understand as a *Writan* landscape (from the Anglo-Saxon *writan*: to scratch, tear or score[1]), where traces of past human activity, environmental processes and memory persist within place. This approach acknowledges landscape as a dynamic, unstable, and time-bound site - continually shaped by both human and non-human forces - predicated on an understanding that most people left no written or archival trace.

[1] Tim Ingold, "Surface Textures: The Ground and the Page," *Philological Quarterly* 97(2) (The University of Iowa, 2018), 139.

By foregrounding fragility, impermanence, and trace, the work resists dominant narratives of landscape as stable, picturesque, or consumable. Engagement with landscape is not extractive, but slow, embodied, and process-led, exploring the ethical implications of contact, use, and neglect. The resulting work reflects an internalised understanding of place formed through duration and attentiveness, as I situate myself within the landscape as both participant and witness.

Archival research and oral histories actively inform material decisions in the studio regarding what is recorded, what is erased, and what remains partial. Within the studio, landscape is not merely represented but re-enacted through material behaviour, creating a collaboration between place and process and demonstrating how material practice can operate as a mode of landscape enquiry and knowledge production. Print becomes a temporal act and a carrier of concept, while ceramic and photographic processes function as a responsive, unstable archive, articulating material processes as systems through which we might attend more carefully to landscape.

The research establishes a methodology for understanding landscape through material practice. The interweaving of walking, writing, print and ceramic processes enables reciprocity through practice between artist and landscape, creating a form of collaboration between place, material and making. This integration of place and process is driven by emotional engagement. It positions making as a form of knowing - one that acknowledges instability, embraces uncertainty, and recognises that every interaction with landscape leaves a trace.



Footpath through the long field.

Introduction

To pin something down and take it out of time.[2]

'Some of us are so obsessed with the past that we are of it. It is the attitude of the poet who never finds the lost heaven and it is really the situation of artists who work for a reason that nobody can quite grasp. They might want to reconstruct something of the past to exorcise it. It is that the past for certain people has such a hold and such a beauty'.[3]



[2] Jackie Wullschläger, "Lunch with the FT: Frank Auerbach," *Financial Times Life & Arts*, October 6-7th, 2012, 3. https://www.ft.com/content/13de02c8-0be0-11e2-8032-00144feabdc0

[3] Louise Bourgeois in *Deconstruction of the Father/Reconstruction of the Father. Writings and Interviews 1923-1997*, eds. Marie-Louise Bernadec and Hans-Ulrich Olburst (MIT Press, 1998), 133.

I am walking,
late on a still, blue afternoon
that presages frost.
The milk white sun hovers,
just above the tree line.
The mud ridged bridleway beneath my feet.
An earthy accumulation
of leaf and foot fall, hoof prints, paws,
the scars of tractor tyres.

The furrowed path, pooled with rainwater,
reflects the sky,
the tangled hedgerows,
the ancient looming oaks.
Ash, Beech and Hawthorn leaves
fallen this past summer, held,
just below the surface
of the water.

In this moment of solitary stillness I feel my presence entangle with trace memories of the others who walked this track before me; as the sun arcs through the sky again and again; the looming oaks are planted, grow and decay; rain falls and floods; the earth bleaching, cracking, freezing, thawing. This place an accumulation imprinted by the presence here of those I never knew and with my own memories and presence.



Hollowmarsh Lane.

The words that give this project its title - *every contact leaves a trace* - are attributed to the nineteenth century scientist Edmund Locard. His research into trace evidence employed an empirical, physical process - dusting for fingerprints - to bring greater insight into what had hitherto been undetectable. His resulting *Exchange Principle* states that whenever two objects come into contact with one another, each will take something from the other or leave something behind.[4]

My research practice is imbued with a sense of longing, a wish to decipher and comprehend the trace marks and signs that remain here of the countless unrecorded lives, encoded within the material of landscape. As if the landscape were a page that I could read.

[4] 'There is always an exchange of material after contact, but many times the material is too small to be seen or detected' Amy Michaud, "Trace Evidence as Investigative Lead Value", in *Mute Witnesses: Trace Evidence Analysis*, ed. Max. M. Houck (Academic Press, 2001), 49.



Litton Village from St Mary's churchyard. December.

I have lived in the small village of Litton in the Mendip hills for ten years now. The longest and most settled dwelling I have experienced. This village is an 'old, old place'[5] of low stone buildings, grazed fields and marshy meadows, bounded by the steep limestone terraces of the Eastern Mendip plateau, the most southerly Carboniferous Limestone upland in Britain. The landscape surrounding the village has been shaped over millennia by human activity, inhabitation and intervention; an anthropogenic creation, in which it is still possible to sense the reciprocity between people and place that held sway until relatively recently.

[5] Arthur Mee, *The King's England* (1936), in Christopher Booker, *A Guide to St Mary's Church and the History of Litton* (Self-published, 2019), 3.



Tithe Map of Litton, Somerset, 1839.[6]

The parish boundaries of the village remain those defined by the 1839 Tithe Map of Litton, Somerset; parameters first recorded in the Domesday Book of 1086, themselves based on an existing Anglo-Saxon settlement.[7] Maps, charts and ancient property documents, in particular the 1839 map with its record of field names, play a significant role within my methodology.

> *The 1836 Act of Parliament that did away with tithes had the wonderful side effect of creating remarkable encyclopaedic maps and surveys, covering some 80 per cent of England's parishes. Every field within the parish bounds is there... some enclosed shortly before the map was made, neat and geometrical, others with edges softened by time and use,*

6 *Tithe Map of Litton, Somerset, 1839*. Reproduced with kind permission of the South West Heritage Trust and Litton Parish Council. SHC D/PC/litt/1/3/2.

7 Oliver Rackham, *The History of the Countryside* (Weidenfeld and Nicholas, 2020), 159.

squashed polygons, their boundaries meandering and dog-legged to attest to their antiquity. [8]

In using the names given to this place over the centuries, what the artist Andy Goldsworthy refers to as 'the poetry of place names'.[9] - *Single Stone, Poor Ground, Lower Rushes, Summerleaze* - I entangle myself with an ancient rhythm of affinity with the material of landscape which we have almost entirely lost.



The Hollowmarsh looking north. January.

[8] Christopher Hadley, *Hollow Places. An Unusual History of Land and Legend* (William Collins, 2019), 56.

[9] Andy Goldsworthy, *Hanging Stones*, Artist Statement (2018) https://hangingstones.org/artists-statement/

The particular geographic, political and social forces that formed this place, its marginality and relative insignificance, have allowed traces of the deep past to remain present here. Parish boundaries, based on ancient rights of way, create liminal spaces which once held great metaphysical significance, used for hanging, shaming and the burial of the criminal or unconsecrated.[10] Transient, unacknowledged traces of what was once a devastating reality are still present in Deer Park Boundaries, Strip Lynchets, and buried objects:

> *The place-names all hazed over*
> *With flowering grasses, and fields*
> *Shadowing Domesday lines* [11]

Andrew Hurley, author of Starve Acre, writes that the 'complex relationship of people with the layers of history and memory' are more apparent in rural places than in an urban environment:

> *where the topography can be altered overnight and it's possible to quickly forget what somewhere looked like, or how things were... To go from the urban to the rural is to pass into a place where time runs at a different rate ... as if an ancientness is still apparent there.*[12]

There have been recent interventions here too, this landscape which seems so stable and bucolic has been the subject of immense change, evidenced in new roads and buildings, obsolete field systems and paths, the Victorian reservoir and recent Ash die back. But none so profound or irrevocable that these traces have yet become

[10] Nicola Whyte in "The deviant Dead in the Norfolk Landscape," *Landscapes* (2003) writes about parish boundaries and places where three parishes meet as liminal sites associated with gibbets and the burial of suicides.

[11] Philip Larkin, Poem MCMXIV (1964) https://www.poetrybyheart.org.uk/poems/mcmxiv

[12] Weird Walk. A Journal of Wanderings and Wonderings from the British Isles, *Beating The Bounds, An interview with Andrew Michael Hurley*, Vol 1, Number 3 (Colophon, 2020), 27.

subsumed beneath an accumulation of tarmac and concrete. This is an ancient *Writan* landscape, giving tangible expression to Tim Ingold's dwelling perspective which perceives landscape as:

> *an enduring record of, and testimony to- the lives and works of past generations who have dwelt within it, and in so doing, have left something of themselves.*[13]



Looking over the Hollowmarsh from Chewton Wood Holloway. February.

Whilst our understanding of what writing is might now be confined to letters and words set deliberately on a page or screen, the verb *to write* originates in the Saxon word *writan* meaning 'to scratch, tear or score.'[14] As the earliest texts were

[13] Tim Ingold, "The Temporality of the Landscape," *World Archaeology, Vol. 25(2) Conceptions of Time and Ancient Society*. (1993), prologue.

[14] Ingold, The Ground and the Page, 139.

scored and pressed into wood and clay - cuneiform tablets, and shards found in the Walbrook river,[15] traces of the past are writan into this landscape in ridge and furrow; track and Holloway; carving and gravestone; puddle and pool. The marks and traces of past lives that remain in the present turn the landscape into an archive, writan in clay and wood and stone, eroded by water and frost and at times barely visible. Landscape becomes a surface of inscription, shaped through the continual cycle of marking, erasure and rewriting that characterises both human presence and environmental process.

This cycle of 'inscription and erasure' through which landscape is formed is compared by Ingold to the formation of a palimpsest,[16] a concept which plays a significant role in my research practice. Derived from the Latin *palimpsēstus,* meaning 'to rub smooth again',[17] a palimpsest is created when parchment, made from animal skin is scraped and reused. The underlying writing remaining as a ghost trace beneath the new.

This growing awareness led me to experiment with different registers of writing, enabling a shift between critical analysis and experiential reflection in response to landscape.

As in a palimpsest the lines and marks
I make through my own existence in
this place add to the accumulation
of touch and tread traced into the landscape.

[15] The Fortunata Tablet is one of the earliest examples of text found in England, dating from 43-53 CE, found in the Walbrook river, London. "Museum of London Archaeology. Walbrook Discovery Programme," Wax on, Wax off, November 2012, accessed 182025, https://walbrookdiscovery.wordpress.com/2012/11/30/wax-on-wax-off

[16] Ingold, The Ground and the Page, 140.

[17] "Cambridge Digital Library," Ghost Words: Reading the Past, accessed May 8th, 2024, https://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/collections/ghostwords

Continually and repeatedly written, erased,
written, erased. Each new iteration at once
intangible, elusive,
and earthily, messily present.

Traces of the past shift, subsumed beneath
accumulated layers of leaf fall, water, time and forgetting;
then become tantalisingly close, there in the glimmer of a
reflection; in the mass of millennia old earth works
appearing and retreating with the angle of the sun.



Bridle track to Chewton Wood.

To the poet Patrick Kavanagh, the intimacy of the parish or village was 'not a perimeter but an aperture: a space through which the world could be seen…'[18] By placing this landscape in the context of wider events and histories the parochial

[18] Robert Macfarlane, *Landmarks* (Penguin Books, 2016), 63.

becomes universal, revealing the powerful connections between seemingly insignificant places and objects, and wider events of enormous significance. Doreen Massey refers to this as a 'simultaneity of stories-so-far'[19], in which the landscape is perceived as an archive of all the actions that have taken place over decades and centuries and millennia. As I walk the lanes, fields and holloways of this Mendip Valley my own history entangles with others, with place, with memories that belong to me, to people I have known and those whose trace presence here is all that remains.



Whitehouse Lane looking north. May.

[19] Doreen Massey, "Some Times of Space," in Olafur Eliasson: The Weather Project, ed. Susan May. (Tate Publishing 2003) exhibition catalogue.

Absence:

Frank Auerbach attributed his own acute desire to create art to his visceral awareness and understanding of death and displacement: [20]

> *I was always aware of death because of my background. And in some curious way the practice of art and the awareness of death are connected. Otherwise, we would not find it necessary to do the work that art finally does – to pin something down and take it out of time.* [21]

My own longing to understand and belong to a particular place was engendered by the ongoing sense of dispossession or strangeness that I carry, despite now living in one place for many years. A separateness, of quiet (often silent) observation was induced in me early, prompted by a peripatetic and complicated childhood, the frequency of changing homes and schools, of experiencing family breakdown, and the death or long fading of beloved family members.

In the spring of 2020 my mother was diagnosed with Alzheimer's dementia. As I began this research project I was witnessing, with growing dismay, the slow unravelling of my mother's *self.* Time became an ungraspable concept rather than a structure to her days, her memories disintegrating, her children and grandchildren tangled and tumbled together in her mind, a shifting palimpsest of past and present. I pictured her memories as a fine mesh of gossamer thread once tethering time and place and people and language, now slowly unravelling; seeds blown from summer flowers, drifting out of sight; a dandelion clock before the breeze; a quick shadow cast by weak winter sun; a sudden reflection on water.

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[20] In 1939, when he was seven, his German-Jewish parents sent him to England from Berlin. He later learnt that they had been killed in 1943. In Barnaby Wright, *Frank Auerbach. The Charcoal Heads* (The Courtauld Gallery, 2014), 19.

[21] Wullschläger, Auerbach, 3.

Only those memories that had traced the deepest furrows remained to be dredged from her bewilderment. Stories of her childhood in Hartlepool and the years in Cumbria when my sister and I were small. Stories grooved into her mind through repeated retelling and meaning. So, when concepts of time, of language, of most of what had made her herself had disappeared, these few remained.

In Freud's concept of the 'mystic writing pad'.

> *The memory of an experience (that is its continuing operative power) depends on a factor which is called the magnitude of the impression and on the frequency with which the same impression is repeated.*[22]

As I witnessed the slow fracturing of my mother's memories, I could viscerally comprehend what this experience shared with the degradation of memory manifested in the material of landscape. How stories and memories disappear and are lost through the accumulation of time, and what that loss means to our understanding of what landscape/memory is.

My mother's memories thread into my own; my memories and hers are woven into place. The stories she told me of her past and mine. They sit with other memories and stories, some my own, some belonging to this landscape. Some I've been told; some I've created as I've dug my life and that of my family into this place. Some are sharply delineated, strong and powerful, as the shadow of the church. Some ephemeral and fleeting, hard to grasp, a dandelion clock, a cloud shadow scudding across a ploughed field in bright sun. Some are particular to me, to my children, in

[22] Sigmund Freud, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Vol 1 (Hogarth Press, 1958), 300, in Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, trans Alan Bass (Routledge Classics, 2001), 253.

the naming of places we visit, some have been transposed from objects such as the field names map. A weaving of past and present; absence and presence.

Interweaving my experience as a historian, as an artist, and as an inhabitant of this particular place, this research project is an integration of place and process, driven by material and emotional engagement, and a desire to unpick, pin down and understand this landscape. [23]



[23] Wullschläger, 85.

Foundation Work



Overview:

This chapter examines a series of ceramic and print experiments developed through field-based engagement with the Mendip landscape. In doing so, it extends the methodological framework of the thesis, demonstrating how material processes of inscription, erosion and trace can operate as methods for understanding landscape formation and memory.

Many of my core ongoing concerns are first articulated in this early work, in particular the conceptual correlation between printmaking, time, and the erosion of memory within landscape. I detail the experimental technical development of new print processes within ceramics, and a new method for cocooning plant material. Of most significance is my emerging understanding of the importance of embodied meaning, relating material process to methods of landscape formation.

Following the polyvocal methodology introduced earlier, the chapter moves between analytical discussion, reflective observation and poetic writing in order to attend to the different forms of knowledge that emerge through practice, an approach that continues throughout the thesis.

Beginning:



> *Sensing, or being a sensor, is not only a quality inherent to a specific kind of instrument. Rather it is a name for the activity of all manner of material things that elaborate sensitivities to the things they come in contact with.*[24]

It is early afternoon in winter, the sun already low in the sky.

I walk, north east along the hedgerowed lane.

The long shadow of my body before me.

The sun on my back.

[24] Fuller and Weizman, *Investigative Aesthetics*, 44.

I am tired,

my body heavy with grief.

I stop, and turn to walk home,

low November sun on my face,

my shadow trailing behind.



Hollowmarsh Lane, sunset.

The act of retracing my steps, something I rarely do, entirely altered my experience of the landscape. Walking north east, with the winter light on my back, my shadow had loomed darkly before me, shadowing the puddled reflections and muddy track.

As I turned towards the sun, slivers of bright winter light glanced and shivered on the surface of the puddled water, casting the ridged surface of the lane, the leaves, footprints and tyre tracks into sharp relief; branches became shifting, occluded silhouettes against the sky.

The hills and hedgerows and trees that surrounded me were also reflected beneath me. I stood suspended vertiginously between two versions of the same place, the water a gossamer skin stretched between worlds; the earth made light and tenuous.

On this track as old as settlement in the valley, where puddled rainwater, fallen through winter, or the day before, covered soft, sappy summer leaves fallen from Oak and Ash inching through centuries; where sunlight, glancing on water, revealed both the layered leaves rotting below the surface, and cast a dark reflection of the hedgerow above, I paused for a moment, and took a photograph.



Hollowmarsh Puddle photograph.

On the telling of stories.

Sontag writes that the photographer, like the collector is *'animated by a passion that, even when it appears to be for the present, is linked to a sense of the past.*[25]

The puddle image was not *still,* but spoke of duration - the entanglement of centuries of footfall, tree growth, light, time and presence that must coalesce in order for this one single image to be revealed in the landscape.

The photograph fulfilled many purposes. It was a physical manifestation of memory and presence; evidence that this moment of ephemeral beauty existed and that I was there to witness it. It was part of an attempt to retain something before it was lost; to burrow under the skin of a place, to try and decipher, through logging the changes that occur, through seasons, weather, lifetimes, what makes place and where my own experience fits.

It was, like most 'photographs' one amongst thousands of other intangible, ephemeral digital files stored on my phone. There was as yet no tactile materiality to the puddle image, and its future tactility, something I might have taken for granted with pre-digital photography was no longer an automatic part of its existence. In an interview in 2009, the filmmaker Harun Farocki explained how important he found the ability to touch and measure the material he was using, the haptic quality of the photograph or film reel allowed him to think through material. [26] As Edwards and Hart argue, the material form of an image, the choice of paper, the size of the print

[25] Susan Sontag. *On Photography* (Penguin, Random House, 1977), 102.

[26] Harun Farocki, "On Materiality", interview by Lina Maria Stahle and Alexander Waszynski (Cine-fils.com, 2010), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YuVLOzW3J-k

and the process used to create the image all exceed *'a direct indexical visual use, and creat(e) literally and metaphorically another dimension to the image.'*[27]

The tangible, haptic materiality of the printed photograph forms a bridge through time between memory and place. It becomes not solely the documentation of a single moment but an 'accumulation of traces' whose '*context is more than background information.'* [28]

[27] Elizabeth Edwards and Janice Hart, *Photographs Objects Histories. On the Materiality of Images.* (Routledge, 2004), 5.

[28] Edwards and Hart, *Photographs Objects Histories*, 4.

Return:





December. Hollowmarsh Lane.

I returned a month later to the place on Hollowmarsh Lane where I had taken the *puddle* photograph. I deliberately set out at the same time of day ensuring that light levels and the sun's bearing would be comparable. In the intervening weeks there had been heavy rainfall, and I found that the track was deeply flooded, totally obscuring the place where the puddle image was taken.

Landscape (like memory) is not stable; it is mud and water and light and rainfall and feet and hooves and falling leaves; it is what you remember as you walk, and what you will forget. The loss of this particular place clarified my growing understanding of the intricate and fragile complexity that creates such places through time.

Returning but being unable to replicate the image, brought the transience of that past moment into focus. The photograph had recorded a fleeting ephemerality

created by the vast coalescence of time, movement, action and circumstance, interconnected in an amalgamation of natural and cultural processes.

Such ephemerality and fragility was inherent to the images captured through early photographic experimentation. This led to one of the pioneers of photographic imagery, William Fox-Talbot, pursuing a method with which he could permanently retain an image:

> *When I saw how beautiful were the images which were thus produced by the action of light, I regretted the more that they were destined to have such a brief existence, & I resolved to attempt to find out if possible some method of preventing this, or retarding it as much as possible.* [29]

I realised that whilst I would never be able to exactly repeat the conditions necessary to replicate the puddle image, just as I cannot return physically to the people or places that I summon through memory, I could recreate the digital image in a material form which took notice of the theoretical connotations of the processes involved - a return to place through material practice.

[29] William Henry Fox Talbot, *Some Account of the Art of Photogenic Drawing. Or, the process by which Natural Objects may be made to delineate themselves, without the aid of the Artist's Pencil.* (1839), https://www.lens-and-sensibility.eu/PDF/Photogenic-Drawing-1839.pdf



William Henry Fox Talbot, Album di Disegni Fotogenici. 1839-40.[30]

[30] William Henry Fox Talbot, *Album di Disegni Fotogenici*. 1839-40. Calotype, Met Museum, New York. https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/268303 Reproduced under the Met Open Access scheme.

First Print: Photogravure:

I wanted to establish a method grounded in both looking and making, which could consolidate the immediacy of a digital photograph and its ability to capture the intangible in light, shadow and reflection, with the materiality of a direct print or cast. I sensed that the photogravure [31] process had the potential to restore the haptic to the process of taking a digital image.

I immediately recognised a likeness between the printing methods I was using and ceramic handbuiding processes. Both use material knowledge and understanding learnt through touch as much as sight. The rhythmic, time bound structure of inking up a plate, the repetitive process of rubbing ink into the etched grooves, felt familiarly close to working with clay; a kinaesthetic knowledge felt through the body which I also experience when walking through the landscape.



First test Prints.

[31] A photogravure plate is created when a light sensitive plate is exposed beneath a photographic transparency in a UV light box. I use the term Photogravure throughout, rather than photoetch; this distinguishes between the production of a short run of artist prints and the use of photoetching as an industrial process.

Although still two dimensional the handmade nature of the print created a reciprocity with a hand built ceramic object, the print, like a coiled or pinched pot, had been created by the touch of my hands. Unlike a smooth photographic print, the surface of the printed paper was indented and textured with the lines and marks I had recorded in the landscape. The duality of the plate and the print replicated in some way the walker's relationship to the ground. Print and plate, earth and feet each recording and affecting the other.

I became intrigued by the conceptual connotations between the ground and the page, and with print process as a method through which to perceive and make visible past experience left as a trace within landscape.



First large photogravure print.

Erasure:

> *Through living in it, the landscape becomes a part of us, just as we are a part of it... But in a landscape, each component enfolds within its essence the totality of its relations with each and every other.* [32]

The English rural landscape is now an empty place - often devoid of both human and non-human presence. As the first predominantly urban society, the connection between people and the English landscape has been progressively weakened. Since the Industrial Revolution the proportion of the population living in the countryside has declined from seventy percent in 1750 [33] to ten percent in 2023.[34] A landscape which would once have been busy with people and animals has been depopulated. What remains in their absence is a landscape replete with material trace of past inhabitation and use. These signs are not static, but ephemeral and changeable. Fields that appear flat in bright midsummer daylight become grooved with strip lynchets or ridges and furrows in the sharp winter dawn, a mass dial appearing and retreating on the stone of the church porch.

As paths are used less, as field systems undergo modernisation or new intensive farming methods, as people interact and understand these places less and less with the passing of time, these traces become ever harder to see, recognise or decipher. They fade into the landscape, fainter as each year passes.

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[32] Ingold, Temporality of Landscape, 154.

[33] Tony Wrigley, "English county populations in the later eighteenth century," *Cambridge Group for the History of Population and Social Structure* (University of Cambridge, 2007), 5.

[34] "Key findings, Statistical Digest of Rural England," Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. Updated 15 July 2025. https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/key-findings-statistical-digest-of-rural-england/key-findings-statistical-digest-of-rural-england

I became fascinated by the speculative implications, relating to the erosion of memory in place, that I comprehended in an unintended aspect of Fox Talbot's earliest work. In the 1840s he was commissioned to illustrate a series of books with '*photographic drawings' or calotypes*. The innovative nature of this process led to mistakes being made in the way the images were printed – they were exposed at incorrect light levels and fixed using contaminated water. This caused some of the calotype illustrations to degenerate over time, resulting in pages containing blank space where the image would once have appeared.

> *His early photographs blackened or faded when exposed to light... The images on the many plates in The Pencil of Nature vanished, and a reviewer of the 1862 International Exhibition wrote that some of the calotypes that were exhibited there had "fad(ed) before the eyes of the nations assembled."*[35]

This gradual corrosion and eventual disappearance of the calotype image struck me as closely aligned conceptually to the concomitant fading of memory and narrated understanding of landscape that I have experienced here in this place. This is a theme repeatedly explored by the Polish poet Wislawa Szymborska, who sensed an often willed and collective forgetfulness of her country's uncomfortable past: [36]

[35] Gail Buckland, *Fox Talbot and the Invention of Photography* (Scholar Press, 1980), 28, in Malcolm Daniel, "William Henry Fox Talbot and the Invention of Photography," (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2004). http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/tlbt/hd_tlbt.htm

[36] Maria Diana Piele, "The Aftermath of War in 'The End and the Beginning' by Wisława Szymborska," *International Journal of Language and Literary Studies*.6(4) 2024, 500.

Extract from: The End and the Beginning

By Wislawa Szymborska [37]

Those who knew
what was going on here
must make way for
those who know little.
And less than little.
And finally as little as nothing.

In the grass that has overgrown
causes and effects,
someone must be stretched out
blade of grass in his mouth
gazing at the clouds.

I sensed a corelation between the gradual fading of trace presence and memory within landscape, and processes of print making. Fox-Talbot was undeterred by the fading he encountered in early Calotype images. He realised that the calotype negatives were susceptible to revival, developing a new process through which to revive their latent potentiality.[38] In doing so '*various details make their appearance which had not before been seen, having been latent all the time.'*[39] The traces of existence and experience revealed through the repetition of constant and careful

[37] Wisława Szymborska, *Miracle Fair: Selected Poems of Wisława Szymborska*, trans. Joanna Trzeciak (W. W. Norton and Company Inc, 2001), 48.

[38] Vered Maimon, "On the Singularity of Early Photography: William Henry Fox Talbot's Botanical Images," *Association of Art Historians,* 34(5), (2011), 969.

[39] William Henry Fox Talbot, "The process of calotype photogenic drawing," in Beaumont Newhall, ed., *Photography: Essays and Images* (Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1980), 35. https://archive.org/details/photographyessay0000unse/page/n5/mode/2up

revisiting; through material understanding and engagement and through careful documentation create a form of reinking or reanimation, in which through a process of perceiving, recording and remembering, the latent potentiality of landscape is revived.



Holloway through Chewton Wood, possibly pre Roman origin with an Anglo Saxon or Norman Deer Park Boundary in the trees on the right.

Erasure Book:



Erasure Book. Fourteen etchings taken without reinking the plate.

As the etching plate is put through the press, ink transfers from the plate to the paper; the plate is then reinked before each new pressing. In this next series of work I continued printing from the same plate without reinking. The image became incrementally fainter, until by the fourteenth impression no ink adhered to the paper, and the image became a blind emboss, only able to be seen when held sideways to the light or felt with fingertips like braille.

I fixed the series of gradually eroded prints into a consecutive line in a book form. Although each print was *texturally* identical, the *visibility* of the printed image is incrementally changed through the presence of ink.

Each consecutive print became less perceptible over time. But, as with Fox Talbot's Calotypes, or the revisiting of an old memory, walking an unused path through a field, finding the history of a place and telling its stories, the impression made by the etching plate could be revived through reinking.





























Photogravure on porcelain paper clay:

> *Substance to convey meaning replaces representation with presentation.*[40]

At the core of this research project is how process can express the materiality and volume, the 'messy physicality' [41] of this landscape, with which clay is so affiliated and entwined, whilst retaining the transience of light, shadow and reflection (memory). By bringing processes examined in the photo etching book into a ceramic process I hoped to align the conceptual and the technical; the materiality of the ground expressed through clay, the transience of memory, light and shadow expressed through the photoetched image.

By etching onto porcelain paper clay with ink made from Manganese, Black Iron Oxide and Black Body Stain, I impressed the photographic image into the surface of the clay. It became part of the body of the piece, as the path is etched into the surface of the earth, closer, conceptually, to an expression of the *writan landscape* (as in scratched, scored or incised) than a photographic print which sits on the surface of the paper.

[40] Rebecca Solnit. *As Eve Said to the Serpent. On Landscape, Gender and Art* (The University of Georgia Press, 2003), 59

[41] Will Ashon, *Strange Labyrinth*, (Granta, 20017), 208.

Technical/Method:

I rolled Flax porcelain paper clay into 3mm thick slabs the day before using, ensuring that the clay was surface dry but malleable. Flax porcelain paper clay has greater strength and resilience than many clay bodies, but I found that damp slabs stuck in the grooves of the etching plate, whilst dry slabs cracked and split under the pressure of the press.

I combined Black Iron Oxide, Manganese Dioxide and Black body stain with copperplate oil using a glass muller to make a printing ink. If insufficiently combined the ink remains grainy and is unable to be rubbed into the grooves of the plate.

There was a small amount of cracking on the black body stain plate due to the pressure of the press, or a slight inconsistency in the depth of the slab, which will affect the success of the final print.



Black copper oxide, manganese dioxide, black body stain.

I fired the clay prints straight to stoneware (1260°c). This gave a depth to the printed image and vitrified the porcelain. The manganese had a brown tinge and some speckling. The most consistent result was the black body stain ink.



Puddle print on porcelain paper clay with Manganese ink.

I used the same process to investigate whether I could print on a larger scale. I used a square etching plate and Manganese ink. The printed image didn't totally adhere to the clay surface, and cracked along one side, possibly because the slabs were

slightly too dry. Although accidental, these elements lent the print a transient, dreamlike quality, as if depicted in the process of disappearing.
I fired to bisque rather than stoneware, which retained the earthy dustiness of the oxide surface and allowed for future interaction with the surface of the fired clay through smoke firing, sgraffito or further glazing, not possible with high fired slabs.

Once printed onto clay a two dimensional print becomes three dimensional, it can be seen from behind (if there is opacity in the clay body), be stood upright, or interplay with other forms. To extend this I created an 'aperture' framework using thin clay slabs bound together with thread and slip, utilising offcuts from the porcelain printing slab. This process aligned with how baler twine is used within landscape, binding gates shut, mending fences, or entangled with hedgerows.



Puddle clay print, detail.

The Field:

In seeking processes aligned with those found in the landscape I turned to a wider field of ceramic practice, examining the conceptual capacity of process in understanding landscape formation. Gillian Lowndes and Sara Radstone stood out as artists whose practices focus on the dichotomy of ugliness and beauty found in the rural landscape; work with a rawness and fragility of response not filtered by overworking, where the accidental is embraced.



Gillian Lowndes, *Wall Mounted Brick Bag*. 1981.[42]

[42] Gillian Lowndes, *Wall Mounted Brick Bag*, 1981, melted brick in fibreglass bag, ceramic and wire, 46 x 46 x 14. The Sunday Painter Gallery, London, https://thesundaypainter.co.uk/artists/37-gillian-lowndes/works/82-gillian-lowndes-wall-mounted-brick-bag-1981/ Image reproduced courtesy of the Sunday Paper, London.

Lowndes saw the kiln 'not as a reliable tool, but as a black-box system – withholding useful mysteries akin to those of the human brain,'[43] an arena of production in its own right. By warping, melting or destroying the elements she placed in the kiln, she was able to focus less 'on the object itself, but on the volatile atmosphere of its production'.[44] What remains is the residue of an event rather than a resolved object. This relinquishment of control, in which work is able to transform in unexpected ways, is investigated more fully later in the chapter as I explore systems of making that echo those found in landscape: erosion, collapse, sedimentation and accumulation.



Gillian Lowndes, *For Jenny*, 1990-94. [45]

[43] Aaron Angell, Gillian Lowndes (The Sunday Painter, 18th November – 23rd December 2016) exhibition press release, https://thesundaypainter.co.uk/exhibitions/31-gillian-lowndes/press_release_text/

[44] Angell, Lowndes, 2016.

[45] Gillian Lowndes, *For Jenny*, 1990-94, collage with extruded clay and can opener, 7 x 16 x 8 cm, The Sunday Painter Gallery, London, https://thesundaypainter.co.uk/artists/37-gillian-lowndes/works/2094-gillian-lowndes-for-jenny-1990-94/ Image reproduced courtesy of the Sunday Paper, London.

Radstone sees clay as a material allowing 'the merest, most fleeting gesture to be transformed from transient to permanent... a skin on which human scars do not fade'.[46] Her hand built slab and coil work privileges direct human touch. Each mark of her hand becomes a memory of process and material interaction, as traces of human existence remain embedded in landscape. [47]



Sara Radstone, *Untitled,* 2004.[48]

[46] Sarah Radstone, "More than Words,"(York Gallery, 2017) exhibition film. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5dLp-lYW2GA

[47] "Museum Crush," Richard Moss, More Than Words: Mining the depths of the interior clay void with Sara Radstone (2018), interview, https://museumcrush.org/more-than-words-mining-the-depths-of-the-interior-clay-void-with-ceramicist-sara-radstone/

[48] Sara Radstone, *Untitled*, 2004, clay and glaze, The Anthony Shaw Collection, York Art Gallery, https://anthonyshawcollection.org/sara-radstone/ Image reproduced courtesy of the Anthony Shaw Collection.



Sara Radstone, *Corpus*. 2001-2002. [49]

'*Corpus*' (2001-2002), a series of forty-four clay book forms taken from moulds of books owned by Radstone's mother, a book dealer and avid reader, was the first work created after her mother's sudden death. Although the series of book forms that create '*Corpus*' are hollow, and have volume, they cannot be opened, their interior remains hidden, creating a powerful connection to the loss Radstone has experienced.

[49] Sara Radstone, Corpus. 2001-2002. York Art Gallery. Image reproduced courtesy of the photographer David Harrison.

The books are shown in various stages of decomposition, inscribed with words and abstract marks. Like buildings, or vessels, book covers hide their inner contents and interior life and thoughts. [50]

Radstone is fascinated with the potential of the closed interior of a vessel form as much as its surface. '*Corpus*' presents the book form as an inaccessible container of memory, where the surface indicates, or hints at what is inside. For Radstone the enclosure of the form holds 'psychological and interesting resonance.' [51]



Sara Radstone, *White Spine*, 2004.[52]

[50] Hannah Savage, "More Than Words: An Exhibition of Work by Sara Radstone," York Art Gallery (blog) https://www.yorkmuseumstrust.org.uk/blog/more-than-words-by-hannah-savage-york-art-gallery/

[51] Richard Moss, (2018).

[52] Sara Radstone, *White Spine*, 2004, clay and glaze, The Anthony Shaw Collection, York Art Gallery, https://anthonyshawcollection.org/sara-radstone/ Image reproduced courtesy of the Anthony Shaw Collection.

In contrast, Alison Rees's practice is unconcerned with volume, focusing on the 'clay page' which she sees as sitting apart from 'traditional clay-based archetypes such as the vessel, the figurine, the tile.' [53] Drawing on Ingold's concept of 'wayfaring,'[54] - which she describes as 'journeying without a map, of actively and materially engaging with the landscape around me as I travel,' [55] she treats the clay slab as a responsive, two-dimensional site of inscription,[56] a topographical record, where the act of touch is synonymous with walking through a landscape.



Alison Rees, Enclosure III (2019) [57]

This methodology of recording through material interaction finds a broader theoretical framework in the work of Mandy Parslow, whose early practice 'explores attachment to and engagement with place through the medium of ceramics.' [58] Her work often uses gathered material, creating forms that 'evolve from the place itself...

[53] Alison Rees. "Turning the page: a new dimension to the language of ceramics with reference to wayfaring, porcelain paperclay and the archetype of the paper page." PhD Diss,. Royal College of Art, (2021) p. 5.

[54] Tim Ingold, *Lines: a Brief History* (Abingdon; New York: Routledge, 2016) p. 16.

[55] Alison Rees. "*Turning the page.*" p. 5.

[56] Alison Rees. "*Turning the page.*" p. 18.

[57] Alison Rees, Enclosure III (2019) Photograph by Alick Cotterill. All Rights Reserved. Image reproduced courtesy of the artist.

[58] Mandy Parslow, "About." *Mandy Parslow*. Accessed March 3, (2026). https://www.mandyparslow.com/about

(acknowledging) the ephemeral qualities of place.'[59] Parslow argues that the engagement with place is not merely aesthetic but is formed through small stories - the iterative, processual decisions made in the studio, at the intersection of making, thinking and clay.



Mandy Parslow, *Brich/Beech bowl* (2020) [60]

Across these practices - Lowndes' embrace of the kiln as a 'black-box system,' Radstone's 'inaccessible container of memory,' Rees's 'journeying without a map,' and Parslow's 'small stories' - process operates as a means of holding time, touch

[59] Mandy Parslow.

[60] Mandy Parslow, *Brich/Beech bowl* (2020), gathered clay. https://www.mandyparslow.com/works. Image reproduced courtesy of the artist.

and place within form. The book and the page emerge as structures through which memory, landscape and material action are mediated.

It is within this field of thinking that my own methodology developed. The book form and the page play an increasingly significant role in my practice as my research progresses, operating as frameworks through which landscape can be enacted rather than depicted. I later extend this discussion through the work of Neil Brownsword and Edmund de Waal. Their practice, responding to place, site, and the marks and traces of human existence, left as a memory of presence, is considered more fully in my Methodology chapter.

Cocoon:

I wanted to find ways to embody meaning within process. Rather than etch onto clay with an *image* of plant material, I wanted to create *actual* accumulation, treating the clay slab as a form of *ground*. Reflecting the seasonal accumulation of plant material obscuring or obliterating a footpath or building, I subsumed the clay surface beneath an accretion of cocooned seed heads, layers of slip, glaze, molochite and powdered porcelain. In their square uniformity the slabs deliberately referenced archeological excavation grids.





Whitehouse Lane and Hollowmarsh Lane.



Field below the strip lynchets on the main road to Ford.

I used Teasels, Curled Dock and Cow parsley stems as these are robust and plentiful, and hogweed seed heads, which have hollow tube stems that respond well to cocooning in slip. Fresh, sappy plants resisted the slip due to the amount of water still in the plant. My knowledge of the properties of, and when to gather, these plants inculcated a cyclical relationship with this place based on when plants could be harvested for use.

As delicate seed heads became subsumed beneath the weight of the slip, I introduced a process in which I dipped the seed head in thin slip, before scattering the surface with dry powdered porcelain and fine molochite, spraying the surface with a fine mist of water before repeating. In this way the surface of even very fine seed heads became gradually encrusted and preserved.



Stoneware slab with porcelain slip, terra sigilatta slip, black slip, oak gall ink and molochite.

45cm x 45cm x 4cm.



Stoneware slabs with porcelain slip, terra sigilatta slip, black slip, oak gall ink,
terracotta powder and molochite, 45cm x 45cm x 4cm.

I washed the surface with layers of terra sigilatta, porcelain slip and black body stain, before again dusting the surface with dry porcelain powder and terracotta dust. Although some delicate plants burnt away in the first firing, a ghost trace remained of their presence in the slip layer beneath. I used oak gall ink to stain the surface of the slabs, which delineated these latent areas within the cocooned slip surface, bringing tiny details and textures into focus.

The most effective slabs encompassed - in both material and process - an embodied rather than borrowed response. As with the gradual erosion of the photo etching book I was *actually* building up the surface of the clay, much as leaf fall and dead summer growth will gradually accrue on the earth, using materials gathered from this landscape. I next intended to introduce a greater degree of risk, and possibility of flux within the material, echoing the processes of decay, degradation, accumulation and collapse that I had witnessed in landscape.

Integration of Place and Process:

The corelation between the images I collect as I walk in this landscape, the memories provoked though this process, and the work I produce in the studio is central to this research. I do not deliberately set out to *illustrate* aspects of the landscape I have photographed, however, when the photographic images and the work are set side by side there is a clear connection between what I witness and document in place, and the work that I create in the studio. A series of photographs documenting fly tipping on the edge of the village became the instigation for this next body of work.







Fly tipping on Litt Hill

The abandoned Holloway running beside Litt Hill is used as a fly tipping site. The accumulation of manmade detritus dumped here is, over time, being slowly subsumed by the earth. Sofa cushions are green with moss; tyres mounded with leaf mould and entangled with ivy; twisted metal lying rusty and corroded.

I began the Aperture series (documented below) in the days following my discovery of the fly tip, but only noticed the correlation months later, when I began cross referencing photographs taken in the landscape, with documentary photographs of work in progress in the studio. The ceramic work unconsciously referenced structures and processes that I experienced as I walked, achieving my aim of investigating studio practice which operates as analogous to processes of landscape formation. I had set up a series of loose parameters - based on my material knowledge of ceramics and understanding of the processes these pieces would go through, and within this structure I had relinquished an element of control, allowing the work to transform in unexpected ways. The interplay of artificial and natural forms echoing the accumulation of plant material in an abandoned structure.

The slip used in these pieces retained a memory of the process of construction either on the plaster bat, or within a cardboard armature (see below). This led me to question the void that would remain within landscape when (or if) the manmade materials dumped in the Holloway rotted or rusted. The absence of the containing structure would be made visible by the plant material accumulated on and around these absent structures.





Aperture Series: 1

Thin slabs of black chunky stoneware clay, overlaid with plant material dipped in porcelain paper clay slip, dusted with porcelain powder and molochite, fired upright, allowing gravity and the heat of the kiln to interact with the material. 20cm x 12cm x 5cm.



Aperture Series: 2

Black stoneware clay frame constructed on a plaster bat, slip soaked plant material placed within the aperture, layered with molochite and porcelain powder with the addition of high alkaline frit to bind the structure together and halted its disintegration in the kiln. 30cm x 12cm x 4cm.





Aperture Series 2 on the bat and drying before firing.



Aperture Series: 3

Double frame constructed on the plaster bat, large amounts of porcelain paper clay slip pooled with cocooned plant material and molochite within the aperture frames, subsuming the seed heads.
32cm x 15cm x 4cm.



Aperture series: 4

Plant material dipped in slip, molochite, high alkaline frit and powdered porcelain clay laid on a cardboard armature, which I closed around the accumulated material, stood upright, and filled with porcelain flax paper clay slip. Bisque firing burnt away the enclosing structure leaving the piece imprinted with what had once contained it. 30cm x 10cm x 10cm

Conclusion:

> *Things already exist, we don't have to create them; we simply have to see their relationships.*[61]

My ongoing research centred around the following questions:

- Could artistic process influence and impact how we treat landscape, making visible processes of anthropogenic landscape formation, and the changing impact of our presence in place through time.

- Could process/material embody a profound or actual link with what I found in landscape; work that was not the stating of an interpretation, an attempt to represent an impression or idea removed from the material of landscape - but was instead made with and through what I experienced in this landscape.

The intermingling of different aspects of process - walking, writing, photographing and ceramic studio work - detailed above was an early iteration of my developing methodology. As this methodology evolved my written response shifted between analytical, reflective and poetic modes, reflecting the different ways knowledge emerged through practice. What began with a photograph taken on a muddy lane in winter had developed into an entangled and complicated process of discovery through material practice. The implications of this evolving practice are examined in the following chapter.

[61] Stéphane Mallarmé, quoted in Fuller and Weizman, *Investigative Aesthetics*, 5.



Exhibition of PhD research practice at the Michael Pennie Gallery, Locksbrook, 2021.

Methodology



> *Amidst any cross-disciplinary traffic of ideas and techniques concerning the fragmentary past, the specifics of method can still be hard to pre-plan. More likely, they are fallen upon, or opportunistically designed. To do so requires that faith be kept in immediate surroundings and our human abilities to perceive them.*[62]

Employing an approach referred to by Bennett as active engagement - 'a state of interactive fascination... fostered through deliberate strategies'[63] - I established a network of enmeshed and repetitive practices encompassing historical and theoretical research, photography, print and ceramic process, walking and gathering, and analytical, reflective and poetic writing.

Walking – writing – making – researching – gathering.

It is in the messy evolution and implementation of this methodology - learnt from doing, or practiced to a resolution[64] that new knowledge had been developed and implemented.

Make – research - photograph - gather – walk – research – walk – make – photograph – gather – make – research – walk – photograph – gather – walk – make – research.

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[62] Hayden Lorimer, "Caught in the Nick of Time: Archives and Fieldwork," in *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Geography*, eds. Dydia DeLyser, Steve Herbert, Stuart Aitken, Mike Crang and Linda McDowell (Sage, 2009), 257.

[63] Jane Bennett, *The Enchantment of Modern Life. Attachments, Crossings and Ethics.* (Princeton University Press, 2001), 157, in Alan Macpherson, "'Sensuous Singularity' Hamish Fulton's Cairngorm Walk-Texts," *Critical Survey*, Vol. 29 No. 1 (Aberdeen University Research Archive, 2017), 2.

[64] Brad Haseman, "Rupture and Recognition: Identifying the Performative Research Paradigm." In *Practice as Research: Approaches to Creative Arts Enquiry,* edited by Estelle Barrett and Barbara Bolt, 147–158. (I.B. Tauris, 2007), 147.

Walk:

> *The mind doesn't absorb a sense of place at any speed much faster than the human body moves. Faster than that, at the speed of machines, the world becomes a stage set and only the largest changes register.*[65]

On most days I walk directly from my home in the centre of the village, for an hour, in a circular route, with my dogs, in silence. The Litton landscape is domestic, small, pastoral; the furthest of the Parish Fields are about thirty or forty minutes by foot from my home. I rarely walk beyond the bounds of the village as marked in the Field Names Map of 1839. In many ways my walks echo a rhythm of walking which has been part of this landscape for a thousand years as villagers tended to their allocated field plots across the parish.

Some artists, such as Hamish Fulton, employ deliberate strategies to 'alienate the everydayness with which we commonly regard walking'. [66] But this everydayness is part of my practice, walking has to fit around my care duties, which over the last five years became increasingly demanding. These externally imposed constraints on my time created boundaries to how far and when I could walk. But the constraints also turned my everyday practice of walking and recording into an act of resistance and escape. Being alone outside was a challenge to domesticity/busyness/caring.

I have been startled looking through this research at how regularly the idea of resistance occurs. Resistance as a concept can feel brave and loud. I come from a family of brave and loud rebels, and I am not one of them. Mine is a form of resistance gathered through quiet noticing and accumulation, through deliberate strategies eked out of small sections of time. A resistance to complacency and

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[65] Rebecca Solnit, *A Book of Migrations* (Verso books, 2011), 113.
[66] Alan Macpherson, "Sensuous Singularity' Hamish Fulton's Cairngorm Walk-Texts," *Critical Survey* . Vol. 29 No. 1, (Spring 2017), 3.

wanton destruction; to the 'dystopia of the economy;' [67] to forgetting or valuing some forms of memory above others; to the severing of intangible connections between place and person inculcated by the boarding school system.

Having lived in many places and been to many schools, one of my first acts in a new place would be to walk; beating the bounds, [68] orienting myself. Walking became a way into a landscape, a strategy through which I imprinted these new places on my memory, resisting disenchantment and alienation through my embodied knowledge – as if by knowing a landscape through my feet I belonged there.

Walking, writes Solnit, is balanced between 'doing something and doing nothing'.

> *As the rhythm of the walk is interrupted by the surprises and irregularities of the landscape, so ideas arise from lengthy concentration interrupted by epiphanies... but it is only long work that takes one to them, as the walk takes one to landscape.*[69]

As I walk the paths that score this landscape, I return in memory to the garden of the house where I was born; or to the melancholy of a fallen tree; my feet treading where generations have passed before me. And though the people that trod these lines into the landscape, or heaped the stones on the Hollowmarsh fields are not known to me, in walking where they walked, touching the walls and the trees and the buildings familiar to them, I feel connected through time to their past presence.

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[67] Iain Biggs. "Between Creative Praxis and Place Governance: Four examples." in *Landscape Values. Place and Praxis*, eds. Tim Collins, Gesche Kindermann, Conor Newman and Nessa Cronin. Galway. (Centre for Landscape Studies, 2016) 40. https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Conor-Newman-2/publication/312046901_Landscape_Values_Place_and_Praxis/links/586cea1408ae329d6212d58e/Landscape-Values-Place-and-Praxis.pdf.

[68] Weird Walk. *Andrew Michael Hurley*, 22.

[69] Rebecca Solnit. *As Eve Said to the Serpent. On Landscape, Gender and Art* (The University of Georgia Press, 2003), 6.

John Wylie refers to such embodied knowledge/interaction with landscape as *wayfaring - 'embedding life within lived-through landscapes... a form of living and dwelling in the world in which there is no separation between self and landscape*.'[70] Walking is entangled with knowing, with belonging, with making; recording my embodied interaction with landscape through material intervention, process, writing, photographing and collecting. Listening to the landscape, the rhythm of my tread; memories and stories of my past entangling with those whose footsteps I am retreading.

[70] John Wylie, "Dwelling and displacement: Tim Robinson and the questions of landscape," *Cultural Geographies* 19.3 (Sage, 2012), 372.

Photograph:

As a child I took countless images that, although rarely containing people, were full of oblique human presence. A reflection of my own sense of a fleeting and disrupted claim to belong anywhere, or driven by a need to provide evidence that we leave a mark on the places we inhabit. I was there in the shadow, the scratch mark on the wall, the path pushed through wet grass, the footprint in mud.

Much of my response to landscape is predicated on this sense of intangible or spectral presence - referring to a '*constitutive element of geographical experience, taking place as a persistent and unsettling capacity of place to enchant and haunt... sensed persistence without the fullness of presence.*'[71]

The indexicality and trace like character of the photographic image offers a means to keep hold of a residue of what has gone, the image of the past creating a tangible link between then and now, signifying your past presence.

The framing device of the photograph narrows the immensity of existence, until it can be comprehended. Details that are lost when standing in the vastness of landscape can be startlingly revealed, reconciling the immensity of time, memory, loss, to a manageable dimension, understanding experience through an aperture: *'putting borders to catch something which is mysterious.'* [72]

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[71] Derek P. McCormack, "Remotely Sensing Affective Afterlives: The Spectral Geographies of Material Remains," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* (2010): 642. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/233475475_Remotely_Sensing_Affective_Afterlives_The_Spectral_Geographies_of_Material_Remains

[72] Adrien Heathfield, "Writing not yet Thought. Hélène Cixous in Conversation with Adrian Heathfield," Paris, September 2010. https://www.adrianheathfield.net/project/writing-not-yet-thought

I use the camera on my iPhone to record this landscape, the ease and availability of this method means I do not need to plan these interactions; giving me the ability to bear witness to change through time, noticing and recording small things that would often escape regular notice, and recording damage.

I have an archive of eighty two documented walks, each a series of between five and fifteen photographs taken during the course of a single walk and archived with the time, date and location. This collection is at the core of my methodology; I continually refer to it in order to build narratives through time, construct an archive of places that have been lost or irrevocably changed (even in this short time) and to use as a material resource to create photogravure, cyanotype, and photo decal images.



St Mary's Churchyard, Litton, early morning.

Gather/Return:

In a process of refracted autobiography, I haunt places where it is possible to sense the trace presence and unrecorded absence of the people who shaped this landscape. Places encoded with past meaning through now obsolete objects such as the (circa) fourteenth century Lead Ampulla and seventeenth century musket ball, both buried in Badger's Mead Field, though four centuries apart; places which once exerted enormous power either through intangible belief systems or political control; holloways tracked into the earth through continual use; hillsides shaped by generations of ploughing, and the reasons why the ploughing stopped.

The act of return builds a deep knowledge of these places. Of how they change over time, resist a particular method of recording, are tricky, entangled, multi-dimensional and messy. Initiating new ways of recording, alternative methods developed through material engagement, and continual reassessment of the research methods I am using.

The artist/researcher-as-inhabitant:

I gather objects: twigs, oak galls, small balls of clay, impressions taken with clay, paper or print from the landscape as I walk.

I gather other people's memories: the documentation of these other voices, histories and obscured knowledge has added to my understanding of placemaking and process. Sharing knowledge and walking with others has created a polyvocal memory archive in which other voices augment my research, drawing on fieldwork methodologies used within anthropology and cultural geography.

My writing often shifts towards a more experiential register in order to reflect the embodied and relational nature of this fieldwork practice. This interpretive, intuitive account of mine and others' embodied experience of the Litton landscape has had an impact on decisions made within studio practice. Collaborating with my community in creating work with this landscape (detailed in Chapter 5: *Landscape*) added depth and meaning to my own practice, encouraging a deeper relationship between the people who live here and the stories and stuff that makes this place. Raising awareness of the fragility of a rural landscape often taken for granted or assumed to be functioning as it should, beauty obscuring the truth of environmental degradation and collapse.

I gather places. Over the course of the last five years of research I have found that I am continually drawn back to particular places within this landscape, where the membrane between what is and what was feels slight, as if by paying enough attention I could summon the past into the present. [73] Some places are saturated with traces of the past, whilst others conceal their history, rendered invisible through physical processes or through forgetting.

[73] Lorimer, Archives and Fieldwork, 257.



Strip lynchets above Litton.

A list of gathered places:

The bridge in Long Dole Field

Long Dole Field

The burnt tree (gone)

The ancient oak on the Holloway to Chewton Plain

The Holloway to Chewton Plain

Pine trees planted for pit props in Chewton Wood

The deer park boundary

Hollowmarsh lane

The Holloway to the reservoir gate

Strip lynchets

Mass dial

The church rebus (Richard Harewell).

John Harewell's tomb

Gravestones and yew trees in St Mary's Churchyard

The ampullae and musket ball from Badger's Mead field

The fly tip on Litt Hill

Writing/Research:

Aesthetic investigations, write Matthew Fuller and Eyal Weizman, are:

> *Investigations of the world and enquiries into the means of knowing it.... They deal with the production of evidence while questioning and interrogating the notion of evidence, and with it the cultures of knowledge production or truth claims that relies upon.* [74]

Such investigations advocate the use, or development, of systems of material practice which challenge and interrogate existing narratives of place and history. There is growing interest in seeking other forms of information to understand a place, which legitimises the experience of those whose knowledge is transmitted or preserved in different ways including memory and oral tradition.

In her PhD thesis *The Forgotten Mothers of the `Cillíni*, Sheena Graham George focused on the unmarked grave sites, scattered across the Irish landscape, of women and babies who died, either unmarried, or unbaptised, during childbirth. These mothers and babies were omitted from the official archive, a non-inclusion, which if continued would 'result in the gradual editing out of these women and their lives from the history books'.[75] There is very little archival information about the Litton landscape, and what there is, such as the Field Names map, often privileges ownership and literacy. Interpreting what is found in landscape through archival inquiry alone risks repeating the erosion of presence experienced by the mothers of the *`Cillíni*.

[74] Fuller and Weizman, *Investigative Aesthetics*,15-16.

[75] Sheena Graham George, "The Forgotten Mothers of the `Cillíni," Reflections Vol. III (2018): 111. https://mural.maynoothuniversity.ie/13354/1/REF%2020.09.16%20S_Graham_George_Article.pdf

My early research was influenced by the academic training I experienced during my History degree, where research methods were centred on empirical observation and archival research. The knowledge and understanding I gained from this early form of historical research into the Litton Landscape and the history of my family runs like a unifying thread through later work. I have since found greater freedom to interact with landscape in less rigid ways, seeking also what is absent, or not known within landscape and the archive, and the reasons for this absence.[76]

This research methodology is centred on the rural Somerset village where I live, but these methods are not specific to this place, and could be developed in any landscape - urban or rural - by artists/researchers looking to comprehend place through the prism of their own stories/memories, through historical research and through material practice.

[76] Brigid Mary Costello, "Finding the Groove. The rhythms of practice-based research," *in The Routledge International Handbook of Practice-Based Research*, ed. Craig Vear (Routledge, 2021), 529.

The Field: Writing/Research/Practice

> *Haunted places are the only ones people can live in.*[77]

> *I use a personal, working definition of 'landscape' as the tool humans use to mediate the relationship between themselves, place and time ... And some of the biggest stories of today relate back to that idea of landscape.*[78]

Connecting trace evidence of past practice within landscape to the history/story of the people who created the often obsolete *taskscape* [79] in which I live is central to my methodology. Although this is an embodied practice, gathered through walking and material interaction with place, it is not my own presence I am most concerned with, but how my experience and presence can uncover, reexamine or reenchant other stories that this landscape already holds, often relating to the past history of my family.

I employ a methodological approach of careful looking and noticing, influenced by a mode of practice, referred to by Fuller and Weizman as *Investigative Aesthetics*:

> *Grounded in experience... openly partial, embedded, activist or militant, rather than a 'disinterested' or neutral view from nowhere.* [80]

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[77] Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (University of California Press, 1984),108.

[78] Weird Walk. A Journal of Wanderings and Wonderings from the British Isles. *An interview with Justin Hopper*, Number 1 (Colophon, 2019): 16.

[79] The idea of the *taskscape* is first explored by Tim Ingold in his 1993 essay "The Temporality of the Landscape."

[80] Fuller and Weizman, *Investigative Aesthetics*, 14

I endeavour to unearth in landscape, and in the archive, clarification for both the physical and psychological structure of the places we now inhabit. I engage with research and material practice that shares the sense of longing I hold - of hoping that mute material will somehow divest itself of its stories; and that through *practice*, care and attention will be brought to bear on the marginal or ignored in landscape.

Writing/Research:

The ideas at the centre of my research are formed around specific objects, places and ways of making a mark, often referencing the conceptual connotations embodied by the palimpsest, book form and page. Research conducted by Tim Ingold on the ground and the page, *taskscape* and dwelling perspective has had a profound impact.[81]

I consider research in the expanding field of psychogeography. Tim Edensor's theory of absent-presence, [82] seeks in landscape places where the past has not been disposed of, where traces remain of past presence; or where the absence of this presence is 'profoundly evident...crowded with remembered and imagined impressions of that which used to fill the absence.'[83] Matthew Green, Nick Hayes and Hayden Lorimer examine those instances when '*the deep structure of the landscape – is fused with the project of self-understanding*'.[84]

[81] Ingold, The Ground and the Page (2018), 146.

[82] Tim Edensor, "Mundane hauntings: commuting through the phantasmagoric working-class spaces of Manchester, England," *Cultural Geographies 15* (2008): 324.

[83] Edensor, Mundane hauntings: 325.

[84] Hayden Lorimer, "On Memoirs for the Earth. Jacquetta Hawke's literary experiments in deep time," *Cultural Geographies* 19 (1) (2012): 90.

The poet Kathleen Jamie interweaves embodied response to landscape with historical research and consideration of the *pluri-temporality* [85] of landscape. Her writing often dwells on the connection felt across time, manifested through material touch.

Rebecca Solnit examines themes of personal loss and belonging, alongside legacies of historical transience, as evidenced by the material remains of historical events within landscape, particularly in relation to industrialisation, enclosure and the Irish famine.

These writers influenced not only the conceptual framing of my research but also the tone and form of my writing. Their work demonstrates how embodied encounter, historical inquiry and personal reflection can be interwoven in ways that allow landscape to be understood as both lived experience and historical record. While these approaches provided an important point of departure, the voice and register of this thesis developed through the research process itself, as I sought ways to bridge historical investigation, emplaced experience and personal memory.

Practice:

Alongside the ongoing impact of the ceramic practice discussed in the chapter *Early Work* I considered the work of Neil Brownsword, Edmund de Waal, Lotte Scott, Niamh Fahy and Lydia Halcrow.

Neil Brownsword's practice focuses on the post-industrial landscape of Stoke on Trent, and the erosion of haptic skill and connection to place through time. In the

[85] Rebecca Wheeler, "Mining memories in a rural community: Landscape, temporality and place identity," *Journal of Rural Studies*, Vol 36 (2014). https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrurstud.2014.06.005

exhibition *'Alchemy and Metamorphoses'* [86] Brownsword sought the small, overlooked traces that remain of a skilled workforce which now barely exists. These artefacts of past practice initiate a discourse on a lost world of haptic skill and labour; what/who is recorded and what/who is left out. Describing his response to the kiln props and saggars included in the exhibition, Brownsword said:

> *They're so expressive you can trace that contact of the person who made these things through the fingerprints within the clay there. And again the saggars, I've always loved these by-products of industry really because they tell a very human story. It was really important to try and connect that history of labour with the objects.* [87]



Handmade Kiln props. Alchemy and Metamorphosis. Transitions 2. [88]

[86] Neil Brownsword. Alchemy and Metamorphosis. (Topographies of the Obsolete Publications, 2021) https://www.britishceramicsbiennial.com/app/uploads/2021/08/Alchemy-Metamorphis-.pdf

[87] Neil Brownsword, "*Alchemy and Metamorphoses,*" Exhibition Introduction film, The Potteries Museum and Art Galleries, (2021) https://www.stokemuseums.org.uk/pmag/alchemy-and-metamorphosis-neil-brownsword/

[88] *Kiln props*, Alchemy and Metamorphosis. Transitions 2, exhibition programme, https://www.stokemuseums.org.uk/pmag/alchemy-and-metamorphosis-neil-brownsword/. Image reproduced courtesy of The Potteries Museum and Art Gallery, Stoke on Trent.



18th century Saggar containing damaged blackware. [89]

Belonging, loss, transience and emplaced memory are at the centre of recent work by Edmund de Waal. His exhibition, *Lettres à Camondo* [90] at the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Paris, traces the tragic story of the Camondo family through the material and archival traces they left behind. Examining how 'objects and collections, like words on a page, can articulate the most intimate and complex thoughts and feelings.'[91]

[89] *Saggar containing blackware or 'shining black' teapots which suffered damage or collapse during the glost firing, excavated at the Albion Hotel site, Hanley; c. 1760*, Alchemy and Metamorphosis exhibition catalogue (Topographies of the obsolete publications 2021), 59. Image reproduced courtesy of The Potteries Museum and Art Gallery, Stoke on Trent. https://www.britishceramicsbiennial.com/app/uploads/2021/08/Alchemy-Metamorphis-.pdf

[90] https://madparis.fr/Edmund-de-Waal-Lettres-a-Camondo-2037

[91] Florence Hallett, "Edmund De Waal. A Man of Letters," review of *Letters to Camondo*, by Edmund de Waal, *The New World*, December 2, 2021, https://www.theneweuropean.co.uk/edmund-de-waal-new-exhibition/

> *I have written and rewritten one of my letters... through layers of porcelain into gold, a kind of palimpsest. And then in the house, there are several installations of objects – broken shards, vessels, words written into paper – thin slithers of porcelain.*[92]

These small ceramic interventions placed within the collection are De Waal's own response to the grief and loss at the heart of the story, and draw attention so that others can engage with these past events.



Edmund de Waal, *Lettres à Camondo, I.* [93]

[92] Edmund de Waal, Lettres à Camondo, exhibition presentation. Musee des Arts Decoratifs. (2021-2022), https://madparis.fr/Edmund-de-Waal-Lettres-a-Camondo-2037

[93] Edmund de Waal, *Lettres à Camondo, I*, 2021, porcelain, gold, oak, liquid china clay, steel and lead, Musée Nissim de Camondo, https://madparis.fr/Edmund-de-Waal-Lettres-a-Camondo-2037#&gid=1&pid=4 Image used courtesy of the photographer Alzbeta Jaresova.



Edmund de Waal, *Lettres à Camondo (hold still),* installation view. [94]

My apprehensive awareness of the precariousness of this ancient rural landscape is a central tenet of this research, inculcated by my perception that the fragile accumulations of experience and time, on which my practice often focuses, would be the work of an afternoon to scrape away forever. I see such destruction and irrevocable return to anonymity everywhere. The work of a growing numbers of artists has been put in the service of protecting landscape

[94] Edmund de Waal, *Lettres à Camondo (hold still), installation view*, 2021, porcelain and wood, Musée Nissim de Camondo, https://madparis.fr/Edmund-de-Waal-Lettres-a-Camondo-2037#&gid=1&pid=4 Image used courtesy of MAD Paris, Christophe Dellière and Edmund de Waal.

through creating work which makes visible overlooked degradation and misuse, driven by both a '*moral imperative and an intellectual excitement*':

> *If environmental problems are really cultural problems - about the nature of our desires and perceptions - then a crucial territory to explore or transform is the territory of the mind.*[95]

The state of climate and ecological emergency recently declared by many arts organisations recognised that artistic practice has the potential to both respond and draw attention to environmental damage:

> *'Interpretation and communication of the complex social and cultural issues that arise due to the impacts of climate change can best be delivered and understood via art (rather than science – which is often ignored, and at worst flat-out denied).'* [96]

The artist and researcher Niamh Fahy investigates 'the possibilities and capacity for the print artist to challenge and expand modes of understanding anthropogenic changes within landscape.'[97] Fahy worked in collaboration with environmental scientist Dr Gillian Clayton in the Somerset Levels, developing 'print processes which respond to the specificity of water bodies.'[98] The project title - *Slow Violence* [99] -

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[95] Rebecca Solnit. *As Eve Said to the Serpent. On Landscape, Gender and Art* (The University of Georgia Press, 2003), 2.

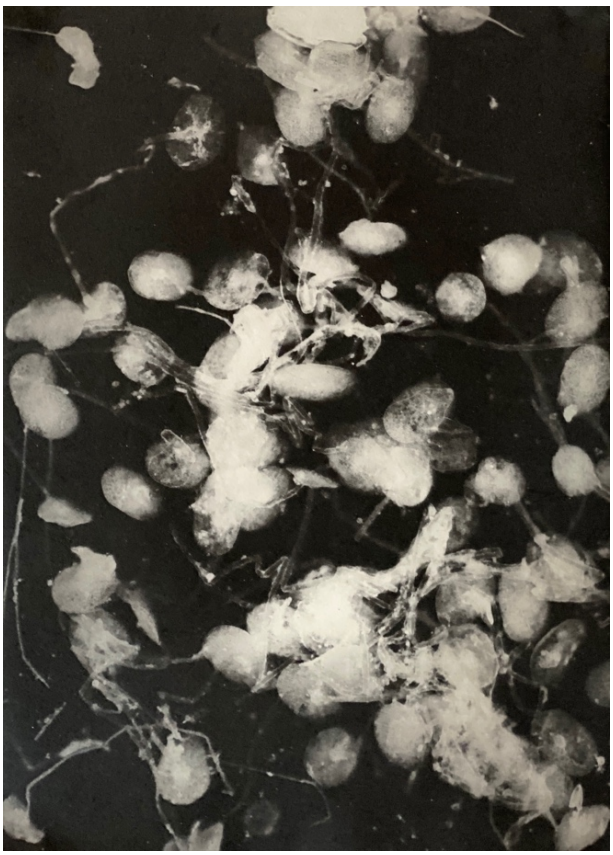
[96] Somerset Art Works, *Somerset Art Weeks Festival. Landscape Flux and Flow* (2024), 2. http://heyzine.com/flip-book/2bdc3d6fa3.html#page/4

[97] "CFPR, Centre for Print Research," Niamh Fahy. Slow Violence and River Abuse: The Hidden Effect of Land Use on Water Quality, 2020-21, https://cfpr.uwe.ac.uk/project/slow-violence-and-river-abuse-the-hidden-effect-of-land-use-on-water-quality/

[98] Anna Jones, "Niamh Fahy. Slow Violence and River Abuse: The Hidden Effect of Land use on water quality", Exhibition flyer, Centre for Print Research. UWE Bower Ashton, Bristol. Jan 31- Feb 3, 2023. https://blogs.uwe.ac.uk/research-external-engagement/slow-violence-and-river-abuse-the-hidden-effect-of-land-use-on-water-quality-exhibition/

[99] Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (Harvard University Press, 2011), 2.

refers to the incremental damage inflicted on the levels by runoff from surrounding farms and industry. This collaboration between art and science was a means of making visible to the public a set of irrefutable data which risked becoming lost in impenetrable scientific detail.



Niamh Fahy, *Violent Impressions.* [100]

Artist Lydia Halcrow's recent doctoral project asked, '*how slow and collaborative artistic mapping processes (can) generate careful records through touch and a close engagement with the vibrant matter of 'place.'*[101] There are parallels between our practice in our use of printmaking techniques to understand and interact with landscape, and mutual despair over the degradation of the environment. As part of

[100] Niamh Fahy, *Slow Violence*, 2020-21, photoetching, my photograph. Reproduced courtesy of the artist.

[101] Lydia Halcrow, "A thousand intertwinings: an exploration of embodied artistic processes made in collaboration with an estuarine landscape and its vibrant matter," (PhD thesis, Bath Spa University, 2022), 5. https://researchspace.bathspa.ac.uk/14657/

her practice Halcrow attached aluminium plates to her shoes and hands to gather direct interaction with the Taw estuary in North Devon, blurring the boundary between her body *'and the textures of the matter under hand and under foot.'* [102]



Lydia Halcrow, *Beneath my Feet.* [103]

Artist Lotte Scott's installation *Ash Viewing* placed a single diseased Ash tree in a barn at Deer Leap in the Mendip Hills. The isolation of the site necessitated a long walk to see the tree, creating a sense of pilgrimage. Incrementally covered in white limewash through the duration of its installation, the isolated singularity of the tree stood as a powerful symbolic representation of the many millions of trees lost to Ash dieback. Being able to interact with this one tree, to touch it and see it fallen, made the enormity of the damage that has been unleashed on the landscape tangible.

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[102] Halcrow, A thousand intertwinings, 40.

[103] Lydia Halcrow, *Beneath my Feet*, 2020-2022, earth ink dry point etching on Hahnemuhle paper. https://www.lydiahalcrow.com Image reproduced courtesy of the artist.



Lotte Scott. *Ash Viewing*. [104]

[104] Lotte Scott, *Ash Viewing*, 2024, diseased Ash tree and limewash, Deer Leap, Priddy, Somerset. My photograph, used with permission from the artist.

Make:

> *Of history made somehow discernible through mysterious marks, traces and the textures of clay.*[105]

I first held clay when I was seven years old; I remember the thrill of affinity with the cold weight of the material I held in my cupped palms. This haptic understanding connected me, had I known, to my grandfather, who worked as a mould maker in the Hartlepool docks, as had his father before him. The conceptual connection between my own history, material knowledge, and the traces of past experience and haptic skill held within this place are the cornerstones of my research.

I employ a reactive, emotional engagement with landscape, allowing process to lead - an open-ended methodology which allows me to experience with and through material process. I have learnt to disrupt existing practice and create new forms of interaction between print and clay, focusing on the potential of printmaking to gather trace within landscape.

I explore aspects of repetition, time, reproduction, erasure, erosion and the potential of this new knowledge within the wider ceramic field. Some methods have gained greater significance as I seek answers to new questions raised through the practice of this methodology. Whilst others, after thorough investigation of their potential, were abandoned.

I work within a structured format across different processes and materials in order to better interrogate my actions. I am drawn to book and archival forms and often work in sequences and grids, creating a series of correlating dimensions for use across

[105] Richard Moss, "More Than Words: Mining the depths of the interior clay void," Interview with Sara Radstone, York Art Gallery, *Museum Crush* January 11, 2018. https://museumcrush.org/more-than-words-mining-the-depths-of-the-interior-clay-void-with-ceramicist-sara-radstone/

ceramic, print and paper. This both alleviates the potentially overwhelming nature of a project such as this and allows for relationships to be discerned between contrasting materials and processes as demonstrated in the *Aperture* series.



Sketchbook pages.

I record my progress through photography, video and sketchbook work; through drawing, notetaking, diagrams and in charts recording the effect of different processes at different times and seasons. I have recently added another form of recording to my methodology – the creation of a book for each year of this project, in which I gather all information from the different strands of my research into a chronological document.

Working chronologically across different processes has allowed relationships and synchronicities to become apparent between disparate threads of research, which had previously been unacknowledged. There is also an element to this process which satisfies the historian in me; I struggle to place research in anything other than a strict chronology. Knowing that these documents exist as a record of when and where I

recorded/wrote/made work gives me the freedom to play with different strands of work in a non-chronological order, which often makes more sense as a developmental process across different material trials.

As I explore each of the processes listed below throughout the course of this Thesis I will not describe each practice in detail here. It is in the exploration and intermingling of each of these material processes with the research methodology described above that new knowledge has been generated. Not only of technical material process, but of how material, historical and archival process can be used to reveal and understand place.

Print and Photographic Processes:

- Photography
- Photogravure
- Soft ground etching
- Lithography and alginate print
- Photographic decal
- Cyanotype

Ceramic Processes:

- Ceramic hand building processes:
  slab, coil, molochite cocoon, saggar, cast, monoprint.
- Ceramic surface processes:
  monoprint, sgraffito, glaze, smoke firing, drawing into clay, photographic decal, resist and direct print.
- Gathering local clay and other materials directly from the landscape.

Ceramic and print materials:

I use a very limited number of materials:

- Porcelain flax paper clay, black gritted and smooth sculpting clay, stoneware and porcelain paper clay casting slip and locally dug clay.
- Molochite and porcelain powder.
- White raku crackle glaze and transparent earthenware glaze.
- Terra sigilatta slip, black and white decorating slip, local clay slip.
- Black body stain, black copper oxide, manganese dioxide, black iron oxide (very occasional use of copper carbonate).
- Alginate, plaster and paper pulp.
- Paper, printing ink, copperplate oil, cyanotype, beeswax, oak gall ink, thread.

Conclusion:

> *I prefer to build a film in the way birds build a nest.*[106]

The art of urban nest building, write Fuller and Weizman, involves weaving together 'twisted twigs with found scraps, bits of string, cigarette butts or torn nylon along with some moss, grass and spider's webs.'[107] Each of these disparate, and separately insignificant objects together form a narrative of what has happened there in place – becoming a collective, a commons:

> *A counter narrative that gathers all these different kinds of trace and is attuned to their erasure. Reworking what are sometimes weak signals – forming a composite from all of these recordings – (to) show what happened and what political conditions gave rise to it.'*[108]

This analogy of nest building or *collective commons* comes closest to what I hope to achieve within this research methodology. A form of care duty, directed towards this landscape and the memories it holds, before they disappear; initiating a material practice which avoids the placing of societal value on what I am gathering and recording, and deciphers the codes which place higher value on some memories above others.

[106] Harun Farocki interview quoted in Fuller and Weizman, Investigative Aesthetics, 4.
[107] Fuller and Weizman, 4.
[108] Fuller and Weizman, 2.

Material Practice Overview:

Each Chapter details a distinct phase of my research methodology.

Chapter 1 *Print* focuses on my exploration of the alignment of print process with processes of landscape formation.

Chapter 2 *Hollowmarsh* details my interaction with place and memory though technical exploration of soft ground etching, direct clay printmaking and photography.

Chapter 3 *(An)archive* focuses on the concept of social haunting, detailing my search for a print/photographic process with which I could express the transience of memory in place.

Chapter 4 *Book* examines concepts of Absence and Presence, exploring the accumulative and communal traces of past inhabitation which remain in this landscape. At the end of the chapter I detail a site specific installation at Wells Cathedral.

Chapter 5 *Landscape* puts into practice many of the methods developed through the course of this research working with my local community and school. Bringing a greater awareness of the fragility of this landscape to a wider audience.

Key Questions:

- Can studio and workshop practices operate as analogous to processes of landscape creation and temporality?

- What are the possibilities of print process as a carrier of concept and as a method within ceramics? How do such practices relate to temporality within the landscape?

- Can ceramic and print processes illuminate and broaden our understanding of the formation of landscape? Is the process involved in making important?

- How does the documentation of other voices, histories and obscured knowledge add to my understanding of placemaking and process?

- What bearing will an interpretive, intuitive account of my embodied experience of the Litton landscape have on decisions made within studio practice.

- Can I, through artistic practice, influence a wider perception and understanding of the distinctive precariousness and significance of this landscape?

Chapter 1: Print



Overview:

In this first chapter I focus on understanding processes of landscape formation through their alignment with methods of print process. Working in the etching studio at Locksbrook and in the Litton Landscape I investigate the potential of Photogravure, Soft Ground Etching, Lithography and Alginate print.

I examine repetition, time, erasure, growth and decay and the cyclical rhythm of the seasons, light and shadow. I detail the experimental process through which I establish working, repeatable parameters for these new methods. I explore the decision making behind the use of each method, why some were extended into later practice, and others discarded.

The chapter moves between analytical description and more experiential observations of landscape, reflecting how knowledge emerges through both technical experimentation and embodied engagement with place.

Introduction:

> *A writing that is not about the earth. That does not seek to describe, copy or represent the earth by means of words, but rather that writes on, with or through the earth driven by forces analogous to those that move its living inhabitants.*[109]

Our increasing disconnection and unfamiliarity with landscape, experienced as the world becomes faster, increasingly screen based, separated from rhythms of light and dark, growth and decay, material and making, has othered the landscape, allowing it to become a commodity to be used and damaged. Where once there was faith in the animacy of material and mark making, and the efficacy of making offerings to the land in order to obtain its cooperation, we now perceive the stuff of landscape as inanimate, '*dead or thoroughly instrumentalized.*'[110] We have become disembodied, forgetting that we are shaped by our bodily experience of being in the world.[111]

My research is attuned to the cumulative gathering of small traces of past human interaction with place, and the increasing loss or absence of such trace. Technical knowledge and skill, and a growing knowledge of this landscape, has enabled a form of collaboration between this place and the material I am working with and through.

In *The brooch*, Kathleen Jamie describes the sense of connection that can be experienced through material interaction. The poem describes the moment Jamie finds an agate brooch during an archaeological dig:

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[109] Ingold, The Ground and the Page, 138.

[110] Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter. A Political Ecology of Things* (Duke University Press., 2010), Preface ix.

[111] Robert Macfarlane, *Landmarks* (Penguin Random House, 2016), 74-75.

All I have is small enough

to be held in one hand -

an agate brooch. It's pierced

like an implement or tool

for a purpose we've outgrown. [112]

Nothing more remains, she writes, of the woman who once wore the brooch. We are left to wonder who she was, why the brooch was lost, connected by this small trace remaining of a past life, through time by touch.

[112] Kathleen Jamie, *The Treehouse* (Picador, 2018).





13th or 14th c. lead ampullae found in Badger's Mead Field, Litton.

With daisy wheel apotropaic symbol on one side.

Early on in the research process I met a detectorist working in the fields across the river from my house; although we talked for an hour I never learnt his name. He showed me a small lead ampulla he had found in Badger's Mead field, placing it reverently onto my palm. The Portable Antiquities Scheme [113] records over 1,600 such ampullae found buried in British fields, possibly to call blessings on the harvest. [114] The ampulla is a strange object to modern eyes, but the meaning encapsulated within its materials and marks would once have been familiar. Cast in moulds made from dried or fired clay, wood, horn or stone,[115] (a technique which would have been familiar to my grandfather, six centuries later), these votive objects contained water, collected at shrines or sacred wells, creating a 'tangible link to the holy place.' [116]

As I was leaving, the detectorist reached into the pocket of his coat and brought out a lead musket ball that he had found in the same field as the ampullae. "You can have that" he said. I walked home with the surprising heaviness of the musket ball held in my hand; wondering how it fell and whose it was; whether it was dropped or had once passed through flesh and bone.

[113] The Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS) is managed by the British Museum and records archaeological finds discovered by the public. https://www.britishmuseum.org/our-work/national/treasure-and-portable-antiquities-scheme.

[114] William Anderson, "Blessing the Fields? A Study of Late-medieval Ampullae from England and Wales," *Medieval Archaeology*, 54. (2010): 197.

[115] Katja Boertjes, "Pilgrim Ampullae from Vendôme: Souvenirs from a Pilgrimage to the Holy Tear of Christ," in *Art and Architecture of Late Medieval Pilgrimage in Northern Europe and the British Isles*, eds. Sarah Blick and Rita Tekippe (Brill, 2004), 450.

[116] Boertjes, Pilgrim ampullae, 451.



c. 17th century lead musket, found in Badger's Mead.

These objects, both lead, both cast by hand from materials mined from this landscape (there have been lead mines in Priddy since pre Roman times), both lost or buried in the same field, though centuries apart, told very different stories about place. But both created a connection to the past lives of this landscape. To the material of landscape, water, wood, earth, metal and stone; to the people that once occupied this place; to ideas about the potency of material, of objects, of marks. Remnants of a handmade world that we have lost. A connection through time created by material touch.

Aesthetic notice and attunement to place, write Eyal and Weizman, engendered through attention to process and material, rather than an act of beautification, can become a means of '*sensing and sense making*'.[117]

[117] Fuller and Weizman, *Investigative Aesthetics*, 12.

Print Process Trials:

Well do I know thee by thy trusty yew,

Cheerless, unsocial plant! that loves to dwell

'Midst skulls and coffins, epitaphs and worms.[118]

Generations pass while some trees stand, and old families last not three oaks. Nor one yew. [119]



Yew trees in St Mary's Churchyard.

In this early series of print making I chose materials that embodied the past history and folklore of place. By choosing materials which once held great significance I entangled myself with an older way of perceiving the landscape, encapsulated by the lead ampulla, in which material had animacy. The substance of a place, and the deliberate placing of those substances and structures - trees, earth, buildings,

[118] "Eighteenth Century Poetry Archive," Robert Blair. The Grave. A Poem. 1743, accessed August 10, 2025, https://www.eighteenthcenturypoetry.org/works/prb43-w0010.shtml

[119] Hadley, *Hollow Places,* 15.

burials, reveals the story of that place, traces of past practice and belief sitting, often unheeded, within the landscapes we inhabit. The evergreen leaves of the Yew, for example, represented the resurrection; Yew trees were used for hangings, their wood for longbows, barrel staves, chair backs and posts. Early Christian churches were built on the site of existing sacred Yew groves - in many cases the trees are significantly older than the church itself.

> *Yews are not accidental trees, they mark things, they remember things: wells or springs, boundaries, lost settlements, meeting places, pagan religious sites.*[120]

Every aspect of the landscapes we are familiar with signifies a relationship, developed through time, between material and human presence. The materials chosen for this next body of work are those whose story, like the Yew tree and the Oak, seem particularly entangled with the forgotten stories of this landscape.

[120] Hadley, Hollow Places, 60.

1: Soft Ground Etching

I placed Yew twigs, grass and cow parsley directly on the soft ground plate. The surface adheres to, or will take an impression of, anything that touches it. The leaves and grass, once removed, leave an absence on the soft ground, allowing acid to bite into these trace marks, delineating the most ephemeral contact. I saw the potential for this process to be used later directly in the landscape.



Soft ground etching plate with plant material.



Soft ground etching, yew twigs, cow parsley and grass.

2. Photogravure

This is a method closely aligned with Fox Talbot's early photographic experiments. I placed Yew twigs on to a light sensitive plate and exposed the plate under Ultra Violet light. Shadows cast onto the plate become grooved into the surface, creating an ephemeral impression amongst the denser black marks created through direct contact.



Photogravure plate with Yew twigs and grass and the imprinted plate.



Photogravure print on Fabriano paper, 30cm x 15cm.

3: Lithography

Before each print the surface of the litho stone is ground smooth with a heavy circular metal grinder. If not sufficiently ground the stone holds a trace memory of previous interaction which remains as a ghost impression within a new print.

I rolled oil based lithographic ink onto Yew and Birch twigs, which I placed on the litho stone surface. The inked material left an impression on the stone before being removed. The litho stone is then coated with water. This repels the printing ink as it is rolled across the stone, but allows the ink to adhere to the oil based impression. Inked stone and paper are then pushed through the press.



Litho stone with yew and birch impression.



Litho print of yew and birch leaves.

The necessity of choosing robust plant material that would withstand being rolled with lithographic ink created a disconnection between this method and those that could potentially operate as analogous to processes of landscape creation and temporality. There was too much control and placement of material. There also seemed minimal capacity to use Lithography directly in the field. Considering this and other limitations, I decided not to pursue this process further.

4. Alginate

I used alginate[121] to take a mould of a dandelion, hoping to use this to create a ceramic cast using porcelain powder. This was unsuccessful - an alginate mould remains wet and malleable, which resulted in the porcelain adhering to the surface of the mould, rather than separating from the dry porous surface as with a plaster mould. When I next returned to the studio the abandoned alginate mould had dried to a brittle paper texture. I realised that were I able to print from a dry alginate mould I would have the potential to take casts directly from three dimensional structures in the landscape which could then be printed. This would overcome the limitations imposed by the rigidity of the metal etching plates.

The prints taken from the alginate plate were deeply impressed, almost like relief prints, offering the capacity to take three dimensional prints from the landscape. There were limitations to the process however, unlike other intaglio print methods the alginate surface is porous, ink once soaked into the surface cannot be removed. The plate also deteriorated after each print – with the capacity for only four or five impressions to be taken. I conducted some research into methods of overcoming the porous nature of the dry alginate, but the amount of time needed to properly investigate this process meant there were other methods with more immediate potential within my PhD research. I hope that this process will be of interest to other researchers in the field.

[121] Alginate is a natural polymer, derived from seaweeds, which when mixed with water to form a paste is used to take detailed casts.



Dandelion in alginate, removed from mould, first emboss into paper and inked.



Alginate print from the Hollowmarsh Burnt tree.

Plant shadow photogravure plates:

Having begun this chapter with the intention of examining four print processes, I now focused on the two that I felt had the most scope within this research: Photogravure and Soft ground etching.

This next sequence of print experimentation advanced my knowledge of the photogravure process. I created a series of plates through direct contact with plant material, using different plate sizes and plant material (although all gathered from walking in this landscape) to expand the parameters of this process, and understand what would reliably work in the future.

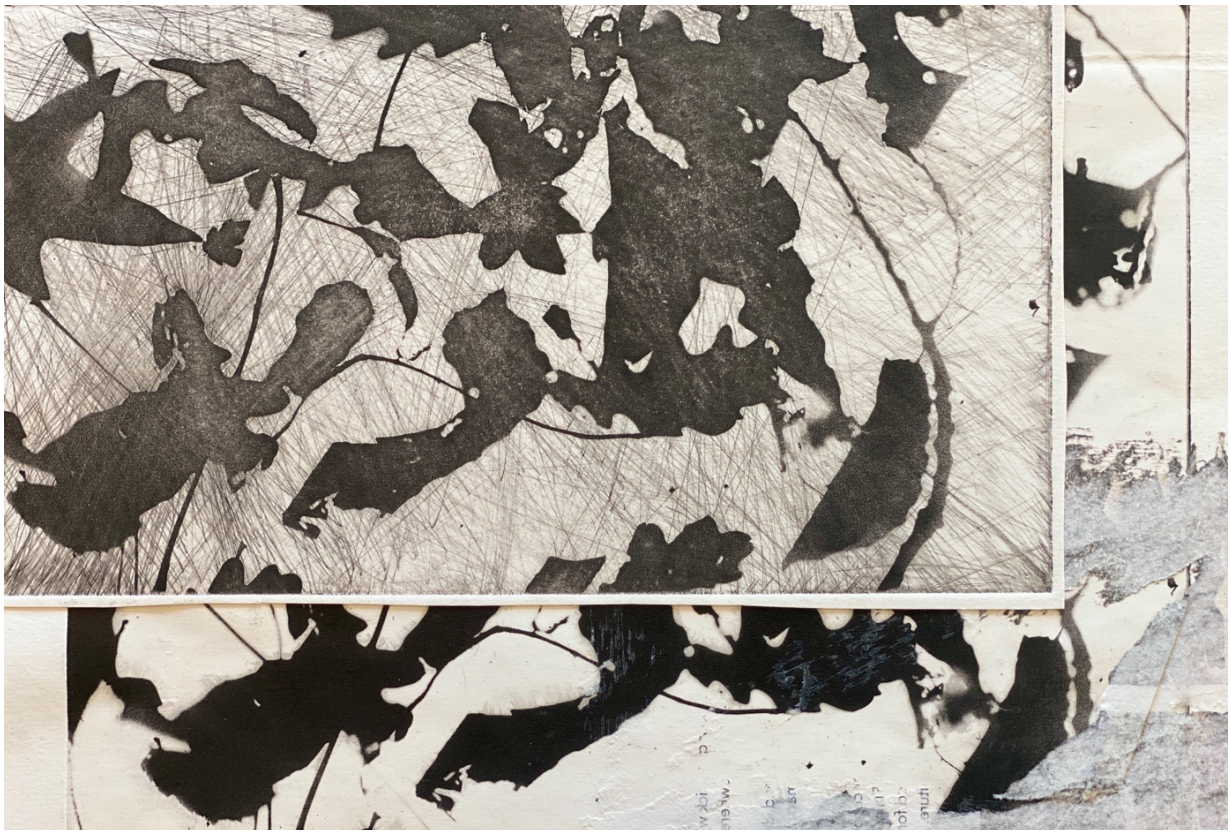


Ivy and Oak leaves on the plate in the light box.

To reproduce the accumulation of plant material that seasonally occurs on the surface of the earth I scattered oak leaves, ivy and twigs gathered from the ground, directly onto the plate. I learnt that a lack of variation in texture or opacity in the leaves creates dense black marks where light is blocked by the strong silhouettes of the leaves.



The etched plate.



Ivy and Oak print after scratching into the plate.

Keeping this knowledge in mind, I created further plates using ephemeral seed heads and leaves which allowed light to penetrate through and around the objects, creating a variety of depths of shadow. With each plate I incrementally raised the lid of the UV light box[122] using wooden blocks. Where more light was able to enter the box during exposure the plant material sat more naturally rather than being compressed onto the etching plate. Shadows were allowed to emerge under and around the stems and seed heads.

I printed these plates onto both paper and porcelain paper clay using the large etching press.



Light sensitive plate with plant material in the UV light box, with the cover propped open with three blocks.

[122] Photogravure plates are exposed in a light box which is programmed to project UV light at exact levels and increments of time which can be adjusted to affect the resulting plate. The plate and acetate image are usually compressed beneath a transparent cover. Adjusting the height of this cover allowed the plant material to sit more naturally on the plate.

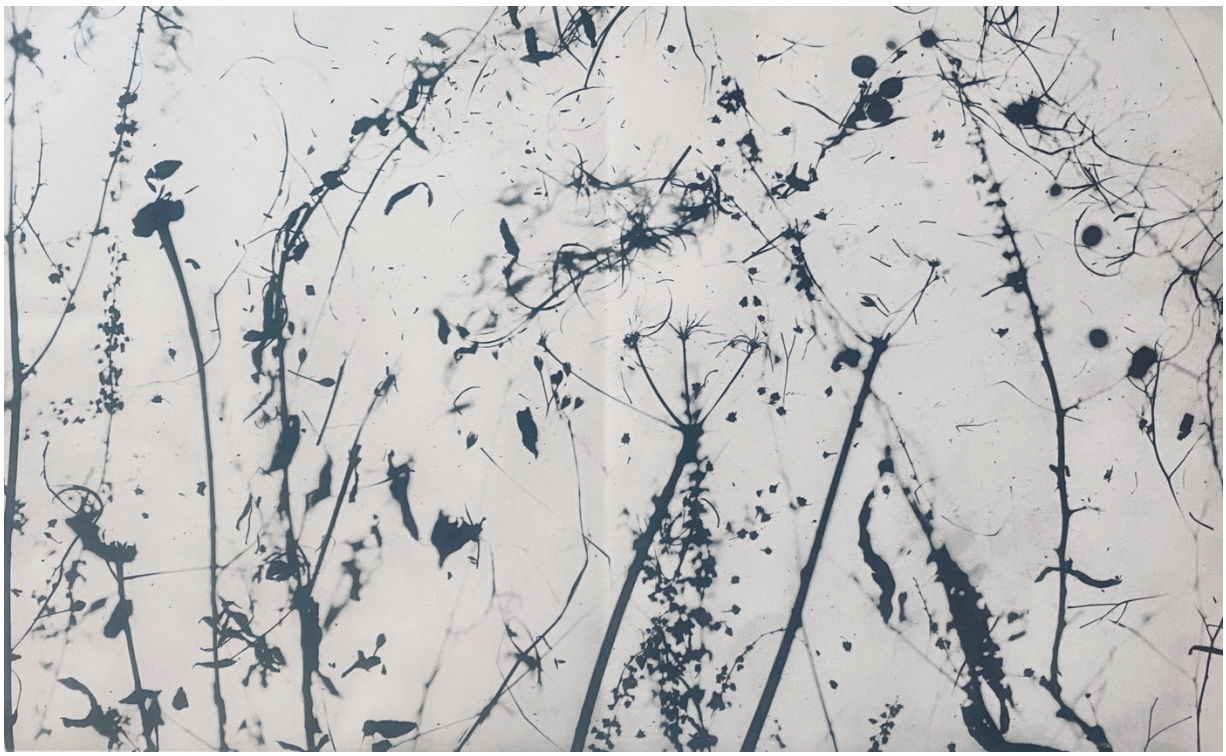






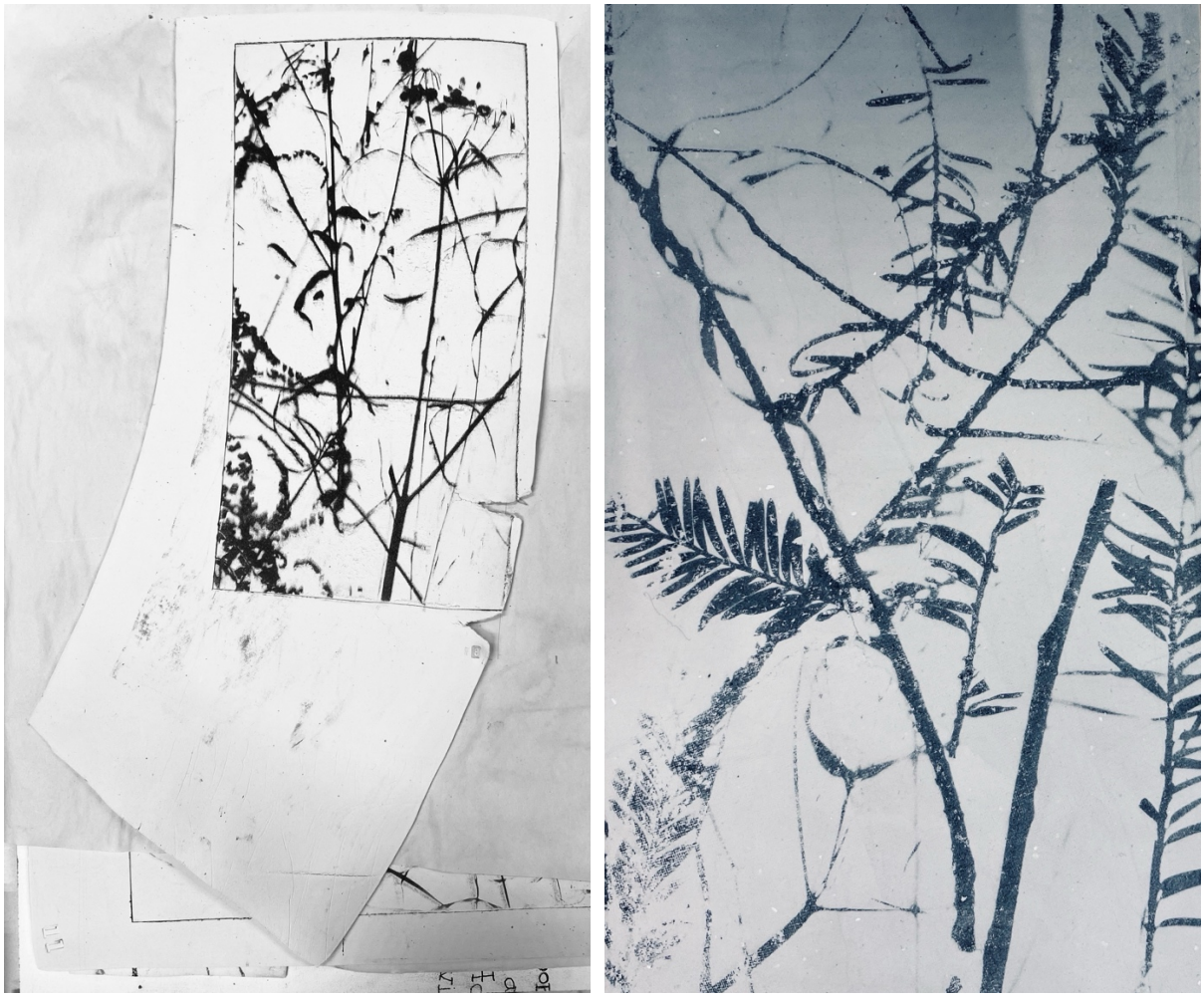
Photogravure plates using hedgerow plants.

The lightbox lid lifted incrementally higher from left to right. Each 50cm x 20 cm.



Large photogravure plate from gathered seed heads. 35cm x 55cm.





Skewed large porcelain print and successful smaller Yew print.

Printing a large photogravure plate onto porcelain was very difficult, a tiny difference in either the pressure exerted across the etching roller, or in the depth of the clay caused the print to veer to one side, distorting the image. As I had successfully printed on clay using smaller plates I learnt that there were parameters to how large a clay etching print could be.

The Yew tree plate and other etching plates created at Spike Island measured 24cm x 14cm, and 18cm x 12cm. The ease with which I produced replicable results using the smaller plates gave me confidence that I had isolated the technical parameters needed to consistently use photogravure plates on paper and clay.

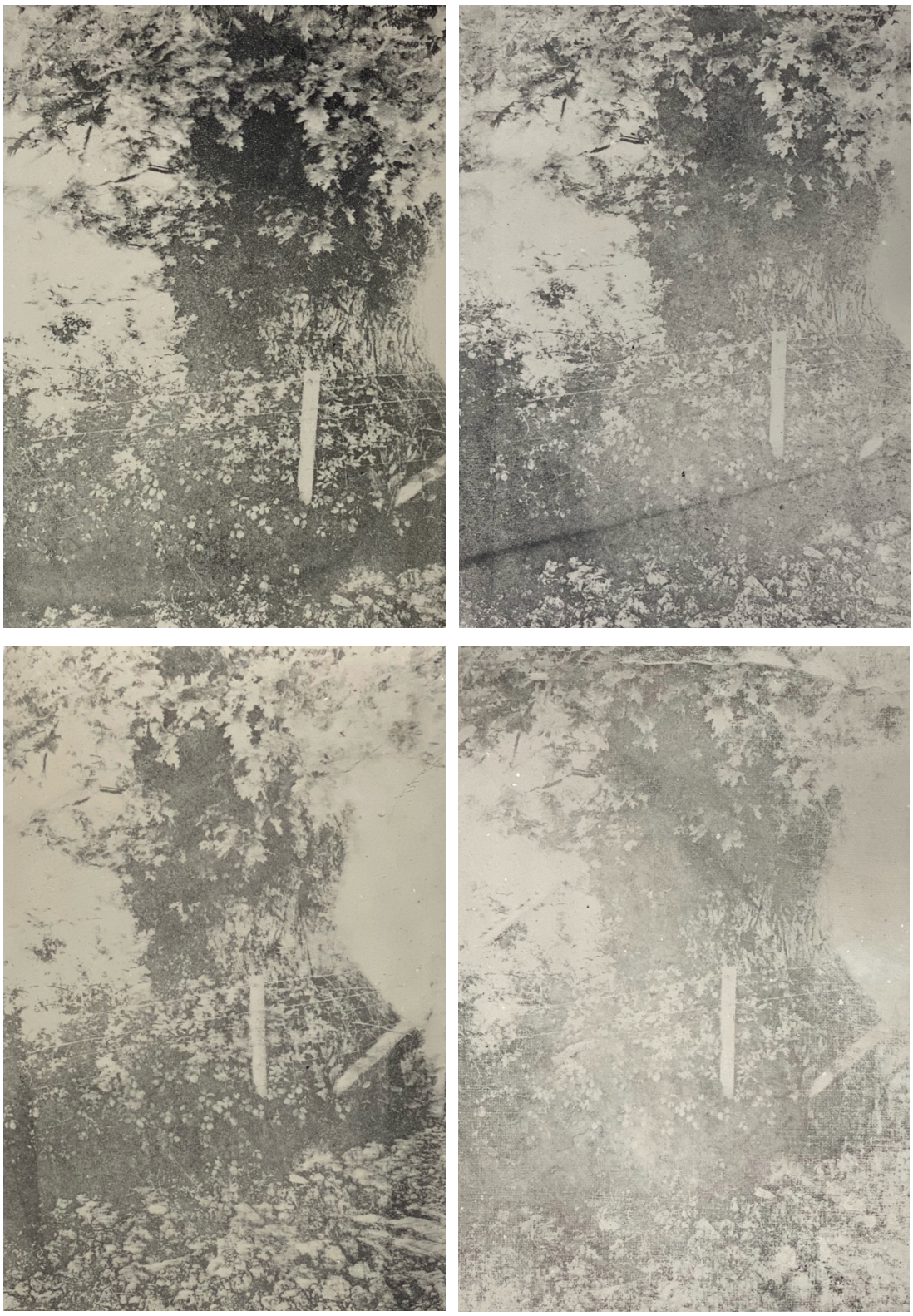


Litt hill Fly tip photogravure.



Oak tree photogravure on Chine Collé. [123]

[123] Chine Collé is a print process in which a fine layer of delicate paper or linen is bonded to a thicker supporting paper before the print is taken, creating layers within the print.



Black Iron oxide print on porcelain flax paper clay, a run of six impressions was taken without reinking. All approximately 15cm x 9 cm.



Run of thirteen porcelain flax paper clay slabs printed with black iron oxide ink.
All the prints were successful, with no blurring or cracking.

I fired all the porcelain paper clay prints to 1000°c. I glazed some of the prints using clear crackle earthenware glaze and white Raku glaze, sprinkling porcelain and molochite cocooned plant shards onto some of the glazed slabs and firing to 1050°c. The manganese ink fired to an ephemeral pinky black, made more intense under the surface of the clear crackle glaze, and obscured by the white glaze.



Manganese oxide ink photogravure on porcelain paper clay, with white Raku glaze and porcelain and molochite shards. Fired to 1050°c.

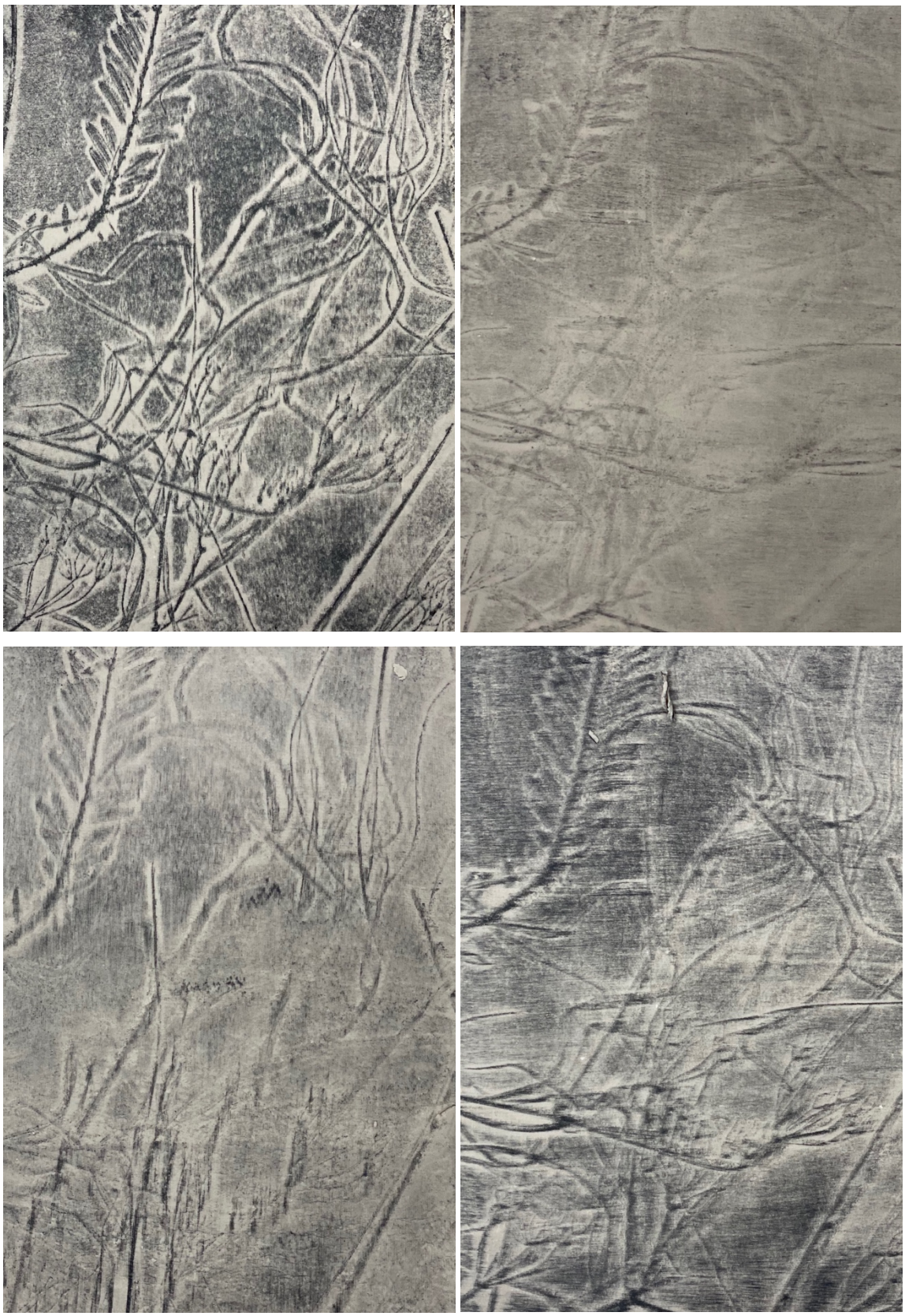
Soft Ground Etching on Porcelain Paper Clay:

I anticipated that the differences between the soft ground plate and a photogravure plate would affect how well I could transfer the soft ground etching method from paper to clay. Soft ground plates are cut from a thick sheet of inflexible metal, meaning they cannot bend and flex in the press, as a photogravure plate, cut from a much thinner metal plate is able to do. Surface marks are also more deeply scored, risking damp clay becoming stuck in the grooved surface.

I began printing using the parameters established in early photogravure trials: thin rolled slabs of porcelain paper clay left to dry overnight and black iron oxide and copperplate oil ceramic printing ink.

I used the smaller wheeled etching press, placing cardboard runners around the plate hoping this would stop it slipping under the pressure of the press.

I immediately encountered problems, the resulting prints were all blurred, squashed or juddered. Over the course of fifteen print cycles I adjusted the cardboard side runners; the placement of the plate in the press; the thoroughness of polishing after inking; the pressure of the press and the consistency of the porcelain slab. Despite these adjustments to the method, prints continued to fail.



Some of the unsuccessful soft ground etching prints on porcelain paper clay.

The blurring seemed to be caused when the clay slab shifted over the print plate as they were put through the rollers of the etching press. Jane Randfield (the technical print demonstrator at Locksbrook) and I decided to trial using the Albion relief press. These are conventionally used for relief printing with wood cut, Lino, or letter press. While an etching press rolls paper (or clay) placed on to the plate through two rollers, under very high pressure, the Albion press instead sandwiches the plate and the paper (or clay) between a flat base plate onto which a second metal plate is drawn down. This exerts a uniform pressure from above and means that the print does not move as it is printed.

I was immediately able to produce successful prints with no blurring, juddering or cracking. The rigidity and depth of the soft ground etching plate made the use of a traditional etching press incompatible with this ceramic process, whilst the Albion press worked consistently well.



Successful soft ground etching on clay.

As an inexperienced printmaker I had quickly learnt many new processes, in particular the technical precision with which a print plate is made and then printed. I had made many mistakes - smudging, over inking, misaligning, and on one occasion exposing a plate back to front. But as I grew in confidence I wanted to experiment more – aligning these printmaking processes more closely with the intuitive way I worked in ceramics. I wanted to push the printed plate onto the concrete of the floor, take sandpaper and earth to the plates, destroy them slightly, leave them out in the rain, or develop them away from the studio environment altogether.

In parallel with this experimental print process, I began to investigate the potential of clay to record an interaction between material, weather and time. I left eleven black clay slabs, dipped in terra sigilatta slip, outside for a week in December. The clay surface had become gradually indented by frost and rain. Laid in sequence the subtlety and fragility could be read as a landscape, disclosing what had happened within that time frame.



Weather/time. Terracotta clay and terra sigilatta slip.

A key consideration within my research practice was finding methods which enabled a reciprocity through practice between myself and the landscape. Unlike the ceramic weather series, the etching plates and prints detailed above were all created within the confines of the studio. They lacked any real relationship to the material or temporality of the landscape, a contrived *reaction*, or illustration of landscape formation, embodying a false temporality, removed from the reality of light and shadow.

The sense of proficiency I had achieved felt like a shutting down of possibility and intuitive risk taking. The series of shadow etching plates (page 129) exemplify the disconnection I was beginning to sense between aspects of the methodology I was developing and the landscape that I wanted to understand through ceramic and print process.

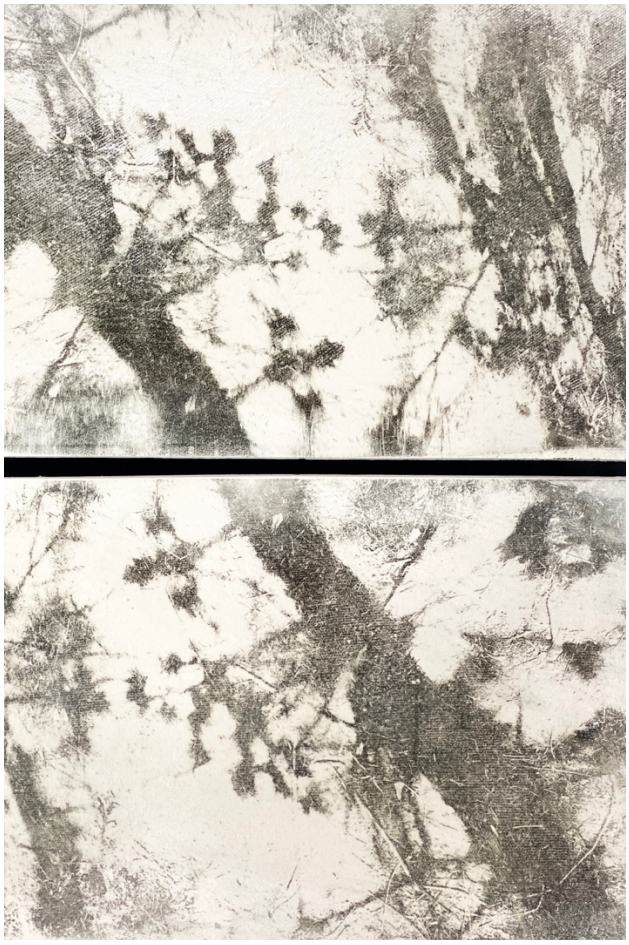
I used *images* of shadows or reflections, which, like the original Hollowmarsh puddle print, depicted ephemeral aspects of landscape which would be difficult to gather through a process other than photography. I developed the series of 'shadow' etching plates using the standard seven step photogravure process:

> photograph - acetate - UV exposure - water bath fix - dry - UV exposure with aquatint - print.

I printed these images onto a thin layer of porcelain slip which lay on the surface of a textured slab of black clay. I used these contrasting clay bodies to *replicate* what I sensed in the landscape. I was trying to express my sense of shadows and reflections existing as a tenuous, fleeting and fluid layer between air and earth. The creation of this work was entirely removed from the landscape; all the processes were contained within my studio in Litton, or the Etching workshop at Locksbrook. I was replicating processes of landscape formation, rather than seeking ways to entangle myself with the landscape through method.

These shadow pieces marked the tipping point in my methodology away from conventional photogravure processes, and from work made predominantly inside, towards more experimental processes that engaged with the rhythms of light, time, growth and decay that I had experienced in landscape.





Photogravure of cast shadows printed on to a layer of porcelain paper clay slip on a black chunky clay base.

Collecting Shadows:

Whilst I had achieved a level of replicability through this technical investigation, I had lost the reciprocity of process entangled with embodied presence present in earlier work. The process of making *with* landscape had become subordinated to the success of the final product. I risked becoming detached both from the landscape itself, and from the conceptual framework I was endeavouring to establish. This investigative process had generated new knowledge of printmaking process in ceramics, which others could now readily replicate if they wished, but with this technical structure in place I needed to reassess the key aims of my research.

My intention was to establish a methodology which did not describe, copy or represent landscape, but was created on, with or through landscape.[124] Assigning primacy to *processes of formation*, paying attention to the meaning inherent in making – rather than seeking a final outcome.

I returned to the key research questions underpinning my methodology:

- Can ceramic and print process illuminate and broaden our understanding of the formation of landscape? Is the process involved in making important?

- Can studio and workshop practices operate as analogous to processes of landscape creation and temporality?

I established two new priorities:

- to find, adapt or create a method which allowed me to make photogravure plates from shadows in the landscape through natural light exposure.

- to find a source of local clay with which to make both a clay body and a ceramic ink.

[124] See Ingold, The Ground and the Page (2018), 138

This next section sets out the technical process of printing from shadows, using natural light exposure in the landscape, and examines the mutable meaning of a shadow. I investigate the history of shadows as a structure or imposition; our removal from an ancient cyclical understanding of time and light; the use of shadows as a way of timekeeping and the remnants of such usage within landscape.

My aim was to find a method to gather cast shadows in the landscape, in which the substance of the work was created *by* the shadow. Such a method, conducted over time would enable a visual gathering of the changeable nature of light and shadow through seasons and years, and entangle me with ancient rhythms of knowledge from which we have been almost entirely displaced.



Light and shadow. Hollowmarsh Lane.

Mass Dial:

To map a place and know its stories is to belong, to find companionship with the living and the dead, to time-travel... Sometimes you spot something - a burial mound, a scratch dial in the church porch – and then set out to find its story. Other times you hear a story and go in search of it in the landscape, in the archive or someone's memories.[125]



Medieval mass dial carved into the south porch of St Mary's Church.

[125] Hadley, *Hollow Places*, 17.

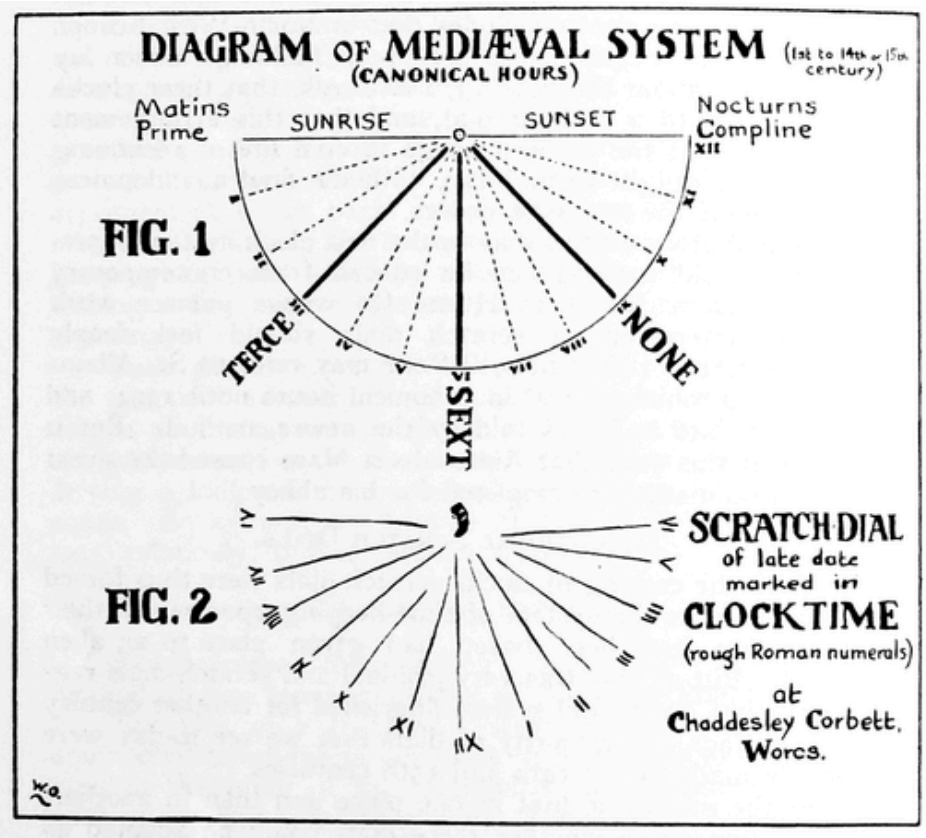


Diagram of medieval system, 1st to 14th or 15th century (canonical hours).[126]

The *mass dial* scratched into the wall of Litton Church, marks the canonical hours rather than hours of daylight. Such dials were common in England between the seventh and fourteenth centuries, before being gradually replaced by clocks. This dial, carved into the south porch of St Mary's church, built in 1392, was created at the very end of the era when shadows called the village to prayer:

> Matins (before dawn), Prime (6am), Terce (9am), Sext (12pm), None (3pm), Vespers (sunset) and Nocturnes (after sunset).[127]

Variations across Britain in the time the sun rose and set, and the unpredictability of the English weather, meant time would be lost. A few cloudy days and a parish might

[126] Diagram of medieval system. Reproduced from T.W Cole. Origin and Use of Church Scratch-dials (Hill Bookshop, Wimbledon, 1935) 8. Image is in the public domain.
[127] Peter Rumley, "Medieval Mass Dials Decoded," *Building Conservation,* accessed May 12, 2020. https://www.buildingconservation.com/articles/mass-dials/mass-dials.htm

celebrate their holy days on entirely different days from a village only a few miles distance. Before we were able to move beyond the speed of the turning of the earth[128] time was a thing of light and season, liquid and changeable.

When I was a child my father taught me to navigate the landscape and understand time through sunlight and cast shadows. Once, on a walk with my sister, deep in the Braunton Burrows, he informed us that it was midday (which we knew meant that the sun was at its zenith in the south) and left us to navigate our own way through the dunes to the beach. I still now have a sense of the time of day and the direction in which I am walking from understanding where the sun sits in the sky, aware that this would have been an entirely unremarkable aspect of life until the very near past.

The cyclical movement of the sun through the sky is one of the few constants in landscape. In the south west of England where I live, the winter solstice sun rises at 8.15 am, setting eight hours later at 4.15 pm. Midsummer sunrise is at 4.56 am setting at 9.30 pm,[129] the hours of daylight twice those experienced in the depths of winter. The changing quality of light through the day, and the season, affect how the landscape is perceived. With the summer sun high in the sky, shadows are short and stark, the summer landscape sharply delineated, static and stable. At noon the density of cast shadows almost becomes the object, inky black shadows cast, as if imprinted on the earth's surface. Only when golden gloaming light falls obliquely across the landscape at dusk are shadows revealed in their winter elongation.
The midwinter sun, always low on the horizon, casts etiolated, ethereal shadows throughout the day, revealing the ridges and marks traced in the surface of the earth, making the familiar landscape eery, strange.

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[128] The advent of the railway demanded that time was standardised across Britain. The Statutes (Definition of time) Bill received Royal Assent on 2nd August 1880.
https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Vict/43-44/9/resources

[129] "Time and Date Website," Somerset, England, Uk – sunrise, sunset and day length, accessed April 10, 2025, https://www.timeanddate.com/sun/@2637532?month=6&year=2025





Short May shadows, Chewton plateau.

Long November shadows. Hollowmarsh.

Printing with shadows and sunlight:

Out, out, brief candle.
Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
And then is heard no more.[130]

What are shadows?
An absence of light.
Fleeting, unfixed.
A metaphor for life and memory.
A way to keep time.

Is the temporality of the shadow tied to the object which casts it, or to the light, made new each day? Pliny wrote that the first picture was created when a young woman traced the shadow of her departing lover in order to remember him.[131] Fox Talbot referred to his work as *fixed shadows*. Both an attempt to hold on to something ever-present yet fleetingly transient, through process.

[130] William Shakespeare, Macbeth, Act 5, scene 5, lines 21-23. *Shakespeare. The Alexander Text of the Complete Works of Shakespeare* (Collins, 1979), 1024-1025.
[131] "Minneapolis Institute of Art," The invention of drawing July 6, 2014, https://new.artsmia.org/stories/the-invention-of-drawing/



Tree shadow, Chewton Wood. June.

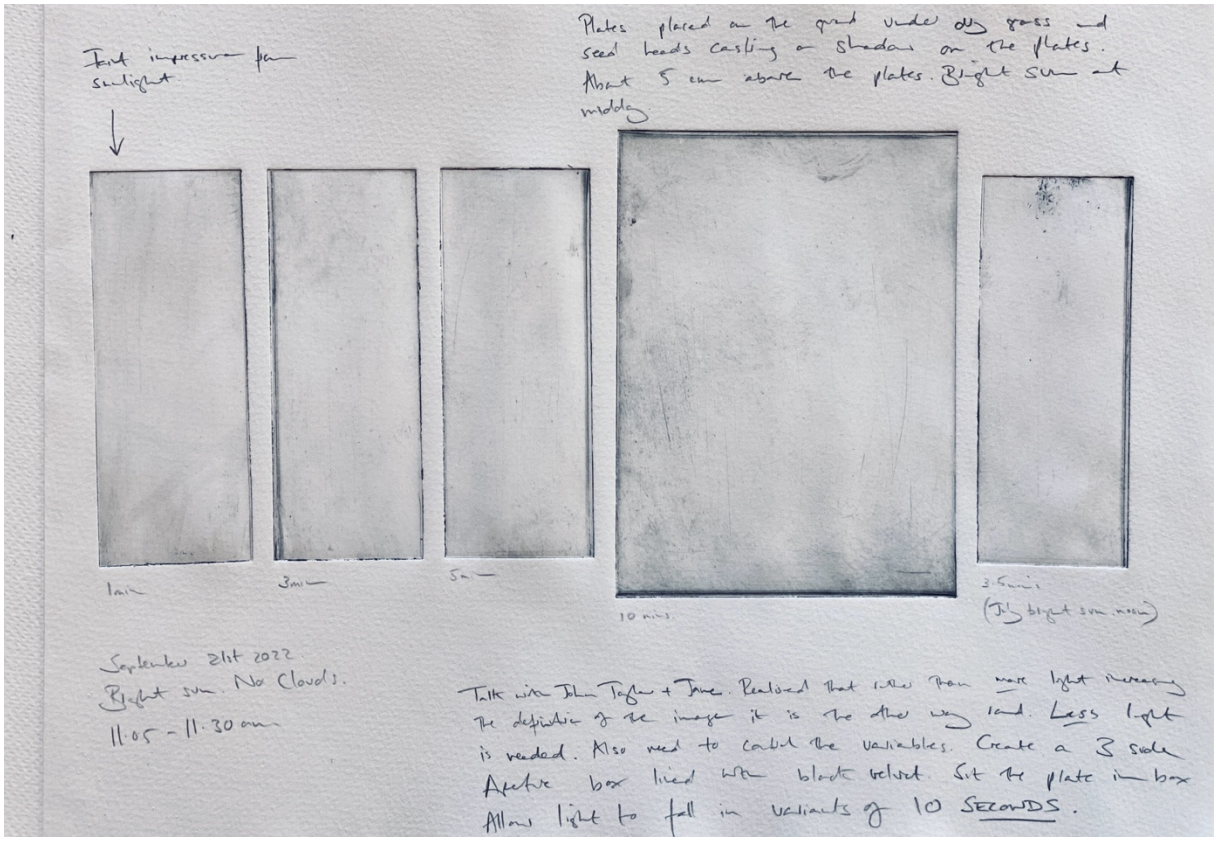




Gate shadow, June, Chewton Plateau.

Process:

I exposed five small photogravure plates at increments of one minute, three minutes, five minutes and ten minutes at noon on a sunny day in September. I placed the plates directly on the ground below seed heads which cast their shadow on the plate (far right is a test plate exposed earlier in July for three and a half minutes).



Prints taken from plates exposed between 1-10 minutes.

Once developed a faint trace of a shadow was perceptible on the plate with the shortest exposure time of three minutes. When all the plates had been developed it was clear that they were all overexposed and a much shorter exposure time was needed. I conducted a second trial using a larger plate which I exposed for forty five seconds in bright sunshine at 1.51pm, placing the plate directly within the hedgerow plants at the edge of Hollowmarsh Lane.



Plate exposed for 45 seconds in Hollowmarsh Lane.

After exposure, a light sensitive etching plate is placed in a water bath for three and a half minutes. For the first minute the plate sits still beneath the water as the image slowly, enthrallingly reveals itself. This plate revealed beautiful cast shadow marks that I hoped would print successfully. Once fully developed it was clear that the marks were very faint (again due to overexposure). I was only able to take two prints before the plate deteriorated entirely.



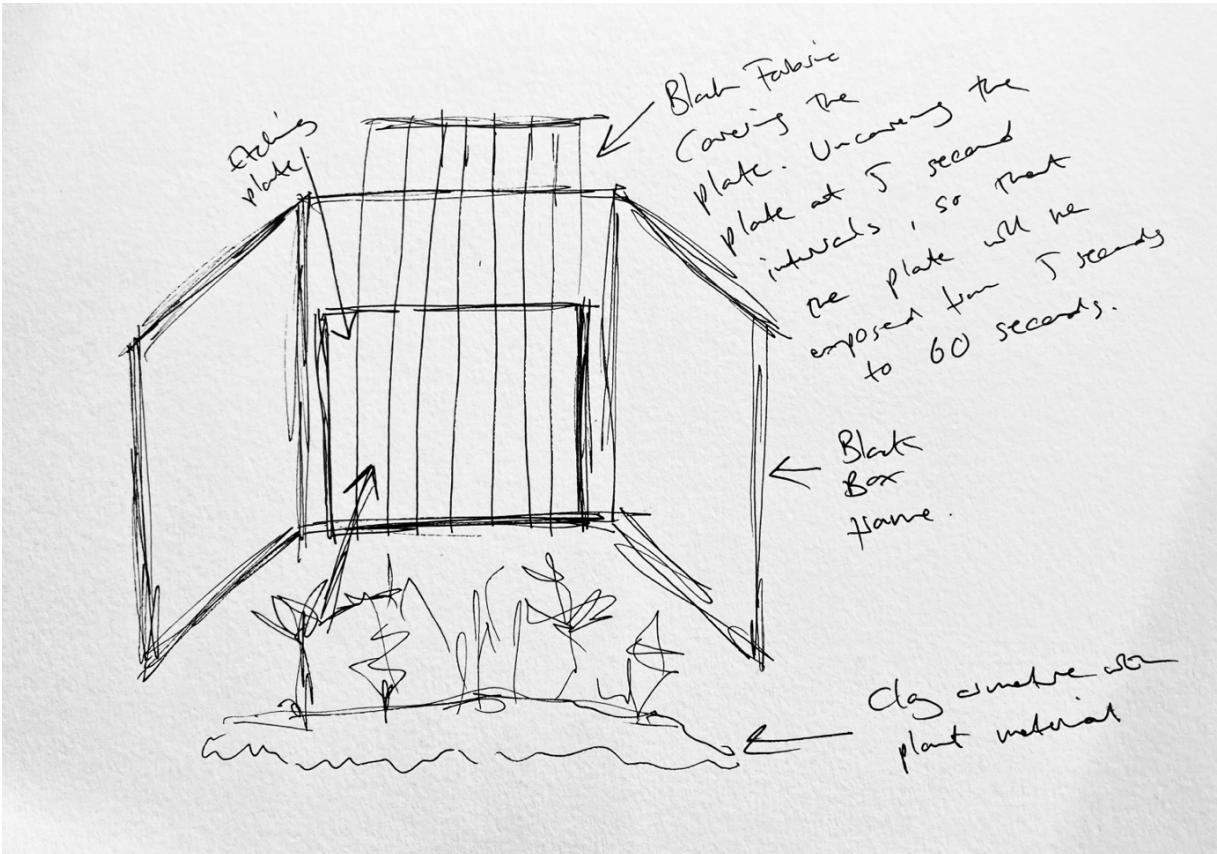
Light sensitive print, one of two.

I knew from technical research into this process that it was possible to imprint light sensitive plates using natural light. But these plates usually involve an acetate image, or other objects placed on the plate beneath a glass sheet. Neither of these techniques enabled the gathering of an impression from a cast shadow. I discussed

this problem with John Taylor in Photography and Jane Randfield in the Etching workshop.

We realised that there were two variable aspects to exposing the plate outside using cast shadow that were causing the failure of the plates and needed to be addressed: diffuse light and time.

To control the amount of diffuse light bleeding beneath the shadows cast by plants in the landscape John suggested I create a three sided aperture box, lined with black card or velvet. This would soak up diffuse light around the plate, concentrating the cast shadow impression from above, as in a UV light box. The box also facilitated the incremental control of time.



Sketch of the box design.

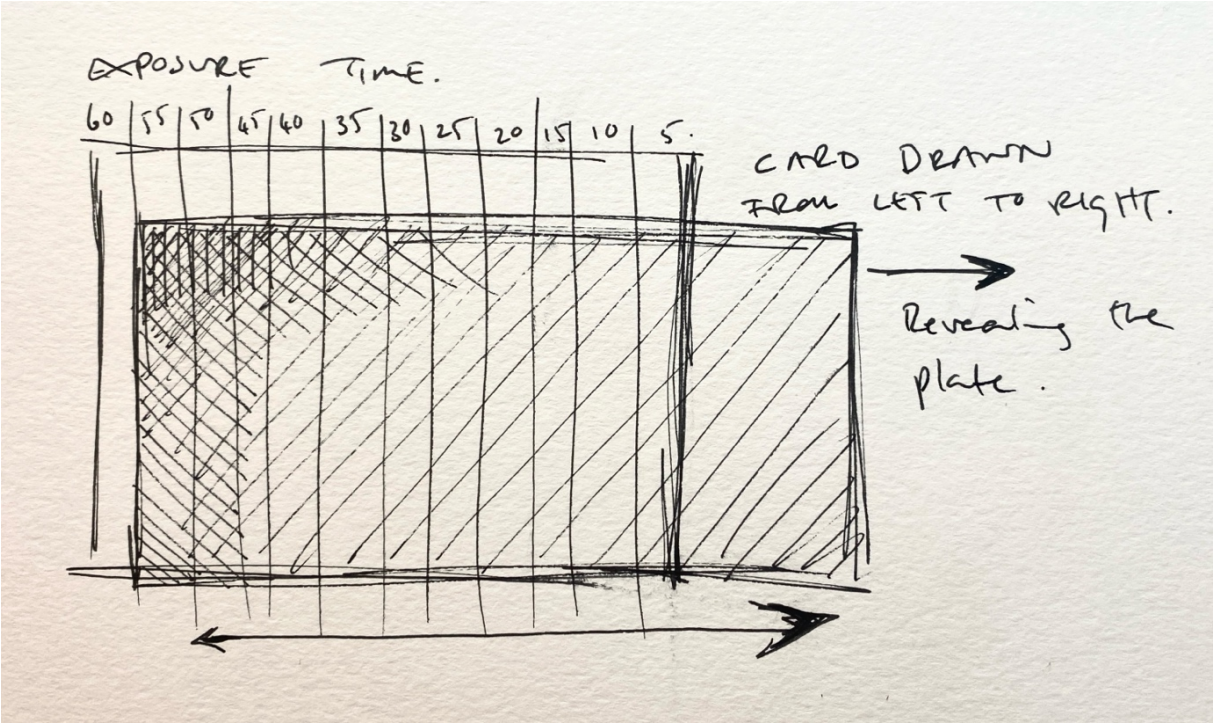


Diagram recording different exposure times.

To further restrict variables in this first technical trial I created a false 'hedgerow' using seed heads fixed into a clay base. This sat in front of the box, creating a fixed shadow. The plate would be exposed in increments of ten seconds, resulting in a single plate containing multiple exposure times, allowing me to judge which was most successful.



Seedheads in a clay base.

Light Trials:

I conducted the first box trial at 11.30 am on a clear sunny day in October, placing the covered plate on the floor of the box, covered with a card sheet. I gradually drew the card cover across the plate from left to right in increments of two centimetres every five seconds exposing the uncovered section of the plate to cast shadows and sunlight. I repeated the exposure process twelve times meaning the far left section was exposed for sixty seconds, whilst the far right section was exposed for only five seconds, with decreasing intervals in between.



Black exposure box with cast shadows.

The multiple exposure plate revealed that there was an optimal exposure time using natural light (at this time of day and season). The forty five to sixty second exposure times were faint and over exposed from too much light. Exposure times of between five and fifteen seconds remained black or blurry from too little light. The twenty five to thirty second exposure struck a balance between these two extremes.



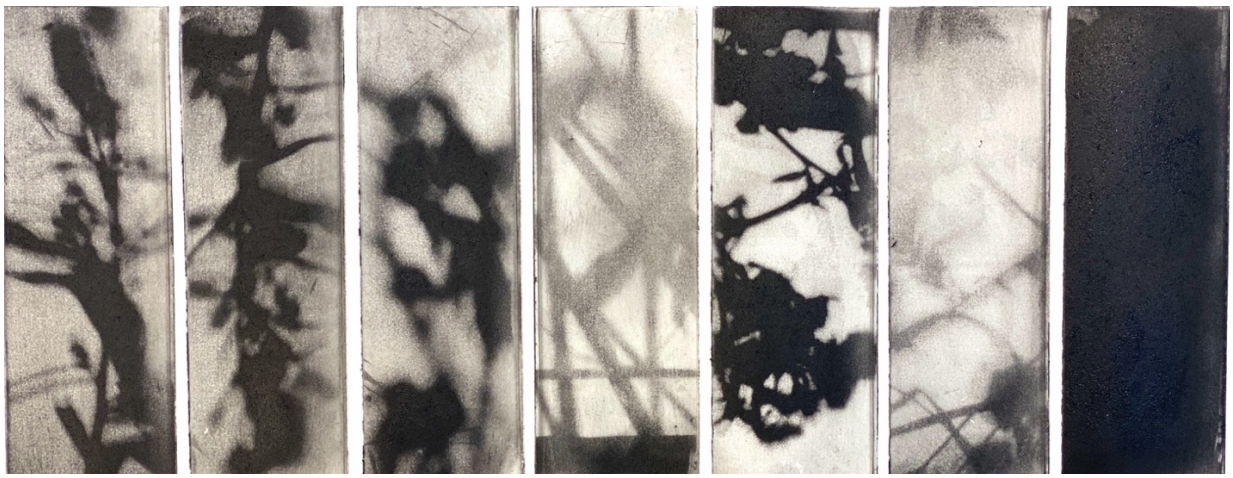
Photogravure plate made in the shadow box with 5 second light increments.

I had now established parameters to this process – exposure time, distance from the shadow, time of day, light conditions and the necessity to block ambient light. I used this information to build a lidded exposure box, lined with black velvet, in which to sit the unexposed plate. Cast shadows on the lid of the box enabled me to judge the efficacy of the cast shadow, before I lifted the lid to expose the plate to sunlight. The plates all measured 5cm x 14.5cm. I planned to expose further plates throughout the year, using the parameters I had established.

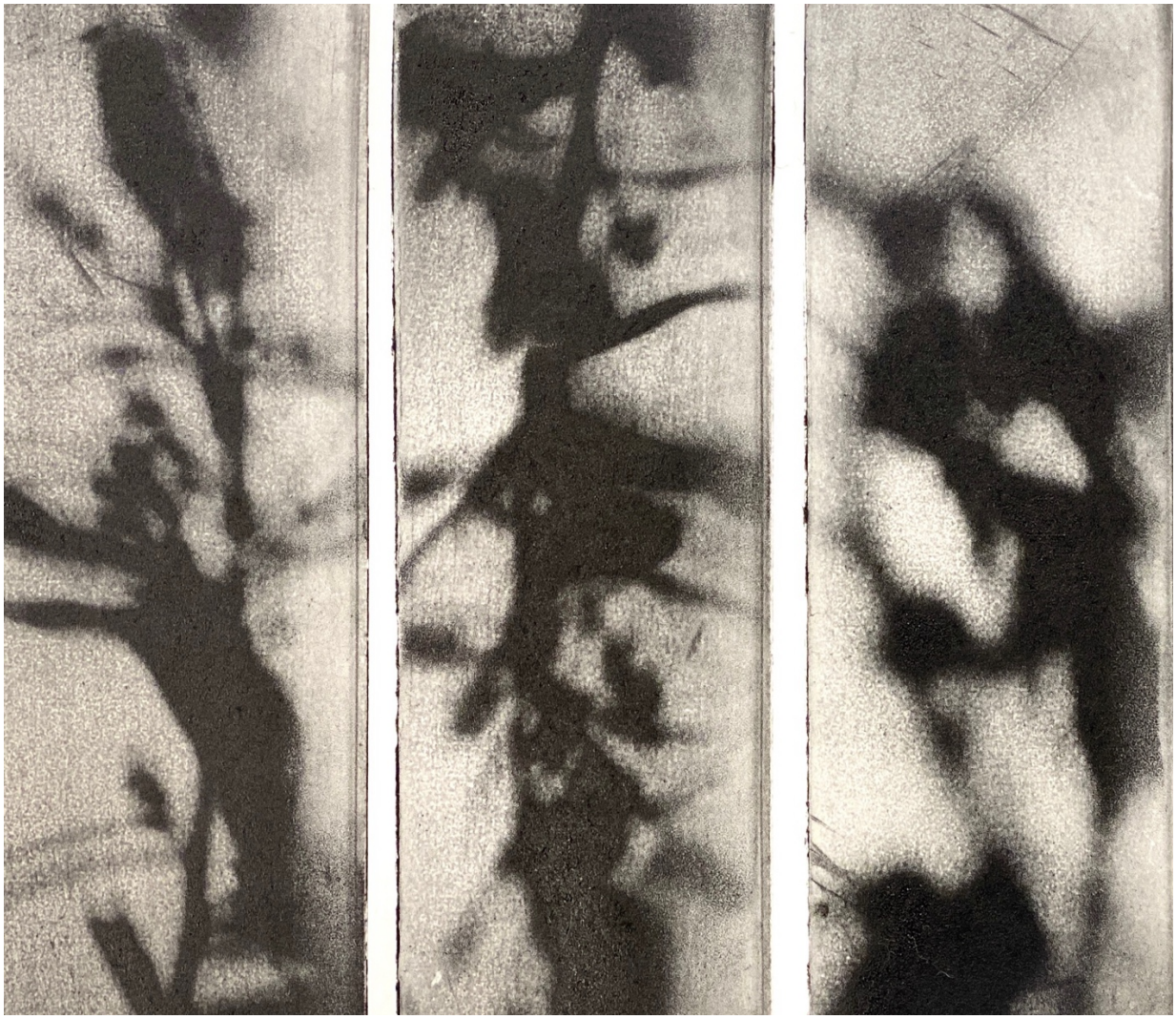




First trials with strips of light sensitive plate in the light box.



First Plates exposed at 11.30 am for 25 seconds. November.



Variable light:

The last unexamined variable was the time of day during which the plates were exposed. Until now I had exposed all the plates between 11am and 1pm when sunlight is strongest. I wanted to examine the effect different light levels through the day had on exposure times.

For the next trial I exposed the plates for twenty five seconds at 9.32am, 10.30am, 11.25am, 12.49pm and 1.46pm on a clear sunny December day.



Plates exposed at different times through the day for 25 seconds. December.

The developed plates reflected the rising and falling light levels of a winter day, as the sun rises slowly into the sky towards midday, before sinking towards the horizon through the early afternoon. The first two plates, at 9.32am and 10.30am, were underexposed, although it was possible to detect faint shadow marks. The 11.25am plate was successful, whilst the two afternoon plates were completely black due to underexposure. If I had exposed these plates at the same times of day a month earlier or later the results would have been different. Had I conducted this trial in

June, around the solstice, the results would have been inverted, with the middle plates over exposed.

This technical process of discovery allowed me to connect with seasonal rhythms of light, in a way I had never experienced. The simplicity of the intervention allowed minimal interruption between my embodied experience of light and time, and the resulting physical record. The knowledge gained through these trials created parameters for this method: Plates would be exposed using the aperture box, at increments of time beginning at 11.30am, for thirty seconds each.



All light exposed plates printed in sequence.

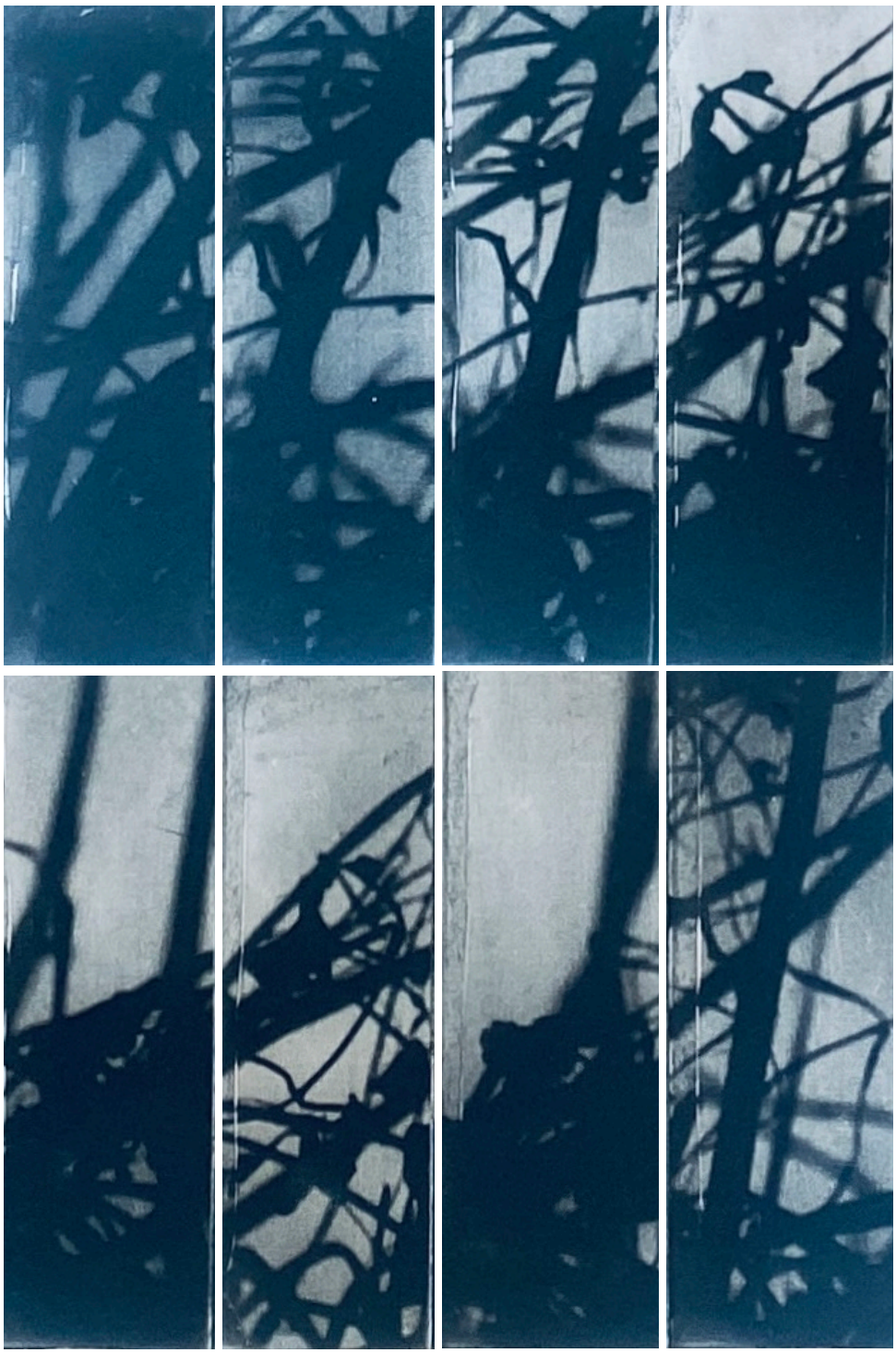
I printed twenty of the shadow plates taken in winter, spring and summer in the sequence they were exposed throughout the year, a visual record of changing light levels through time, interacting with shadows cast from the cyclical growth and decay of plants. This is an ongoing process within this research that I have committed to over the last four years and will continue. The quality of the 'fixed shadows' created a visual representation of the cyclical nature of sunlight, as the plates rose from dense black marks in winter to the ephemerality of the dandelion shadow cast in spring.



November.



April.



January

Local Clay

> *Before landscapes die, they first vanish in the imagination.*[132]

One of the central tenets of this research process is to consider whether artistic practice can influence perception and understanding of the distinctive precariousness and significance of landscape.

There is a growing interest amongst ceramic practitioners [133] in understanding both the source of the materials they are using and the environmental impact of their ceramic practice. A revival of interest in locality, and a tallying of the impact of different processes and techniques - such as whether work should be fired at all - that until recently had been of little interest outside a very small field of ceramic practice. Collectives such as ACS (Alternative Ceramic Supply) who source and reconstitute ceramic material from construction and demolition sites write that:

> *Exploring each material's provenance has helped us respect and understand their story, and the desire to centre ourselves has diminished. Rather than imposing our ideas onto the materials, we've learnt more of a dialogue. The qualities and character inherent to the materials become even more apparent.*[134]

Working with local materials is not a new phenomenon but a return to methods of making, and of considerate interaction with landscape, practiced for thousands of years. Questioning established practice creates alternative ways to practice ceramics,

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[132] Bhavani Raman, "The Curious Disappearance of the Ennore Creek," *The Wire,* November 13, 2017. https://thewire.in/environment/curious-disappearance-ennore-creek

[134] "Glost Glaze", Amelia Black, Claire Ellis, Georgia Stevenson, Sarah Muir-Smith. In Conversation with Alternative Ceramics Supply, https://glost-glaze.com/journal/alternative-ceramic-supply

seeking to work with the landscape, seeing in the stuff that makes landscape a 'life world'[135] of its own, removed from human agency.

I began looking for clay deposits within the Litton landscape. In this search for a reliable source of local clay, two people played an important role. Colin Budge is a retired teacher and local historian, who introduced me to the 1839 Tithe map and gave me access to his years of archival research into Litton parish. Pip Osborne is an archaeologist, who has spent ten years excavating the remains of a Saxon Pottery in Chewton Mendip, near Litton. Part of her research involves establishing the source of clay used in unearthed ceramic shards, which she believes came from the Hollowmarsh in Litton:

> *CAMP's study of the Medieval strip farming of Hollowmarsh and its ancient origins showed that many landholdings in Chewton and neighbouring manors had land on the Marsh and that clay is readily available there.*[136]

As I walked with Pip through the Hollowmarsh fields we came across a cleared drainage ditch. Mounds of clay had been exhumed and heaped on the ground. I rolled a lump between my palms feeling the stickiness give way to a familiar tactile plasticity. The clay was a reddish brown with streaks of blue which Pip thought was Keuper Marl. I agreed to share the results of any test firings I undertook with her.

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[135] Clare Loder, "Did the Sky used to be Full of Birds?" in *Art and Creativity in an Era of Ecocide: Embodiment, Performance and Practice, eds.*, Anna Pigott, Owain Jones and Ben Parry (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2023).

[136] Pip Osborne and Jennifer Waters, "Experimental Archaeology: Making Replica Medieval Coarsewares," *Chewton Mendip Precinct Field Excavations & 'Origins of Chewton' Project. Community Archaeology on the Mendip Plateau* (2018), 16. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1WG_o79EbSqpGiZ-sacYpNTq4m0Alvug-/preview



Cleared ditch in the Hollowmarsh.

A romanticism surrounds the gathering of *wild* or found clay, but such practices have the potential to become damaging and unsustainable if care is not taken. This particular source of clay was the result of water logged drainage channels being cleared by the landowner Jeggs Dowd, so did no harm to the local environment. At this small scale the positive connection I was making with this place outweighed any harm.

Now that I was actively seeking clay I found it everywhere. Along the lane up the hill to Chewton woods, where after heavy rainfall the track runs red with iron drenched water. Lining the walls of the drainage ditches cut into the Hollowmarsh fields. On Whitehouse Lane where the wheels of passing tractors drag desiccated

chunks of it onto the road. As clay particles are smaller than sand or silt, they remain suspended in water for longer, before settling slowly and forming clay beds where water once pooled. The low flooding fields of the Hollowmarsh, lying surrounded by the steep rain drenched limestone hills of the Mendips had, through time, become an enormous clay field beneath a thin scrim of soil. I began to walk based on where I might find clay. Each time I came across a source I would roll a small ball between my palms and take it home.



Hollowmarsh Lane clay.

I returned to the ditch cut in the Hollowmarsh field with my children. They dug their hands into the discarded earth, shaping rough thumb pots from the clay. Theirs was an instinctive exploration of material, unencumbered by thoughts of a final product or whether the clay would fire successfully. The journey to find the clay and their interaction with it entangled us all with this place, connecting the field, the feel of the

material in their hands, and the long, cold walk home carrying heavy buckets of clay. I kept their little thumb pots with the imprint of their fingers in the clay.



Eliza, Henry and Annie making thumb pots.

Technical notes:

I processed the clay to create a smooth malleable body. I then conducted a number of small test firings using both processed and unprocessed clay deposits and ink mixed from powdered Hollowmarsh clay. The clay and ink fired to a rich red terracotta at 1000°c, deepening to a darker burnt umber at 1200°c, fading to a darker brown when high fired under a clear glaze.



Firing trials with processed and unprocessed clay.





Litton clay printing ink, glaze trails and oak gall ink.

Alternative Clay bodies:

I had until this point relied on commercial clay bodies, most often porcelain flax paper clay and professional black chunky clay. I wanted to explore the potential of creating my own paper clay bodies which, whilst having a smaller environmental impact than standard porcelain paper clay, would retain the malleability and strength which makes paper clay such an excellent material to use in ceramic print making. Such material would create a direct connection within the body of the clay to the materials of the Hollowmarsh.

I mixed powdered Hollowmarsh clay, sawdust, dried cow parsley stems and hay in a fifty/fifty ratio with powdered porcelain to create four clay bodies which I rolled into slabs and test printed using the Yew tree photogravure plate. The clay bodies all fired well at 1000°c.

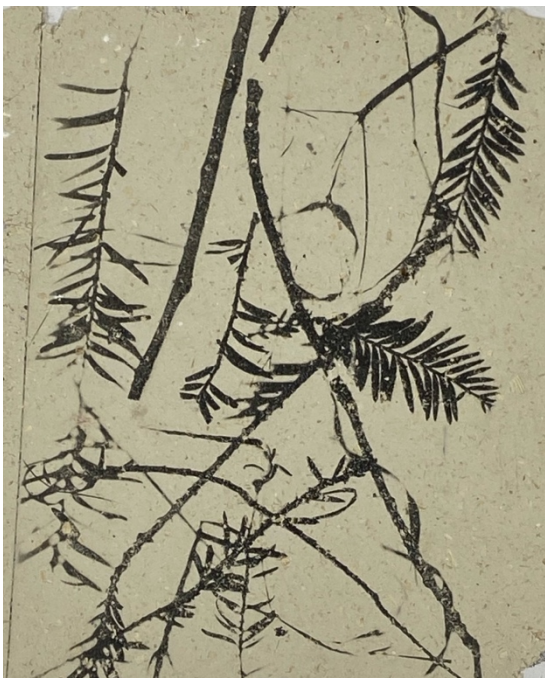






Litton clay, cow parsley, sawdust, hay.






Print on mixed paper clay:

1. Hay
2. Litton clay
3. Sawdust.
4. Cow parsley.

Conclusion.

There is a systematic bias in western thought, writes Ingold, which subordinates the making process to the singular *object of contemplation*, experienced independent of its journey of creation. This priority is often reversed in non-Western societies, where the act or experience itself is fundamental:

> *the products may be relatively short-lived – barely perceived before being erased or covered up.... Far from being the preparation of objects for future contemplation, (making) it is an act of contemplation in itself.*[137]

I realised that I had been attempting to align all the processes I was using into one final object. Taking a photograph and turning it into a print; printing with/on clay from the field where the photograph was taken (a field whose name I knew because I had researched and written about its history); a field that I had walked to when I took the photograph. An exhausting quest for a final object which would encapsulate this research journey, as if there was an elusive formula which once found, through repeated technical experimentation, would answer all the questions posed by the PhD. Understanding sense-making with landscape as an act, rather than an object of contemplation, a process rather than a conclusion, altered my approach to my research.

I began to focus not only on the final results of the methods I was developing but also on the process and journey that had taken me to those methods. The walk with my children to gather clay. Sitting still and quiet below damp winter hedgerows as I watched the sun etch shadows on etching plates. Kneeling to gather small balls of clay. Gathering armfuls of dry cow parsley and hogweed seedheads in the small gap

[137] Tim Ingold. *The Perception of the Environment. Essays on livelihood, dwelling and skill* (Routledge, 2000), 198

between the end of summer and autumn hedge cutting. The final product was only a small part of the research; what was crucial was the ability of process to open up the landscape to me, to help me understand and attune to place.

The technical experiments described here laid the groundwork for later developments, whilst also revealing the importance of attending to the embodied and emotional dimensions of my engagement with landscape. In the next chapter this strategy becomes more established and embedded within my practice research as I examine more closely the interaction between my own emotional, memory driven response to place, and the material processes I use to enable collaboration between myself and landscape.

Whilst the parish of Litton encompasses just over twelve hundred acres of land, within these boundaries I focus on a few specific sites, most significantly the Hollowmarsh.

Chapter 2: Hollowmarsh



Long Dole Field, Hollowmarsh. Winter.

Overview:

In this chapter I begin to place greater emphasis on making through interaction with place and memory, exploring how embodied encounters with landscape shape the material processes I develop. Following the technical experimentation of the previous chapter, I move away from the search for a singular object towards an understanding of making as an ongoing dialogue between material process and landscape. I investigate soft ground etching, direct clay printmaking and photography as methods through which landscape can participate in the making process.

My responses increasingly emerge through direct engagement with particular sites within the Litton landscape. Encounters with places such as the burnt tree and the ploughed Hollowmarsh field trigger reflections on loss, memory and environmental change, revealing how landscape acts both as archive and as catalyst for personal experience.

The research moves more fully into an embodied practice that interweaves personal reflection, emplaced experience and historical research into the formation of this place. Writing shifts in register between analytical passages that establish the conceptual ground; descriptive passages that situate the site; experiential or poetic passages that capture encounters; and studio reflections that show how those encounters transform material practice.

This interdisciplinary practice aligns with a growing body of historical landscape writing and artistic practice exploring loss and environmental damage within landscape.

The Hollowmarsh:



> *The intersections of nature, culture, history and ideology form the ground on which we stand – our land, our place, the local. The lure of the local is the pull of place that operates on each of us, exposing our politics and our spiritual legacies. It is the geographical component of the psychological need to belong somewhere, one antidote to prevailing alienation.*[138]

The Hollowmarsh is an area of flat meadowland surrounded by the steep foot hills of the Mendips. Once farmed in common by seven surrounding manors, the medieval strip field system is still preserved in the outline of the fields.[139] There are no roads through the Hollowmarsh, but many ancient footpaths and tracks still exist, fostering a depth of affiliation and community involvement with this place which is not the case in many rural landscapes. These rights can feel tenuous and threatened, footpaths

[138] Lucy Lippard, *The Lure of the Local. Senses of Place in a Multicentred Society* (New Press,1997), 7.
[139] Edited Pip Osborne (2012) Hollowmarsh - A Medieval, Communal Meadowland in North East Somerset. Full report: Series No 1. October 2012. P2, 7 and 8.

are obstructed by electric livestock wire, signs warn of prosecution and trespass, a spiked metal fence bars access to the ancient Holloway into the marsh.

Though now usually deserted of human presence, this is a place replete with traces of past practice. The vestige of medieval ridge and furrow fields, Norman deer park boundaries, pines planted for pit props, ancient Oaks, and obsolete buildings. It is a damaged place, frequently beautiful and suddenly appalling; a rainbow slick of oil on puddled water, a field sprayed with insecticide and illegally ploughed, an ancient tree felled and burnt.



Fence constructed to block access from Chewton wood to the Hollowmarsh.





Sign next to a footpath gate.

Warning signs at the entrance to the reservoir

As a tree grows rings, a landscape will, over time accrete a history of interaction between its inhabitants, the political and social changes which affect how we use and perceive place, and between time and weather. Landscape can therefore *'with the right kind of attention, be read as an archive with a specific residue of events'*.[140] One

[140] Fuller and Weizman, Investigative Aesthetics, 50

example of how political change is tangibly manifested in the material of landscape lies in the reason why England has more ancient Oak trees than the whole of mainland Europe. After the conquest of 1066 the new Norman overlords enacted *Forest Law*, reserving vast tracts of land as deer parks for the exclusive use of the new Norman nobility.

> *The king...set up great protection for deer and legislated to that intent, that whosoever should slay hart or hind should be blinded... he loved the high deer as if he were their father.*[141]

Ancient rights of collecting and cutting wood became illegal, heavy fines and punishments were inflicted on those caught using the royal forest, brush and low growth cleared to allow for easy riding; perfect conditions for Oak trees to flourish.

The concept of social haunting [142] argues that past acts of social violence - enclosure, deindustrialisation, land clearance, the trauma of the Black Death or the Norman Conquest, are held as a trace within landscape, reverberating through time, entangling us with the past.[143] Investigating such landscapes creates a methodology which finds, collects and combines trace evidence of many different kinds, engaging with alternative narratives of place and uncovering marginalised stories.

Such an anti-hegemonic investigation was undertaken by Paulo Tavares of the investigative agency *Forensic Architecture* after the genocide of the Waimiri-Atroari people in the Amazon. In a process known as '*ground truth*' Tavares conducted a ground level survey of the area of rainforest in which these people had lived.

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[141] The Anglo Saxon Chronicle in Oliver Rackham, *The History of the Countryside* (This edition Weidenfeld and Nicholas, 2020), 130.
[142] Avery Gordon, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination*, 2nd ed. (University of Minnesota Press, 2008), xvi.
[143] Laura Breen, "Re-producing Ceramics," in ed., Neil Brownsword, Alchemy and Metamorphosis (Topographies of the Obsolete Publications 2021), 7.

Because the trace left on their environment was minimal, the only 'media' to bear traces of past inhabitation were patterns of tree growth:

> *What is left to be observed are parts of the forest with a higher density of certain kinds of trees, often fruiting or medicinal trees in the midst of otherwise wild-seeming forest..... Looking at the same forest via aerial or satellite images, it seems an endless sea of green.*[144]



Fungus growth in the Hollowmarsh. Certain fungi provide visible markers of the sites of cadaver decomposition. [145]

Assigning value to seemingly insignificant traces of past experience within landscape readdresses the commodification of the environment and could potentially protect such places for the future. The particularity of this landscape, its 'ground truth' is revealed through careful and thoughtful interaction with places where past human

[144] Fuller and Weizman, Investigative Aesthetics, 47.

[145] Mrk Tibbett and David Carter, "Mushrooms and taphonomy: the fungi that mark woodland graves," *Mycologist*, Volume 17, Issue 1, February 2003, Pages 20-24

experience is manifested in slight changes to the surface of the earth, a fallen tree, scratches in a church wall, a ridged hillside.

As in a palimpsest, both memory and landscape undergo a 'cycle of inscription and erasure' so those places that have been consistently revisited and used retain the deepest and most lasting impression upon them. Places such as the strip lynchets above the village, a visible remainder of the presence over generations of people ploughing the hillside.

Or the remains of ridge and furrow farming left in the Hollowmarsh, (Scripto Inferior) overlain with the more fleeting recent trace of a path created by walkers (Scripto Secunda).



Footpath across the remains of ridge and furrow fields in Hollowmarsh.

Perhaps if this path is used consistently over generations it too will become scored into the earth, or remain an ephemeral trace, revealed in the difference between the cut yellow stubble of the hay meadow and the path, where the meadow grass, repeatedly trampled underfoot has remained low and green. Or maybe the path will

be abandoned for some reason, perhaps a change in how the field is used, and the recent track will fade away. Or in the future the field will be deeply ploughed or developed for housing and both these traces will be lost.



Cut hay revealing a footpath across the Hollowmarsh.

Burnt Tree.

As the Oak, lying ringed in Long Dole Field,
my Father flounders.
The melancholy of this colossus brought low,
draws me back,
the tree, and my father, felled.



The 'conceptual exploration of absence' writes Tim Edensor, '*focuses upon the acute sense of absence that might be triggered by an individual memory of a place or person, by an awareness that a habitually apprehended thing in a familiar location is not there.*'[146]

The felled oak lay on the southern edge of Long Dole field. Most of the oaks in the Hollowmarsh were planted in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, when demand for oak for shipbuilding was at its height. This tree, that once grew in a line of oaks on the field boundary, was perhaps three hundred years old. Although it had been burnt, the vast size of the tree's trunk and bigger branches had resisted the fire. What remained was scattered, black and charred, through the long edge grass. The fire had removed the surface layer of bark, revealing the intricate scale-like structure of the underlying wood. In summer the piled limbs were completely covered by vegetation, like a nest. When I once could not find the burnt tree, hidden beneath the density of summer growth, I felt bereft

.

The sense of persistent loss that I have suffered over the last few years has had a significant effect on my methodology. Many of the connections I once had to my past, and to the stories of my family have gone. If my sister or I, now the oldest remaining members of our family, forget, or fail to pass these memories on, they will disappear. This awareness of the fragility of memory has played an important role in shifting my methodology from seeking presence in landscape to also acknowledging absence and irretrievable loss in my response to the places I am drawn to revisit. My need to create a material response to, or gathering of place is driven by a fearful sense that these places too might soon be gone.

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[146] Tim Edensor, "Watery traces and absences: sensations and speculative histories of an ancient well and a carse landscape," *Cultural Geographies* (2024), 5, https://e-space.mmu.ac.uk/636979/3/edensor-2024-watery-traces-and-absences-sensations-and-speculative-histories-of-an-ancient-well-and-a-carse-landscape.pdf

I repeatedly photographed the tree, but found that the density of the black surface repelled light, the images failing to capture the delicate intricacy of the charred surface. I started to collect little pieces of the tree every time I walked past it, wanting to keep a part of it with me, continually drawn back. I felt as though I was mourning or honouring the tree, lying burnt and prone on the ground, isolated from the row of living oaks. It embodied a melancholy sense of broken strength that reminded me of my Father.



As a small child I understood that my father would leave to embark on adventures that did not encompass me. He was a wanderer, an adventurer; this myth explaining and forgiving him his absence in our lives. We would collect him from railway stations and airports, or wake in the morning to find him sprawled in our Mother's bed, long and lean and tanned, a disruptively masculine presence in our female household.

One summer he paddled a kayak through 125 miles of water, through a day and a night. The seams of his wet clothing, rubbing repetitively against his body with each movement of the paddle, flayed the skin from his bones; his shoulders and back, from the shadow under his arms down to his waist, left red raw and glistening.

Devizes to Westminster Canoe Race 1988

125 miles and 77 locks

This is to Certify that A H Bradborn and I Key

Guards Adventure Training Wing

completed the course of 125 miles in 17 hours 09 mins

1st Place

When I was twenty he left and didn't return home. When I see him now he has grown old in my absence. The damage inflicted on his body manifested in swollen joints and pain. I left him at Heathrow the last time I saw him, alone in a wheelchair, waiting for someone to help him board the plane.

> *To counter the amnesia of our times, we must be willing to look into the face of loss and keep it nearby. In this way, we may be able to honour the losses and live our lives as carriers of unfinished stories.* [147]

Through my interaction with this place, deciphering and recording and seeing, in remembrance and remembering, I create a connection both to the experience of those who were here in this place before me, and with the stories of my own past. I wonder what trace I will leave to the future of my presence here at this time. A tree planted in winter, a hedgerow line, a path through a field. A box of images. Clay.

[147] "The Bábóg Project," Francis Weller, accessed March 15, 2025, https://www.thebabogproject.com/exhibition

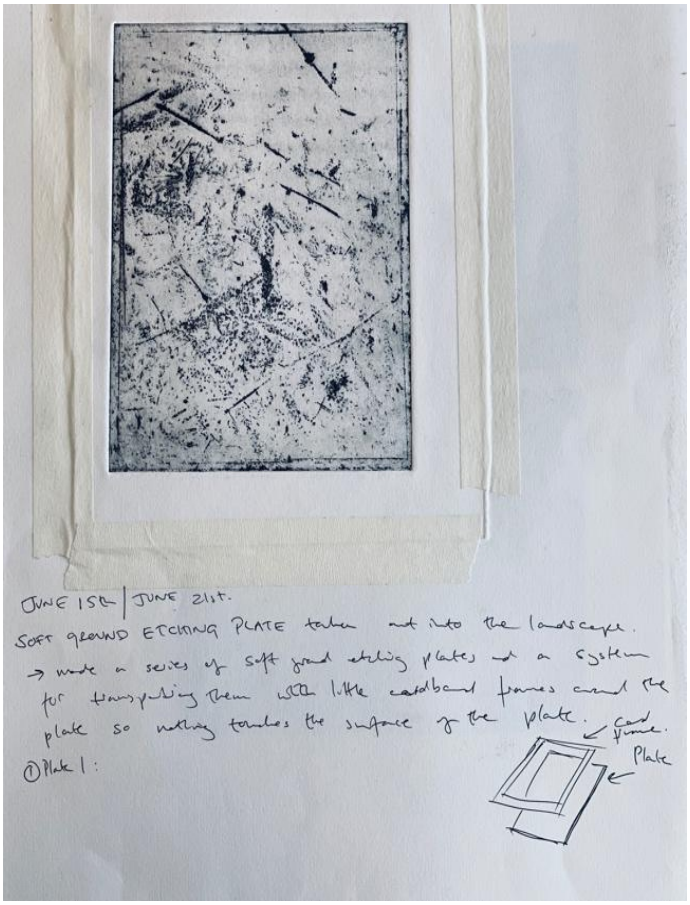
Soft Ground and Clay Printing, Long Dole Field.

I developed a method with which to gather the *ground truth* of this landscape, adapting the soft ground etching process described in the previous chapter, and using clay slabs to imprint directly from the landscape. The following section details the technical development of these processes.

The first problem I faced was how to transport the extremely sensitive soft ground plates into the landscape without imprinting my fingerprints in the wax ground. Jane and I devised a system of cardboard frames which sat on the edge of the plate, allowing them to be stacked, whilst also protecting the waxed surface. The little frames became imprinted in the soft *ground* at the edge of the plate, leaving a line around the image. Far from wanting to remove this line as Jane suggested, the framing device reminds the viewer that this is a gathered image, a page from the ground.

The introduction of standard dimensions (all of this series was A5) across different processes introduced an element of uniformity to the work, making it easier to compare across material and technique. For Louise Bourgeois '*the predictability of formal repetition served to reassert a sense of order to chaotic feelings*', geometry gave her '*a consistent set of rules.... a certitude, which is the exact opposite of the emotional world I inhabit.*'[148] The predictability of the format also began to align this work more closely with book and map formats, which would become increasingly important later in my research.

[148] Text taken from Louise Bourgeois The Woven Child exhibition statement, Southbank Centre. 22nd April 2022.



Sketchbook diagram of the soft ground etching system.

I pressed the first soft ground plate onto the charred surface of the burnt tree and the second into the grass and charred detritus beneath the boughs. The immediacy of the process was exhilarating, the plate picked up trace marks that would have been impossible to record through another method. I created certain parameters to the process - I would not adjust any part of the landscape in order to create a more aesthetically pleasing image, but would rigidly follow my rule of recording what was there; I would be methodical in the way I recorded the process, photographing:

- the place to be printed
- the place as it was printed, from a distance
- the place as it was printed, close up, from above.

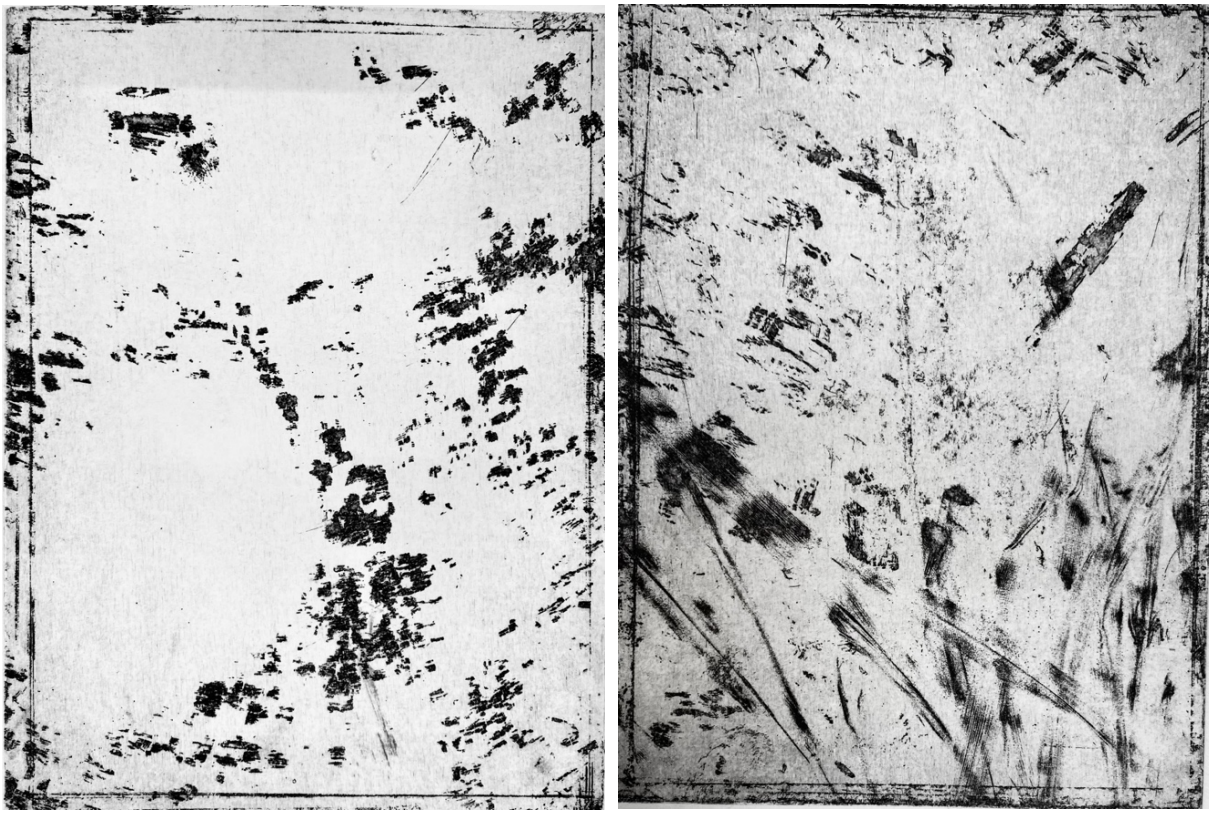
Prints would be taken as I walked through the landscape, recording my journey and interaction with place. The photographs I took of plates being imprinted in place

focused my viewpoint. Although still surrounded by the vastness of the landscape, my attention became focused on this one still point. In a similar sense the single tree of *Ash Viewing* allowed the thousands of trees lost to Ash Dieback[149] to be comprehended in their singularity rather than as an incomprehensible mass. Instead of asking for a response to everything, the little imprints asked for attention to be focused on one small story and what this could later tell of the wider story of this place, the vastness and complexity of the place made comprehensible.



First soft ground etching imprint.

[149] 'Ash Dieback (*Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*) 'will kill up to 80% of ash trees across the UK... It will change the landscape forever and threaten many species which rely on ash.' "The Woodland Trust," https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/trees-woods-and-wildlife/tree-pests-and-diseases/key-tree-pests-and-diseases/ash-dieback/



First soft ground etching prints.



Soft ground etching in Hollowmarsh Lane with the print created.

The print below was created from moss on the ground in St Mary's Churchyard, Litton. The plate gathered ephemeral details invisible to the eye, traces of seed heads and infinitesimal structures within the plant. On a tiny scale the plate makes apparent the density and ordered chaos that surrounds us, the intimacy of the image focusing attention on the particular within landscape.

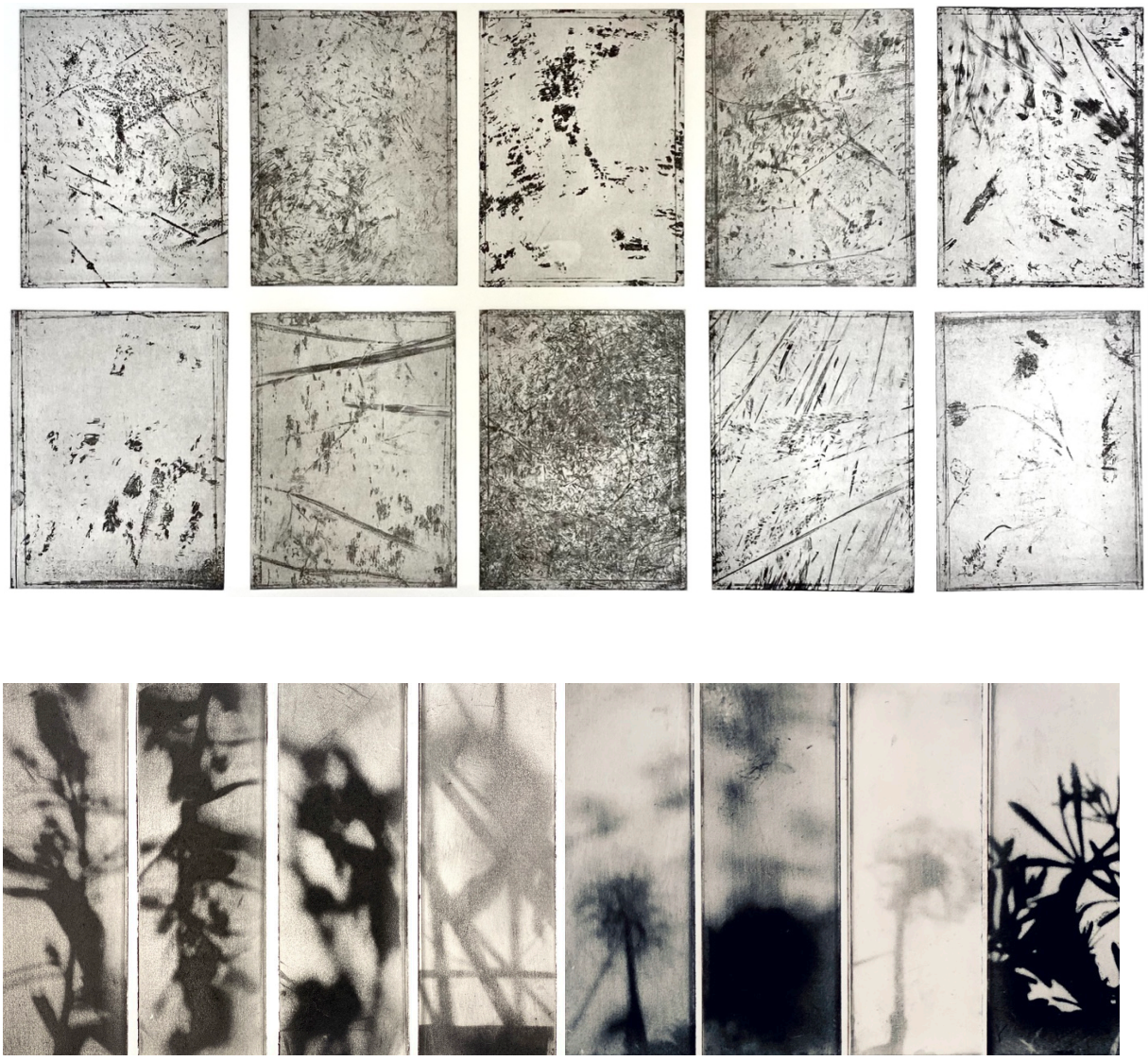


Moss in St Mary's churchyard.

I gathered a series of plates over the next few months, aiming to produce a large-scale print grid and a form of artist book in which the photographs of the process sit alongside the print itself and a map/grid reference of where the plates were taken.

There were limitations to the process. I discovered that different prints need differing amounts of time in the acid bath depending on the material the print was taken from. Too little immersion left the subtler impressions of ephemeral grass stems too faintly etched to print. Conversely if left too long the acid bit too deeply into the metal and the deep ridges wouldn't hold the ink. The rigidity of the metal plates meant there was limited capacity to gather information from large, curved areas. But where something soft such as grass, leaves or cut hay is layered on to a hard surface like a road or gravestone this print process is able to collect trace evidence of activity within landscape that would otherwise be lost.

The print sequence, built up over the course of a year also related to previous practice based methods for understanding temporality within landscape. As the shadow plates changed through the course of the year, responding to changing light levels through time, so these plates picked up the transient growth and decay of different vegetation, revealing the cyclical interaction between people and place that is still evident in this rural community. The photographs and images detail practices such as the cutting of the hedgerows, the gathering of meadow hay and its transportation through the landscape. If this system of soft ground impressions taken from landscape were used in a different place they would tell a different story.



Soft ground etchings from the ground and light etchings.

Like the shadow plates, what felt important here was that this interaction between material and place had created a record of something that was rarely given attention. I was building a bank of different methods with which to interact, interpret and record different aspects of this landscape, without attempting to make any one process encapsulate all that I wanted to understand: a collective commons.



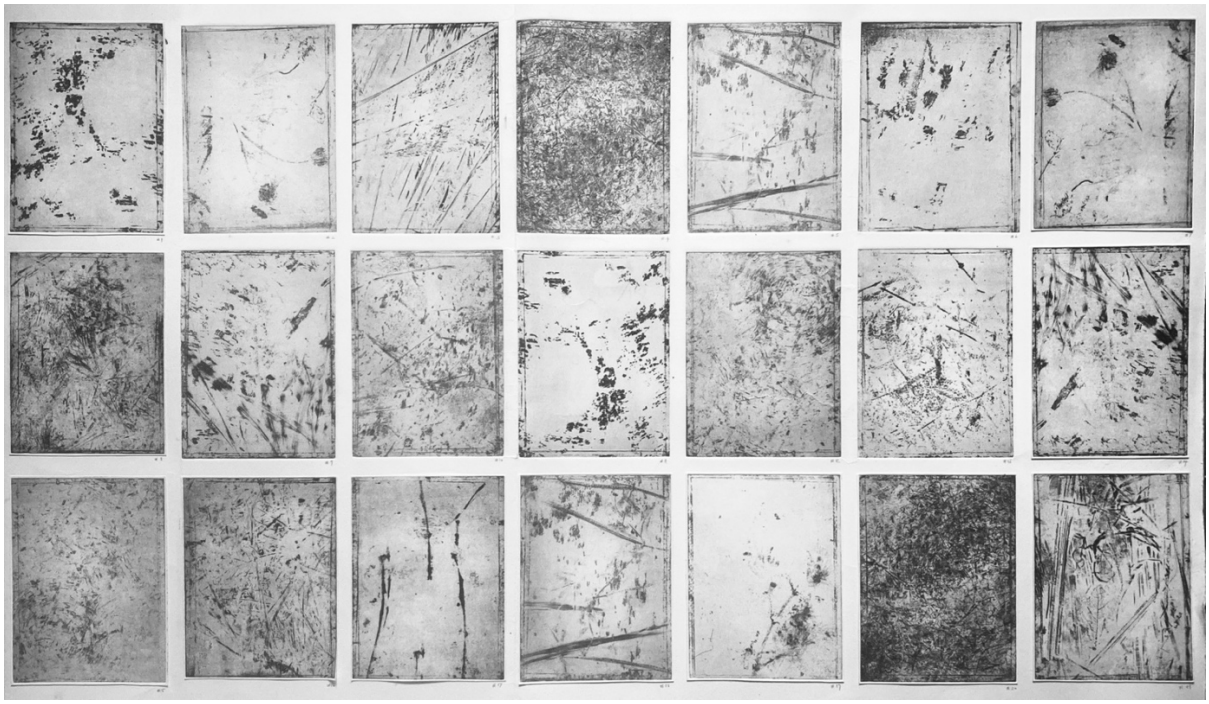












Top: Burnt tree, Long dole field. Dandelion pushing through slabs. Midsummer hedgerow grass, Sherborne. Moss beneath a gravestone. Charred embers beneath the burnt tree, spring. Burnt tree. A wilted dandelion.

Middle: Spilt hay on Whitehouse Lane. Embers in long grass, Long Dole, winter. Hay meadow, Hollowmarsh. Embers of Burnt Oak. A wet day walking to Sherborne the tarmac was slippy. Catkins from the silver birch tree. Embers and long grass, summer.

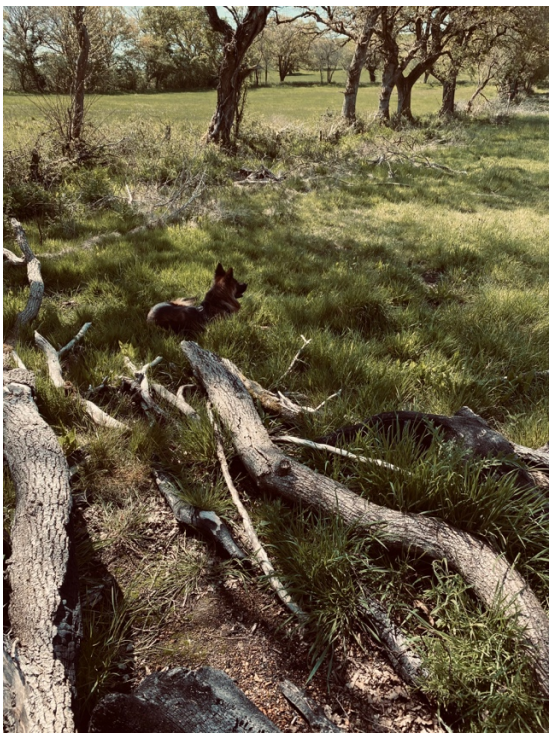
Bottom: The road was slippy so the plate twisted. Long grass and seed heads in Hollowmarsh at midsummer. Fallen oak twigs after a storm. Long straw on embers. A tractor squashed cow parsley on Whitehouse Lane. Moss. Spring hedgerow grass and leaves.

Printing Day: Summer.



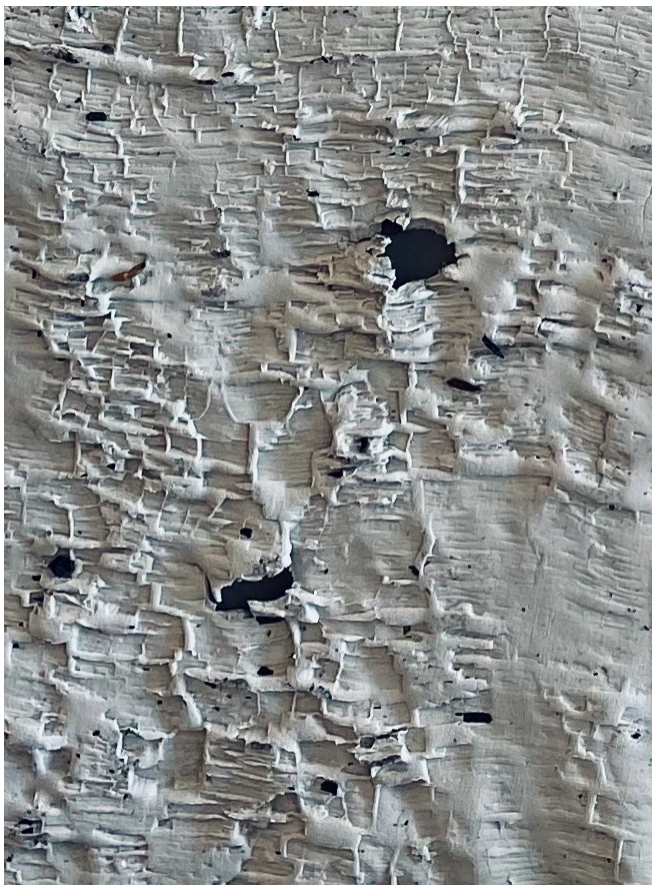
The burnt tree in Long Dole field.

In this next sequence of work I focus on one place, the Long Dole field. I wanted to test the capacity of directly printing from the landscape using clay slabs alongside soft ground etching. I used porcelain paper clay and terracotta clay washed with terra sigilatta slip to gather different impressions of the burnt tree. By keeping the scale consistent each process could be scrutinised effectively in relation to each other, removing the randomness of previous experimentation.



Porcelain slabs pressed onto the burnt tree branch.





Porcelain slabs imprinted with different marks from the tree

The porcelain prints gathered information that I had struggled to reach with other processes. The fine surface of the clay picked up minute detail from the burnt surface of the tree. A wide range of marks was created depending on where the print was taken. Some tree boughs created wide deep marks, others shallow disjointed scratches. The marks reminded me of cuneiform script, as if the tree was writing on the surface of the clay. I later washed the surface of these clay prints with a slip made from Litton clay. This highlighted the intricacy of the impressed marks, and related these slabs further to the earliest forms of writing in which a wood or reed stylus was used to impress letters into a slab of clay.

Rather like soft ground on an etching plate the terra sigilatta slip coating the terracotta slabs adhered to the surface of the tree. Where the surface was shallow the slip was removed, where the impression was deepest the slip was retained.





Porcelain slabs fired and washed with a slip made from Litton clay.



Unfired terracotta slabs with terra sigilatta slip imprinted by the burnt tree.

Printing Day Winter:



Long Dole Bridge. Hollowmarsh.

I returned to Long Dole field later that year planning to take prints from the burnt tree and the concrete bridge at the edge of the field discovered earlier that summer. Printing concurrently with soft ground plates and clay.

The bridge is constructed from three concrete pipes, laid side by side in the stream bed and covered in concrete. The structure allows the river to flow unobstructed, whilst tractors and people pass above. The site had clearly once had another unknown purpose – there is a derelict outbuilding of concrete blocks, a rusted gate baler twined to it, the ground scattered with broken slabs of concrete.

I struggled through dense nettles and marsh marigolds to reach the water and take the photographs. Whilst the upper half of the photograph is a scene of bucolic tranquillity, beneath loom the dark circles of the drainage pipes. These photographic images encapsulated my perception of the landscape as palimpsest, the bucolic view of meadow and trees, undercut by the darkness of the concrete tunnels channelling

the stream; obscured for most of the year by dense vegetation. An entanglement of the human and the non-human.



Long Dole bridge from the south and north. May.

I repeatedly returned to this site, photographing and tracking the changes that were effected through time, particularly the gradual decay of the manmade structures, the blowsy growth of summer overwhelming the remnants of the

concrete structure. The disparate landscapes visited by Cal Flynn, and described in *Islands of Abandonment*,[150] are often sites left neglected or forgotten for years or decades, in which *'nature has been allowed to work unfettered – providing valuable insight into the wisdom of environments in flux.'* [151] Landscapes age, decay, are reborn, or are sometimes destroyed. Unlike the temporal arc of a human life time affects different elements within the landscape at different rates. The manmade, if neglected, will quickly fall into disrepair and decay, whilst the opposite is true for plant growth. A bramble and an oak tree although coexisting have entirely different temporalities.

Through my practice of revisiting the same site over time and recording what I sense and observe there, I have created an archive of places in a state of flux as the needs of different groups in society clash over what landscape should be.

[150] Cal Flyn, *Islands of Abandonment. Life in the Post-Human Landscape*. (William Collins, 2021).
[151] Flyn, *Islands of Abandonment,* 5.

Long Dole Field boundary 2021-2025:

> *The act of remembering (naming places where experiences have 'taken place') is an act of ritualisation. The practice of returning to a place, remembering a place, is practiced ritual and therefore in one sense makes place sacred in the shared memories of the community. It is not surprising that the representation of landscape is imbued with contestation that is heavily charged, emotionally, socially and politically.*[152]



By the bridge in Long Dole field. May 2021.

[152] Pamela Stewart and Andrew Strathern, eds., *Landscape, Memory and History: Anthropological Perspectives* (Pluto Press, 2003), 73.



June 2021



June 2022



June 2024



June 2025

Printing with black clay and porcelain.

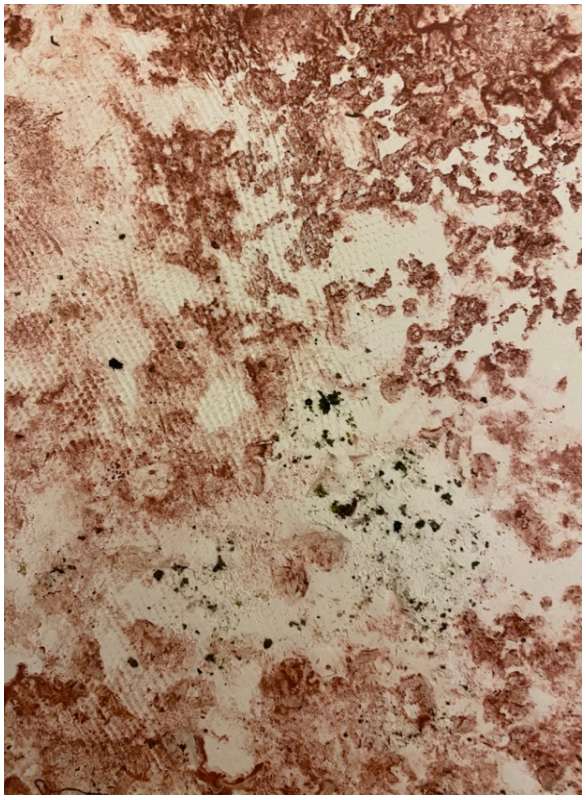




A4 porcelain paper clay slab, burnt tree and concrete bridge.

Up to this point I had predominantly used porcelain paper clay, although this is effective at picking up trace marks from the environment, the delicacy inherent to porcelain risked becoming a disadvantage. The fine, white clay surface bore little relation to the Litton landscape, but as I had not yet gathered a sufficient amount of local clay to use as printing slabs, I compromised by using the grogged black clay, previously used in the *Aperture* series. Grogged clay is stickier than porcelain paper clay, less malleable, and unlike paper clay, once dry it cannot be revived. I had not previously printed with this clay so needed to ensure the slabs were the right consistency, leaving the slabs to air dry for two hours, rather than overnight.

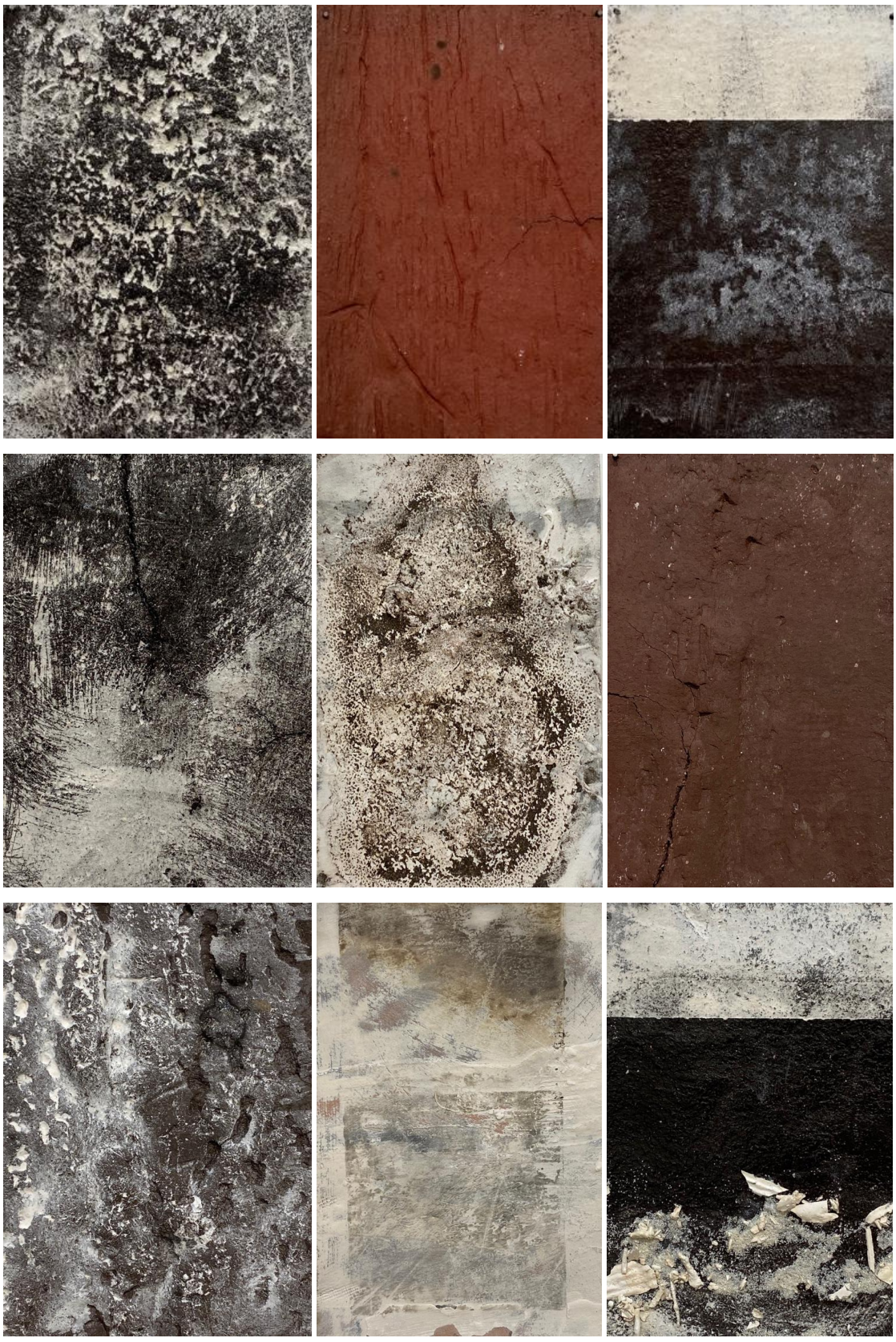
The black clay slabs were more resilient than porcelain allowing the clay to be moulded around uneven surfaces effectively. A residual mark or stain remained on the burnt tree and the bridge concrete where I had taken prints, a visible trace of my movement through the site. I placed a slab of porcelain clay on to the stained marks, recording both the texture of the place and my recent activity.





Porcelain paper clay print with black clay residue from an earlier print.

Porcelain print from burnt tree.



Series of slabs taken from Long Dole field burnt tree and bridge.

I introduced a slip line across the top third of some of the slabs, as I had previously done with the Time/Weather Series. This line could read as a horizon line, and unified the sequence across material and texture.

The photographs I took throughout this process caused me to interrogate the precedence I assigned to different methods. I consistently use photography to record my walks though this landscape and my interaction with place though material process, but had regarded this process as a tool rather than a method. The photographs of the trace residue of porcelain clay remaining on the burnt tree, or black clay on the bridge made me reconsider this. As I had found when I photographed the process of soft ground etching in the landscape, the small residual trace of clay, marooned amongst the vastness of the field, had the effect of focusing attention on the enormity of time, process and presence which had shaped this place. I questioned whether the photographic record of my interaction with place could be an outcome or method independently.



Slip trace on the burnt tree.

There are places in this landscape that resist photography, such as the burnt surface of the tree. This raises new questions about resistance and archive and how and what is recorded. By photographing the burnt tree with the ghost mark of porcelain clay imprinted on the surface, or the small rectangle of the etching plate left in place, the enormity of the site was focused and made comprehensible, the marks acted as trace memory made visible.

I regularly walked through Long Dole field, following my practice of photographing as I walked, recording the date, time and place. The photographs taken through my repeated interaction over many hours with Long Dole field grew in significance over the next year. In June 2022 the field was a mass of wild flowers, teeming with insect life.





Long Dole field 7th June 2022.

When I next walked through Long Dole field in September, the meadow grass and wildflowers had been cut for hay, but I felt no sense of trepidation until I drew near the burnt tree. The limbs had been gathered from their scattering through the edge grass and piled together ready for another burning. I took some of the smaller branches home with me, the larger branches were too heavy to carry. I felt a great sense of desolation over the changes being made to this place and worried why the tree had been cleared after so many years.

When I returned two weeks later the tree had gone, a pile of black charcoal twigs and cindered mud in its place. The meadow grass, sprayed with chemicals, looked singed and sickly yellow:

> *the colour of dead plants or weeds after being sprayed with Roundup. It is these very weeds that provided the main food source for pollinators,*

butterflies, farmland birds and a vast range of other species which used to depend on these habitats to nourish themselves in winter.[153]



September 16th, 2022: Burnt tree piled and cleared.



[153] "Sustainable Food Trust", Patrick Holden, It's not the Plough but the How! Accessed June 2, 2025, https://sustainablefoodtrust.org/news-views/its-not-the-plough-but-the-how/



4th October 2022: Long Dole Field, Hollowmarsh, without the burnt tree.

Slow Violence, the title used by Niamh Fahy for her PhD research on the Somerset Levels, is a term coined by Rob Nixon in 2011 to describe the 'relative invisibility' of violence that occurs gradually and out of sight:

> *a violence of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space, an attritional violence that is typically not viewed as violence at all.... a violence that is neither spectacular nor instantaneous, but rather incremental and accretive, its calamitous repercussions playing out across a range of temporal scales.* [154]

An intrinsic part of Fahy's practice was to bring the 'slow violence' being wrought on the Somerset levels, though phosphate spill off, to greater public attention. It was the small and particular violence wrought on the Long Dole Field and the burnt tree, noticed and recorded by me, that brought both the misery and the power of artistic practices such as these into focus. As Nixon argues, the calamity of such violence lies

[154] Nixon, Slow Violence, 2

in its incremental nature. What does one sprayed field or one felled tree matter. This project returns to the theme of resistance, that these small places do matter.



October 2022:



Plough marks in Long Dole.

When I returned later in October the field had been deeply ploughed to its edge, claw marks tracked through the earth. The claggy clay soil stuck to my boots in thick clods as I attempted to follow the route of the footpath along the field boundary. When I reached the site where the tree once lay I noticed that the ground was thickly carpeted with fallen acorns, as if the living trees were signalling their defiance to the chemical destruction that had been wrought around them.



In the post-industrial society in which we live, we most often experience landscape indirectly through what we are taught, have read, or experience through a screen. We are separated from the sort of everyday direct contact, experienced through the rhythms of our lives, which until recently connected us through physical interaction, presence and attention to the land.[155] The landscape and what happens to it has become an unknown, left to others – farmers, councils, charities, to manage. This gradual alienation has incrementally lowered our accepted threshold for access to, and protection of landscape. The psychological and sociological effect of becoming

[155] Yi-Fu Tuan: Space, "Place, and Nature: The Farewell Lecture," University of Wisconsin-Madison. April 4th, 2014. https://www.yifutuan.org/dear_colleague.htm

accustomed to environmental degradation and change is referred to as *Shifting Baseline Syndrome*:

> *In the absence of past information or experience with historical conditions, members of each new generation accept the situation in which they were raised as being normal.* [156]

Whilst I recognise that land use and land rights are not always compatible across different groups, diversity of habitat, non-commodifiable aesthetic beauty and the intangible connections forged between people and place are often the first things to be sacrificed. Over 97% of the UK's species rich grassland has been lost since the 1930s.[157] We have become inured to environmental destruction, seeing the current state of the landscape as normal rather than the recent aberration that it is.



Long Dole Field, May 2023

[156] Masashi Soga and Kevin J. Gaston. Shifting baseline syndrome: causes, consequences, and implications. *Frontiers in Ecology and the Environment*, Volume 16, Issue 4 (2018), Abstract. https://doi.org/10.1002/fee.1794

[157] "Plantlife"Managing Meadows, accessed May 3, 2025, https://www.plantlife.org.uk/advice-learning/managing-grassland

For months I found it too upsetting to return to Long Dole. When I eventually did, in May 2023, straggly oil seed rape plants were struggling to survive in the poor soil. The Hollowmarsh fields are claggy, often waterlogged, serving for centuries as pastureland for livestock, resulting in their rich diversity of wildlife. The decision to strip and plough this field and five others beyond felt ignorant and wantonly destructive. I later discovered that the fields were owned by the same man who had illegally erected the twenty metre long fence in Chewton woods in an attempt to bar access to his land. A village protest group (of which I was a part) had objected and forced its removal.

This year the field is once again grazed meadowland, but of a uniform green with none of the teeming diversity of wildflowers that was once there.



Long Dole Field. 14th June 2025.

Witness:

If there was any consolation to be found in this experience it was that I had borne witness to it, and wasn't alone in my sense of outrage. Others in the village were angry; the illegal ploughing was reported and although the damage had been done, the landowner responsible was reprimanded. By being present and bearing witness to this place through time I had created an archive of place and practice. These images could be used as evidence if needed, but were also now the only record of a place as it had once been. Like the stories I hold of my own family and their past, the burnt tree existed only in my memory; in the photographs and prints I took from its surface, and in the small twigs and acorns I had collected as I walked. The temporality of the tree, which had the potential to stretch far into the future, was tethered to my own time span.



Burnt tree clay print, acorns from the surrounding oaks and soft ground etching

The opposition within the village to the destruction of the meadow, and erection of the fence, happened because these places are accessible through the footpaths that cross the Hollowmarsh. When places are seen and experienced a protective relationship often develops. The river Wye is one of only three percent of British

rivers with both a statutory right of navigation, and bankside access, along the majority of its length. Many people have taken notice and care about the river's increasing degradation by phosphate pollution.

> *The condition of the river has been turned into a national scandal. Yet without ordinary people serving as this river's guardian and advocates, we would know little of its fate. They know, because they have been empowered to know: their relationship with the river is enduring.*[158]

The recent arguments surrounding the right to camp on Dartmoor, [159] and wider debate over how the English landscape is accessed, farmed and protected have their roots in legislative change begun over four hundred years ago. Between 1604 and 1914 more than five thousand enclosure bills were enacted by parliament, covering over a fifth of the total area of England, or 6.8 million acres.[160]

The effect of enclosure upended livelihoods by removing the common land as a source of grazing, firewood and food, destroying the ability for the rural poor to make an independent living from the land and displacing many to the growing industrial cities. In the enclosure of Barton-on Humber, in the late eighteenth century, in which rights to the common land were taken into account, 3,733 acres were divided between three people, a further fifty-one people were awarded between one and three acres, and many others left with no right to the land on which they lived.[161] Enclosure marked the start of a process of incremental severance

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[158] Nick Hayes and Jon Moses, eds., *Wild Service. Why Nature Needs You* (Bloomsbury, 2024), 270.
[159] "BBC News," BBC, Supreme Court backs wild camping on Dartmoor. 21st May 2025, https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cwywwq5zkqwo
[160] "Uk Parliament," Enclosing the Land, https://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/transformingsociety/towncountry/landscape/overview/enclosingland/
[161] Edward Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (Vintage Books, 1966), 218.

between people and place, that later industrial developments and removal of land based rights exacerbated - dramatically changing the way we relate to landscape. Seventeenth and eighteenth century elites attempted to 'privatise' rural England through acts such as the 'stopping up' of country lanes, and the barring of access to common land. In some counties this was seen as a civilizing mission with landowners *'recasting animal and human bodies 'out of place' as both economically inefficient and morally corruptive'.*[162]

In the 2025 Dartmoor case, landowners Alexander and Diana Darwell claimed they were acting in the best interests of the landscape by restricting public access to it:

> *"Our aim from the outset was to protect and preserve Dartmoor, its flora and fauna," they said. "Landowners and farmers have always played a vital part in the conservation of Dartmoor... Hollowing out the role of landowners and farmers will not improve the vitality of the Dartmoor Commons."* [163]

But in a sign of the growing impact of public action and awareness, the appeal judges stated that public regulation of people's use of Dartmoor was 'likely to be more effective in protecting the land than attempts by private persons to challenge such use'.[164]

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[162] Leonard Baker, "The Moral Ecology of the English Crowd? Resisting Landscape Change in Rural Somerset and Dorset, c. 1780–1850." *Institute of Historical Research*, School of Advanced Study University of London. (2019) Np.

[163] Alexander and Diana Darwell's statement to the press after losing their Supreme Court case. "BBC News," 'How did we get to Dartmoor wild camping ruling?' May 2025. https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c24995gjdy0o

[164] "BBC News," 'Supreme Court backs wild camping on Dartmoor'. 21st May 2025, https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cwywwq5zkqwo

You have to be slower than change to see it, [165] writes Solnit, events have genealogies and evolutions that must be traced back into the past in order to be understood.

> *If you follow them in either real time or the historical record, you can often see power that emerges from below and ideas move from the margins to the centre. You can see how it all works.* [166]

In 1972 the academic Christopher Stone questioned the 'anthropocentric foundations of existing legislation', asking why we were willing to accept the granting of rights of personhood to a conceptual entity such as a company or institution, but not to a living place or thing (this principle is referred to as the corporate veil or the Salomon principle[167]). The last two centuries have seen seismic shifts in the legal standing of many groups in society which, until it happened, seemed threatening and unthinkable.

> *Each time there is a movement to confer rights onto some new "entity," the proposal is bound to sound odd or frightening or laughable. This is partly because until the rightless thing receives its rights, we cannot see it as anything but a thing.* [168]

Macfarlane writes that there *'are few things as powerful as an idea whose time has come'*. [169] The last decade has seen a gradual shift in perception across the world,

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[165] Sally Wetherall, "Notes from James Rebanks interview with Rebecca Solnit, Hay Festival, May 25, 2025. https://www.hayfestival.com/p-23004-rebecca-solnit-talks-to-james-rebanks.aspx?skinid=16

[166] Rebecca Solnit, *No Straight Road Takes You There* (Granta Books, 2025), 33.

[167] "LexisNexis," Separate legal personality and the corporate veil. Accessed June 2025. https://www.lexisnexis.co.uk/legal/guidance/separate-legal-personality-the-corporate-veil

[168] Christopher D. Stone, "Should Trees Have Standing? Towards Legal Rights for Natural Objects," *Southern California Law Review* 45 (1972): 455.

[169] Robert Macfarlane, *Is a River Alive?* (Penguin Random, 2025), 29.

enacted in new legal frameworks, in which landscape is granted recognition as having its own rights as a living being.

This methodology has become a form of quiet revolt, a resistance to a way of thinking and being that commodifies landscape, or what Solnit refers to as the 'tyranny of the quantifiable.'[170] I set out deliberate strategies to interact and learn with this landscape and with the experience of others who live or lived here; hoping that through my interaction with and documentation of this place I might influence a wider perception and understanding of the distinctive precariousness and significance of this landscape.

> *There was never a time when human agency was anything other than an interfolding network of humanity and nonhumanity; today this mingling has become harder to ignore.*[171]

[170] Rebanks interview with Solnit, Hay Festival, 25 May 2025.

[171] Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, 31.

One Field. One Year apart. Long Dole.





June 2022/June 2023.



June 2022/June 2023.

Chapter 3: (An)archive.



Something sets us looking for a place.

Old stories tell that if we could only

get there, all distances would be erased. [172]

Sarah Howe

[172] Sarah Howe. "Crossing from Guangdong", Lines 88-90 in *Loop of Jade* (Chatto & Windus, 2015).

Overview:

This chapter explores how memory becomes another layer within landscape, shaping how place is perceived, remembered and interpreted. In particular, I reflect on memories of my childhood in the Lake District and how these early experiences initially confused my understanding of this landscape, memory overlaying and complicating historical interpretation.

I examine the concept of social haunting and memory in place, engaging particularly with the work of Tim Edensor, Michel de Certeau and Doreen Massey.

I investigate the potential of creating an affinity between the material solidity of landscape formation embodied in the construction of the ceramic slab, and the transience of memory represented through glaze and slip washes, decal imagery and the incorporation of found objects. These processes explore how different forms of memory -personal, social and historical - become embedded within the material of landscape.

Alongside this conceptual exploration, I detail experiments with print and photographic processes that sit on the surface of the ceramic or paper substrate rather than being embedded within it. These surface processes mirror the fragile and shifting nature of memory itself, suggesting how personal recollection, historical trace and material surface interact within both landscape and artistic practice.

Absence:

> *The landscape is a polyrhythmic composition of processes whose pulse varies from the erratic flutter of leaves to the measured drift and clash of tectonic plates... the view before us seems composed of fleeting, ephemeral effects which create a patina of transience on apparently stable forms.*[173]

Until I moved to Litton in 2016 I had seldom felt any deep sense of emplaced belonging towards the places in which I lived. I rarely stayed for longer than a few years, or sometimes months, in one place. Although I have now experienced years of settled existence, I bring to this landscape an enduring sense of unsettlement instilled by the fragility of my past inhabitation of place.

Our experience in landscape/place is not static, but affected by a shifting palimpsest of past experience and remembered impressions and memories. For all the human intention of mapping and recording, much of our experience of landscape resists documentation. A change in the light, a sudden smell, a glimpse of something reminiscent of another time or place, and the landscape you are currently experiencing becomes overlaid with memories of a different place. Each landscape the site of an infinite number of individual responses shaped through the interplay between particular memories, and the embodied reaction to what is already there.

As Massey observes:

> *'Here', in that sense, is not a place on a map. It is that intersection of trajectories, the meeting-up of stories; an encounter.*[174]

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[173] David Reason, "A hard singing of country," in *The Unpainted Landscape*, with contributions by Simon Cutts et al. (Coracle Press, 1987), in Ingold, Temporality of the landscape, 201.
[174] Massey "Some Times of Space." 111.

There are many examples within this landscape in which my own singular history informs my experience here. My profound reaction to the loss of the burnt tree in Long Dole field resurrected memories of the powerlessness that I had felt so frequently as a child, of some thing or place or person being taken from me. The field where the burnt tree once stood will forever be associated for me with loss, a place overlaid with subjective significance through my material and embodied interaction with this landscape, and with the past experiences I hold within me.

Absence, writes Frers, is not spectral or immaterial but a 'phenomenologically grounded concept', that derives its power from its '*embeddedness in the body, in bodily practices, sensual perceptions and emotions.*'[175] We each bring our individual narrative of absence to the places we inhabit, and entangle this with our embodied experience. The traces of past experience that are *writan* into place, have meaning, or tell a story, that may hold a particular resonance for me, but be meaningless to another.

> *as with all traces, they might also be overlooked, ignored, misinterpreted, and, even more than that, their significance changes with their context... thus show(ing) new, hitherto invisible connections, other layers of meaning, layers that are different from the supposedly present.*[176]

A key facet of my methodology is to return to (or haunt) places with which I feel a particular connection, and to find and interpret the stories that such places hold; most often these are sites where traces remain of past lives - the ridge and furrow fields; the derelict barn and bridge at Long Dole; the Holloway up to Chewton Plain.

[175] Lars Frers, "The Matter of Absence," *Cultural Geographies*, 20(4), (2013): 432.
[176] Frers, 'The Matter of Absence', 434.



Strip lynchets, early morning.

Strip Lynchets:

The steep hillside to the east of the village is ridged with deep terraces, scored into the earth. At first I assumed that they had been formed by sheep repeatedly traversing the steep hillside, as the Cumbrian fells of my childhood had been shaped. This remembrance of past experience made me feel a sense of belonging in this unfamiliar landscape. I returned, as I walked the fields and lanes, to memories of the Cumbrian home where I spent only a few fragmented years of my childhood, a house on the side of a river valley, a few miles north of Kendal.



Skelsmergh. 1984. [177]

We returned as often as we could to the cold, mossy, dampness of this house in the north of England, so different from the privet-hedged, tarmac-laid, brick cul-de-sacs of the many army quarters in which we temporarily lived through term time.

[177] Photograph of the author by her mother, Skelsmergh,1984.

Returned to the familiarity of the mossy roots of the tall trees behind the house; of cold, lime-plastered walls, and the scorch of the electric fire. I would climb high into the damp, dark scented branches of the old Yew tree beside the house, and knew not to run beneath it where the slabs were slimed with fallen berries and moss.

Many years after we finally left I returned, walking down the stony track from the Shap Road, crossing the cattle grids, enveloped by the familiarity of moss and damp and sheep and water. As I walked through the gate I saw that the Yew tree was no longer there, only its raw stump remained.

A flicker of recognition now, prompted by a Yew tree, a stone wall, a steep hill, and the intangible memory traces of my past become superimposed on this southern landscape. A bewildering sense of place not as static but cutting through many trajectories; my own memories, the stories I have been told, the things I learn, what I feel and see and smell and sense. As Massey writes, places are not static, they cannot, in your absence be held still. [178] I wished afterwards that I had not seen the felled Yew tree, so that in my memory it still stood.

I discovered that the ridges that seemed so familiar, were not created by the hooves of sheep seeking purchase on the steep hillside, but were evidence of human intervention across centuries, telling a story of unimaginable loss. The burgeoning population of medieval Britain [179] led to marginal land, such as these dry, steep slopes being ploughed for crops.[180] As the plough was dragged across steep earth, soil slithered downwards, eventually forming steps or 'lynchets' - derived from the Saxon word 'hlinc', or ridge. [181] With the Black Death reaching England in 1348, this

[178] Massey, "Some Times of Space," 111.

[179] This peaked at 6 million in the mid 14th century.

[180] Oliver Rackham, *The History of the Countryside* (This edition Weidenfeld and Nicholas, 2020), 159.

[181] Nicholas Crane, *The Making of the British Landscape* (Weidenfeld and Nicholas, 2016), 145.

growing population was decimated. [182] The Leicestershire chronicler Henry Knighton wrote of fields going unploughed, weeds growing high and crops rotting in the fields owing to a dearth of labour.[183] The strip lynchets have remained unploughed since, a spectral presence above the village, as if the ploughman had at this moment stopped and walked down the hill in the warm spring sunshine.

The abrupt termination of their use and the remaining presence of the lynchets above the village creates a dialogue of *Absent presence* [184] made more unsettling by the sensation of the lynchets appearing and retreating through the action of light. These massive earthworks shift in perception, looming clear and stark above the village as early morning light pools in the waves of earth; almost disappearing in the evening as the westering sun flattens the hillside.

[182] The Plague is estimated to have killed between 75 and 200 million people worldwide between the years 1347-1349 and approximately 50% of the British population.

[183] Attributed to Henry Knighton (1349) in Matthew Green, *Shadowlands. A Journey Through lost Britain* (Faber and Faber, 2022), 124.

[184] Tim Edensor, Mundane hauntings: commuting through the phantasmagoric working-class spaces of Manchester, England. *Cultural Geographies* 15 (2008): 324.



Strip lynchets from the south, late afternoon. Summer.

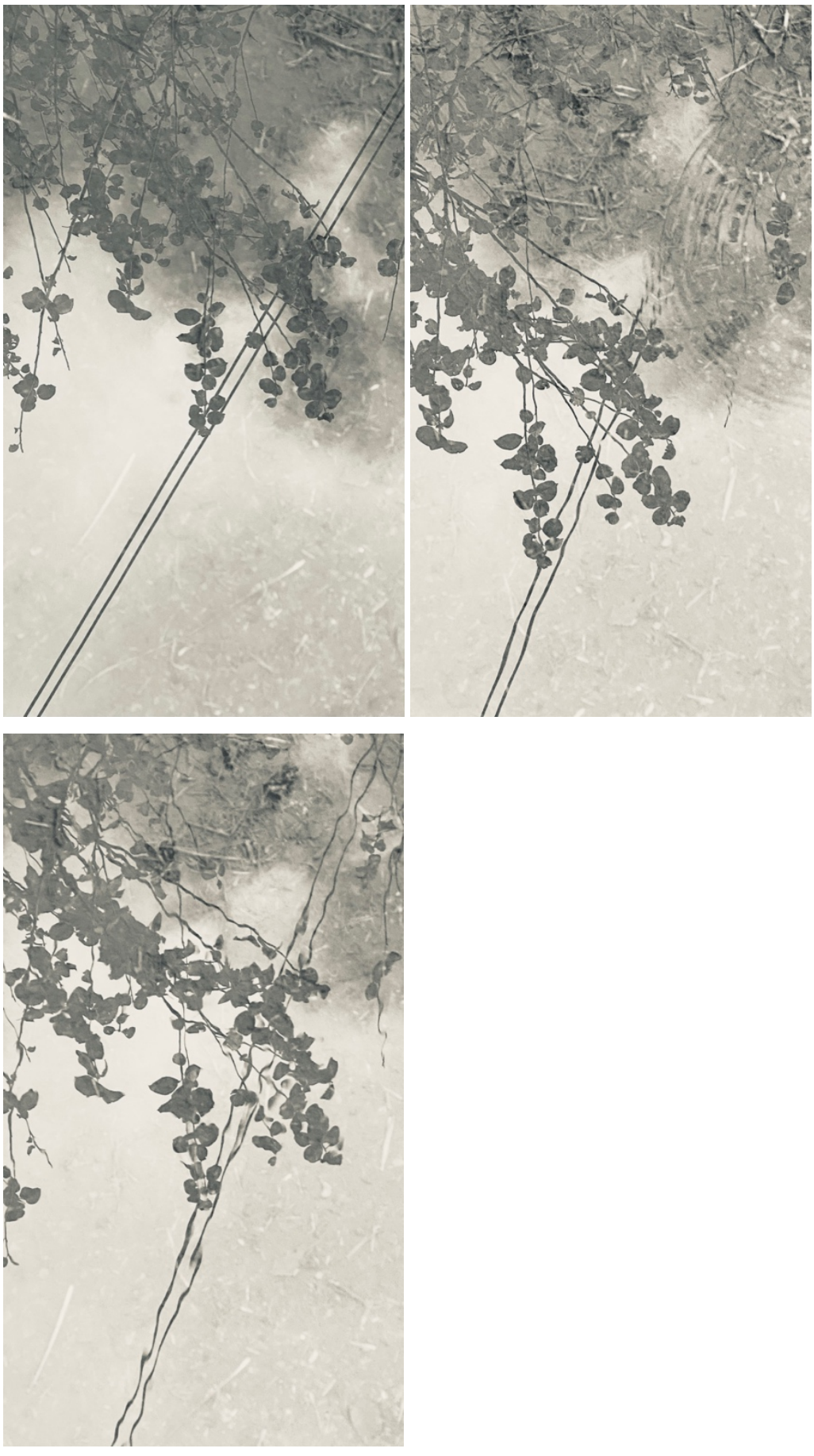
The memories and stories (my own and others) that I bring to this place entangle with what is already here. So the lynchets - formed by feet and plough, that tell a story of abandonment and death - flicker within my own memory of a beloved place of sheep-ridged hills.

It is this sense of overlap and entanglement of memory and place that I now focus on, looking first at methods developed to express the transience of fleeting individual memory in place. Intaglio print methods, on which I had previously focused, felt inappropriate here. Unlike the accumulative traces of past presence expressed within the material of landscape in tracks, paths, lynchets, walls and buildings - singular memory, and especially memories in this landscape of somewhere else, seemed to be expressed by the shifting intangibility of reflections and shadows on the surface of water, a fleeting penumbra.

Individual memory is not a fixed feature such as a tree or a track, ingrained into the surface of the ground, but transient and ethereal as the reflection on the surface of a puddle when the sun comes out, a cast shadow, here, then gone, then here again.



Track through the long field and a reflection on a puddle in Hollowmarsh lane.



A reflection on a puddle as rain starts to fall.

Smoke/Glaze/Decal:

I had not previously used decal imagery as part of my practice, disliking the sense of a surface layer obscuring the clay beneath. But I now wondered whether this surface quality, which sits on the clay, rather than interacting with the surface as an etching plate would, held the capacity to express the fragile transience of a memory, or reflection.

I created a series of decal images from photographs of fleeting, intangible moments in landscape - sunlight turning a muddy puddle into a mirrored reflection, or leaves held suspended below surface water.

As I was unclear whether this method would prove successful, for the first decal trial I reused existing porcelain slabs. This series had been printed with soft ground etching plates using an ink with an unintentionally low ratio of oxide to copperplate oil. Whilst a faint trace of the print was visible on some slabs, many appeared blank. I had intended to discard these slabs, but felt that here was an opportunity to investigate the interaction between different print and surface treatments. The copperplate oil print, although not visible, remained embedded within the ceramic surface (as a memory remains embedded within the mind). Further material interaction might allow these latent prints to become visible, as Fox Talbot had revived the latent image in his early Calotypes.

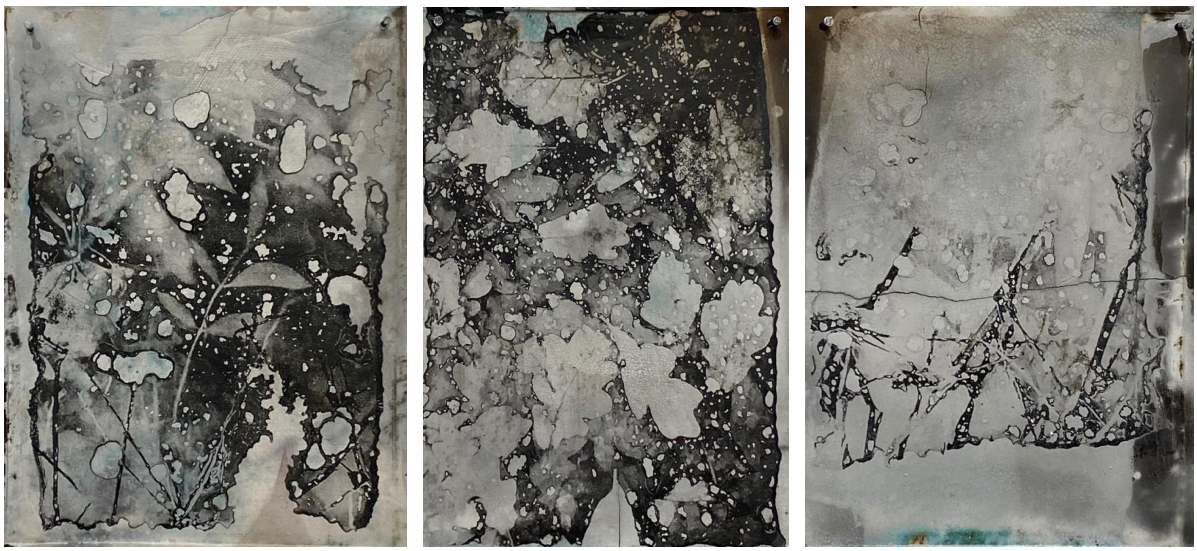
I decided that two processes had the capacity to reveal traces of the soft ground prints: glazing and smoke firing



Bisque fired etching plates printed with a manganese and black copper ink.

I glazed some of the slabs with a thin layer of clear earthenware crackle glaze and fired to 1050°C. This process revealed more of the latent print than had previously been visible, and changed the colour of the oxide ink to a bright turquoise. I transferred the decal imagery onto the surface of the glazed slabs and refired.

A combination of rapid firing, ramping the kiln at 300°C per hour, the temperature of the kiln (850°c) and the very thin layer of glaze I had applied meant the decals adhered only in part. This allowed both the clay surface and residual print trace to be perceived beneath the decal image, creating a dreamlike quality, as if taken from a spool of old and damaged film.



Smoke fired, glazed porcelain paper clay slab with decal images over copper and manganese ink soft ground etching prints.

I smoke fired the glazed decal slabs with the remaining (invisibly) imprinted slabs from the same print sequence. Smoke was drawn to the residual trace of oil remaining within the surface of the unglazed slabs, revealing latent traces of the older print process. These interrelated methods - glazing, decal, smoke firing - had developed through accident and experimentation. They seemed to encapsulate that aspect of landscape with which I had become most fascinated, the concept of landscape as palimpsest, in which different times and memories are made discernible through presence and process.

In the next section I explore this process in greater depth, paying attention to scale, choice of clay and how the decal and underlying slab relate in terms of process and theory.



Porcelain clay soft ground etchings after smoke firing.



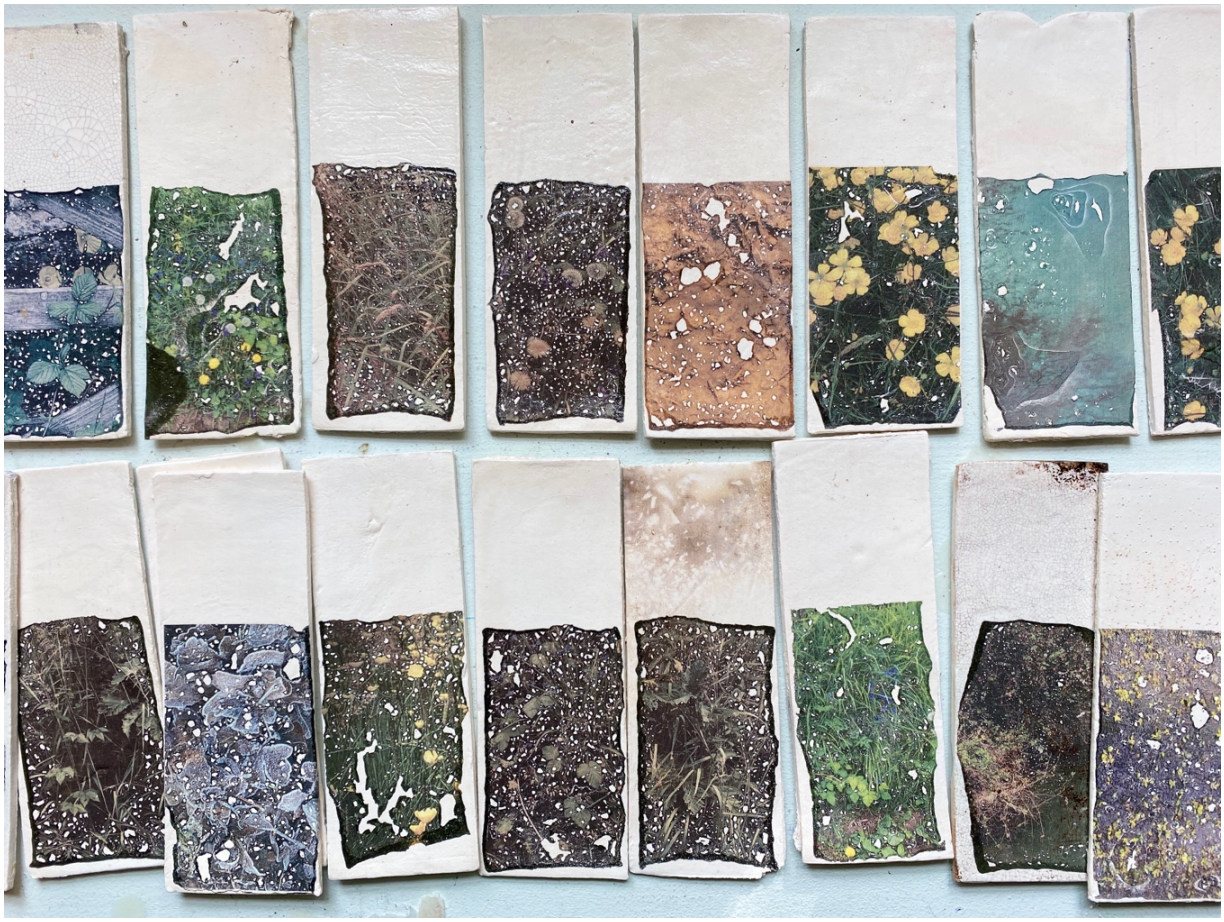
Terracotta slab with porcelain slip, decal image and kiln shards.



Cow parsley silhouette. Hollowmarsh Lane.

Colour:

At the start of this research I often took photographs in the knowledge that I would use the imagery to create photogravure plates. This led to a preponderance of monotone imagery, in which I paid close attention to shadows and tone which could be transferred to a print process, rather than to colour. This was also in part an aesthetic decision, I felt that such imagery allied itself more closely to both print forms and cast shadows in landscape, whereas colour was often intangible, beyond the reach of a print making process. Any attempt to introduce colour into my methodology had seemed a simulacrum of the actual experience of colour in landscape. By using ceramic decals within my practice, the colour of the sky, reflections on water, a silhouette, became aspects of landscape which could now be incorporated and examined.



Testing colour decal images on porcelain paper clay slabs.



Cow parsley silhouette image as a decal on Porcelain Paper clay,

Raku crackle glaze and Oak gall ink.

I returned again to the earlier imprinted slab sequence, this time disrupting and obscuring the surface on to which the decal would later be transferred. I scattered molochite or kiln shards, glazed only in part and added layers of slip before firing. I overlaid processes in order to find out what would happen as these different surfaces interacted with each other; what would be revealed or concealed. The unintentionality of the surfaces I created was important. The resulting densely layered, and obscured slabs created a resonance between the solidity of the etched clay surface, as the landscape is shaped through inhabitation and usage, and the fragile memory traces with which we overlay the places in which we find ourselves, creating *'a patina of transience on apparently stable forms'*.[185]



[185] Reason in Ingold, Temporality of the landscape, (1993): 201.



Slabs showing the layering of process that has occurred, with the faint ghost etching emerging through the layer of glaze. Porcelain paper clay. Soft ground etching. White raku or transparent crackle glaze. Molochite and kiln shards. Decal imagery. Oak gall ink. Sandpaper.

Oak tree:

I now understood how much disruption it was possible to incorporate into a slab while still allowing the decal to adhere to the surface. I wanted to relate the processes through which the underlying slab was formed more closely to the decal image which would form the uppermost layer. This next work was an amalgamation of processes developed in the last chapter *Hollowmarsh*, in which I had taken slabs of clay into the landscape, imprinting them with surface textures; and information gathered from the previous sequence of porcelain slabs.

In a (temporary) disruption to previous methods, the image I used for this next work was of an oak tree, rather than of transient aspects of landscape. I had created a photogravure print of this oak tree, drawn to the multiplicity of stories and temporalities entangled in this site: the earth, the tree, the bank, my own fleeting presence. The Oak is centuries old, it sits on the deep earth banks of a damp and shadowed Holloway through Litton Wood. The Holloway is rarely used now, and often strewn with fallen branches and dislodged stone from its once cobbled base. The route originally led from the village in the valley to a Roman settlement, now buried beneath the earth on the plain above. Alongside the track wind the humped earth ramparts of a Norman deer park boundary.

This was the largest decal slab I had created,[186] and was formed from black chunky clay imprinted with the surface of the Oak tree. Where the small porcelain slabs referenced a series of pages, this piece, both in scale and material felt more closely allied to the surface of the earth.

[186] Measuring 45cm x 30 cm





The Holloway from Chewton wood to the plain.



The surface of the Holloway after a storm: October 2021.

I used the same dimensions to create the decal image as I had for the print. This equivalence would enable a comparison of the same image created using very different methods; one printed *into* flat paper, the other sitting *on* indented and disrupted clay. I added a sequence of glaze and slip washes to the clay surface before transferring the decal image of the Oak tree to the slab.

The fragmentary adherence of the decal image to the imprinted clay slab did create a resonance between my own sense of the brief, flickering temporality of human presence in this ancient landscape, in contrast to the far greater age of the tree and the earth. But the relationship between image, process and material, which had a clear theoretical structure in the sequence of porcelain decal/soft ground slabs did not hold up to scrutiny here.





Photogravure print of the Holloway Oak on paper. Photo decal transfer of the Oak on Black imprinted clay, porcelain slip, transparent glaze and Oak gall ink.

Creating the Oak tree pieces brought into focus how the process of discovery through material research enabled understanding of processes of landscape formation. Unlike the more fleeting aspects of the landscape on which I had previously concentrated, I had many ways to document this tree that resonated more clearly with its materiality - it could be imprinted with clay, photographed, or made into an etching plate. The etching process, in which an image is ingrained into the surface, was more allied to the solidity and presence of the tree than a fleeting decal image. Although vulnerable, as all trees are to disease and destruction, at this time the tree was not a memory but a place. Where memory is multiple and unstable, the tree and this piece were singular and solid.

Archive:

The entanglement of our own presence in landscape, with the remaining traces of past presence creates a series of unstable, fragmented spaces. The landscape becomes what Crang and Tavlou refer to as a 'container for different eras,'[187] and Wall as '*an archive of traces – a complex imbrication of time frames and historic resonances.*'[188]

Lorimer notes a recent methodological turn within traditional archival research and fieldwork towards innovation and nonconformism. This new approach which recognises transience, absence and loss in landscape [189] creates what Lorimer calls an 'expanded archive,'[190] or (An)archive. Whist still drawing on traditional sources of archival and historical information, the (An)archive also considers less conventional sources that might previously have been overlooked, ignored or erased. Within my own methodology this might include a series of photographs, a collection of objects, or the memory of a conversation held on a walk. This alternative material and emotional archive of knowledge, gleaned from my repeated presence in place, combined with more traditional forms of historical research, presented me with a way of making and combining disparate aspects of my research practice free from strict demarcations between process, time or historical research, giving primacy to the personal, embodied, fragmentary and messy, or what the poet Kathleen Jamie refers to as 'findings.'[191]

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[187] Mike Crang and Penny S Travlou, The city and topologies of memory. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space,* Volume 19 (2001): 161.

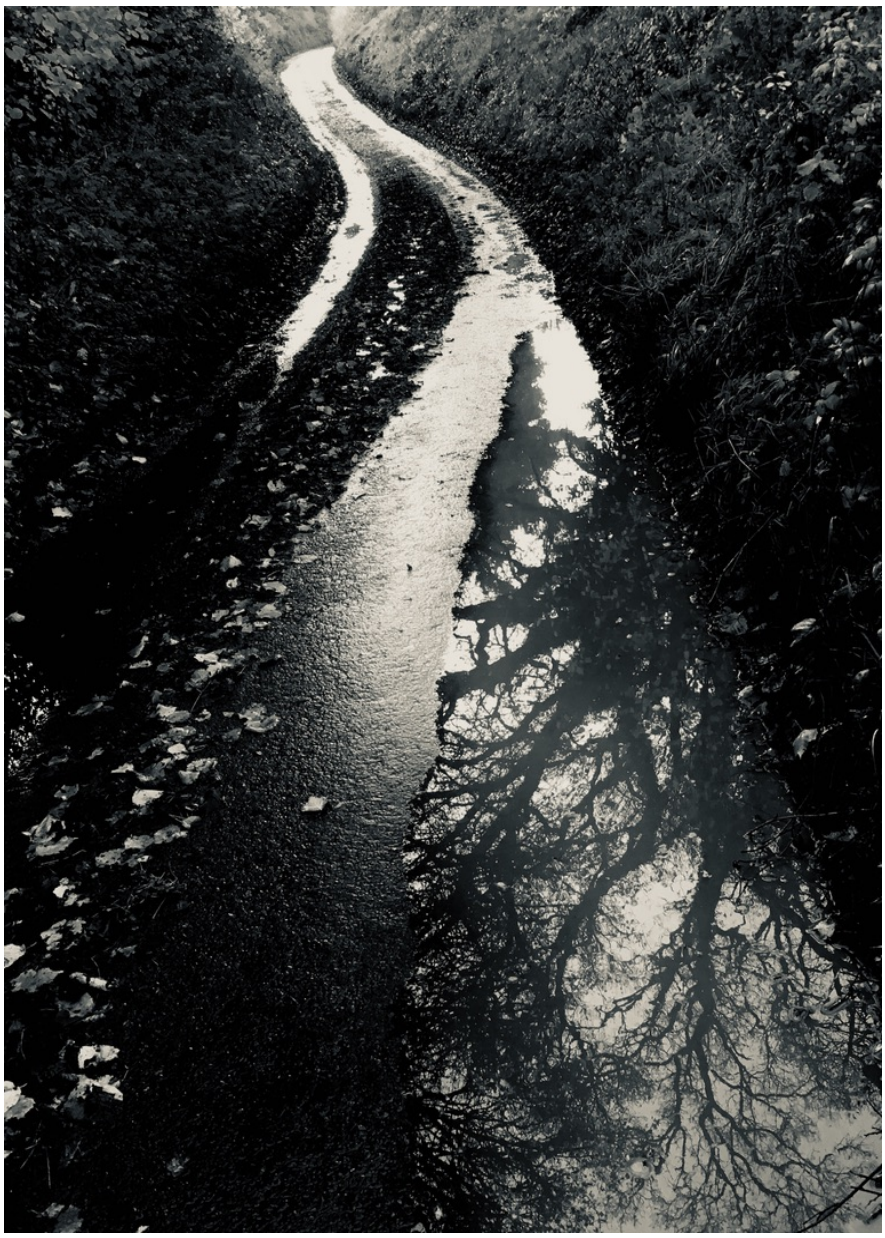
[188] Gina Wall, Ghost writing: photographing (the) spectral north. *Visual Studies,* Vol. 28, No. 3 (2013) 244.

[189] Lorimer, Archives and Fieldwork (2009): 264.

[190] Lorimer, Archives and Fieldwork (2009): 249.

[191] Kathleen Jamie. *Findings* (2005) in Lorimer, Archives and Fieldwork (2009): 258.

I want to hollow the earth beneath me into my hands, also the light falling on the earth at that moment, the plants growing there, the objects accumulated on its surface, the memories entangled here.



Anarchive/Box Sequence 1 and 2.

In the next sequence I reverted to creating multiples, which together form an archive of memory and material interaction with this landscape, reassessing a series of clay box forms created at the beginning of my research process, which referenced the sequencing and scale of museum archival boxes.



Early box series.

Each box was fired multiple times; between each firing I added more cocooned plant material, locally gathered clay, molochite and glaze. Some of the boxes were entirely enclosed, and layered externally with cocooned plants. The gradual accretion on, or in the boxes related to the slow accrual of plant growth, combined with the effect of time, weather and erosion gradually transforming places within the landscape. I had documented this gradual accrual and transformation of landscape in a series of photographs in which I returned over time to specific places, such as the bridge in Long Dole field, or the churchyard slates (below).



Slates in Litton Churchyard 2020



Slates in Litton Churchyard 2024.

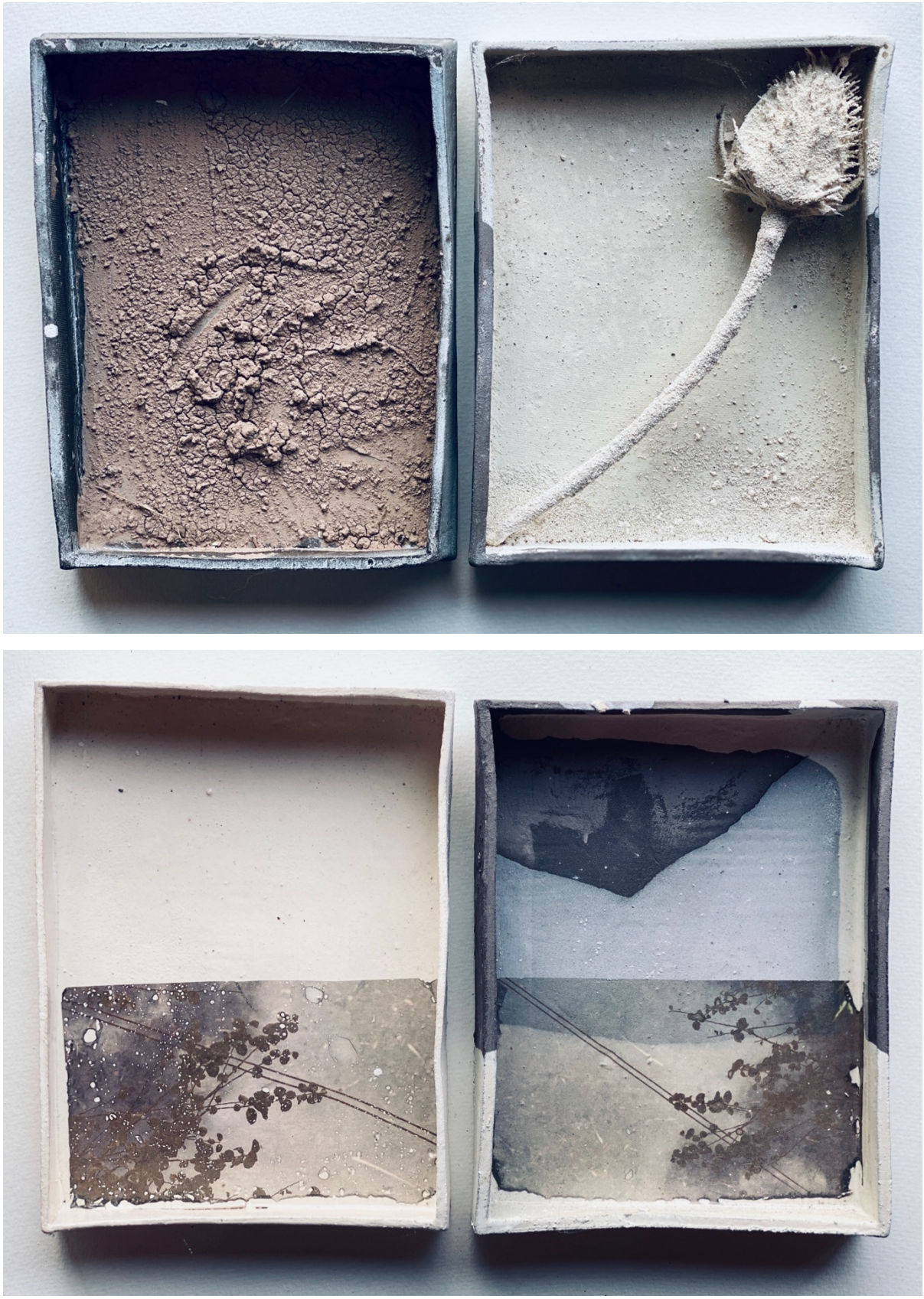
I was interested in the potential of combining my established cocooning process (see Chapter 1) with decal print images, creating a series of clay archive boxes which layered a multiplicity of events and processes, referencing the following aspects of past practice:

- The archive/archaeological box form.
- A multiplicity of imagery.
- The disrupted surface.
- Cocooned plant material.
- Local clay and gathered objects.
- Sequence/series/page.
- Disintegration and dilapidation through time.



Porcelain paper clay and black clay boxes before firing.

I constructed a series of porcelain paper clay and black clay slab boxes which I dipped in terra sigilatta slip. I glazed and fired some of the boxes, placing decal images of reflections, shadows or water within the frame. I used identical dimensions across the images and placement which allowed each box to be both singular and interrelated when experienced in sequence. I filled some boxes with local clay slip, as this dried it cracked and shrank as it would in the landscape. I fired some and left others as raw unfired clay. Some of the boxes remained very simple, containing only the decal image of a shadow, or a pool of slip. Others became encrusted with an accumulation of imagery, pooled clay, glaze and cocooned plant material which obscured the image beneath. I gradually added objects gathered from the landscape to the boxes, not always to be fired, but adding to the layers of accumulation within the boxes; a rusted piece of metal; barbed wire and charcoal from the burnt tree; oak galls; a bundle of Ash twigs; dried buttercups; balls of clay. I continue to add to this accumulation over time, the boxes becoming an archive of objects, material and memory.



Top: Unfired Litton clay and cocooned teasle in black clay boxes with terra sigilatta slip.

Bottom: Porcelain and black clay boxes with terra sigilatta slip and decal imagery.



Top: Black clay boxes with terra sigilatta slip, cocooned Ash twig and Honesty and unfired porcelain.

Bottom: Porcelain box and black clay box with terra sigilatta slip and decal images and local clay.



Porcelain and black clay boxes with fired unprocessed Litton clay and white Raku glaze, terra sigilatta slip, cocooned bramble stem and Litton clay dust.



(An)archive series in the Michael Pennie Gallery, Bath. February 2026.

Conclusion:

> *Obscure signs of the past constitute a continually shifting collage of fragments, some appearing, others disappearing, rather than a seamless sequence of recollected happenings: rather than any totalising narrative.*[192]

The series of work: (An)archive, combined aspects of many processes developed over the course of this research revealing my compulsive need to create a form of material manifestation of my experience of ephemeral and transient memory in landscape. An archive of my transient presence in the world.

The Etruscan word saeculum is usually taken to mean a human generation or span of about a hundred years, or in Solnit 'the span of time lived by the oldest person present'. She writes that each event has its saeculum, before it fades from lived memory and becomes a retelling or eventually is not told at all. Many generations have passed since the strip lynchets and the deer park boundary, the ridge and furrow fields, the ampulla and musket ball, were part of lived memory. How much of what I experience in this landscape belongs to an entirely forgotten past, that I pass by unheeding.

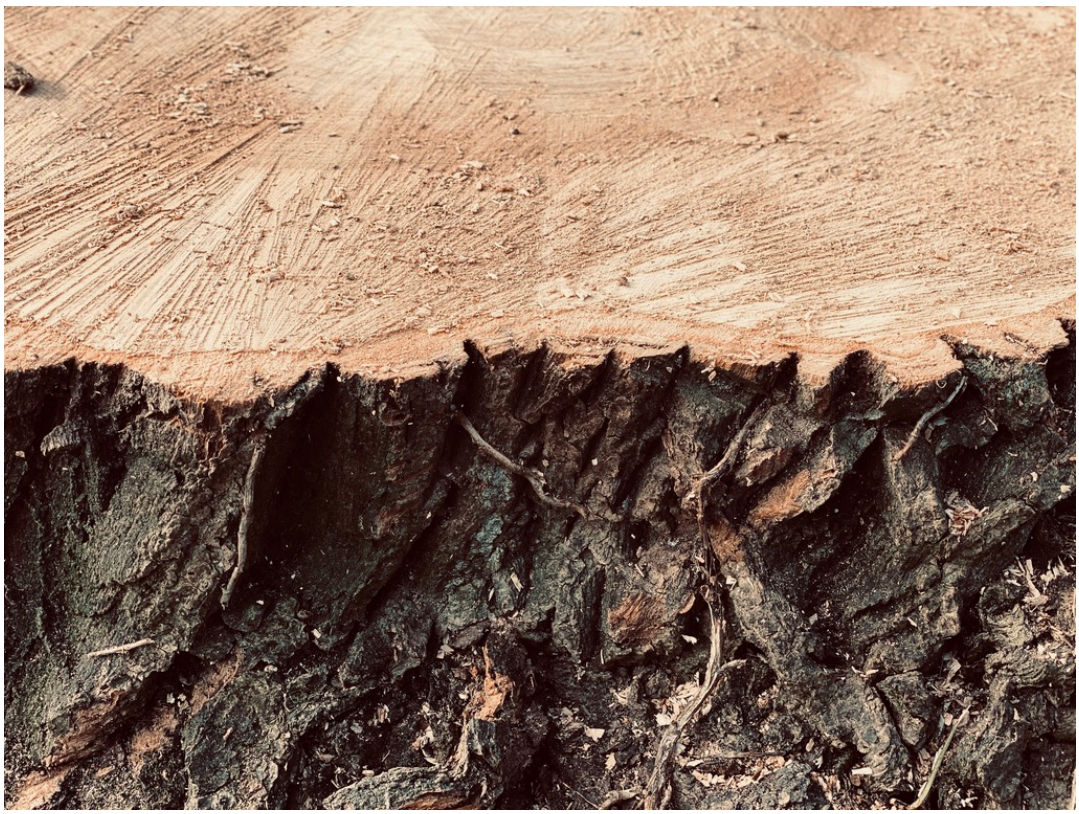
There are only two people left who remember climbing into the branches of a Yew tree on the side of a northern valley. The raw stump that I found when I returned may now have rotted into the ground, but in my memory it is renewed each time I see a felled tree.

[192] Tim Edensor, "The ghosts of industrial ruins: ordering and disordering memory in excessive space." *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, volume 23 (2004): 834.





Felled Oak tree, Whitehouse Lane.



We spin the stories we know from the information that is left to us, skewed by time, by deliberate or accidental forgetting, by political and social reluctance to engage with certain stories, with the weight and care given to others, so that what remains is subjected to a retelling and transposing of a history onto its surface. Many of the stories that landscape can tell become lost in the overarching narrative arc of progress or industrialisation or our 'current dystopia of "The Economy"'[193]

Salman Rushdie writes that 'we all end up lost in the past... most of us forgotten.'[194] But a central tenet of this research methodology is an attempt at understanding why there is unevenness in the forgetting, some memories/stories remaining in the present, whilst others fade.

[193] Iain Biggs. Creative Praxis, 40.

[194] Salman Rushdie, *Knife. Meditations After an Attempted Murder* (Penguin, Random House, 2024), 8.

Chapter 4: Book



Overview:

I reestablish the centre of this enquiry away from individual memory towards the accumulative and communal traces of past inhabitation which remain in this landscape. I examine the absence in the archive of those who were once present in this landscape, seeking spectral traces of my own family experience within this place. The 1872 document in which my ancestors made their mark, using oak gall ink, gains enormous significance. I turn to materials used in the traditional archive to interrogate how mark making and material relate to absence and begin to create work based on the traditional book form.

I reflect on the uneven survival of photographic and documentary records and the ways in which marginalised or ordinary lives are often absent from the official archive, revealing how the experiences of those without literacy, property or social status often remain unwritten within historical record, producing a skewed perception of time and presence, shaped by what has survived and what is absent.

In response, I investigate the material structure of the archive itself - wood, wax, parchment, paper, ink and clay, recognising these as materials shared with the landscape. The use of oak gall ink becomes particularly significant, prompting the development of a series of works using paper, wax and ink in dialogue with clay and print processes.

As in earlier chapters, the writing moves between analytical discussion, personal reflection and more experiential passages in order to attend to the fragmentary nature of these traces and the unstable relationship between memory, landscape and archive.

Introduction:

> *Stories about places are makeshift things.*[195]

> *History with a capital H has often been described as a fiction written by the conquerors, yet there are other histories, often hidden.*[196]

On Litton church tower, between the heads of kings and dragons, a winged angel holds a shield depicting three hares with water flowing beneath. This is the rebus of Richard Harewell, the Rector of Litton, who in 1392 commissioned the building of the church as it now stands. The alabaster effigy of Richard's Uncle, the Bishop of Wells, sits in the south quire of the cathedral, his feet resting on two stone hares. Theirs is a particular history of wealth and power projected into the future, signalling that they were here, that they shaped this landscape to their liking, and that this place is, seven hundred years later, still their creation.

Some stories remain and others are lost in the past. As part of my Progression interview in 2022, it was suggested that a way to connect with the people who lived in this landscape would be to look at the gravestones in Litton Churchyard. The difficulty with using such archaeological evidence is that stone commemorations, until quite recently, were limited to a narrow demographic. In research analysing the baptisms, burials and monumental commemorations of infants in thirty five Cambridgeshire villages in the nineteenth century only fifteen percent of burials were commemorated.[197]

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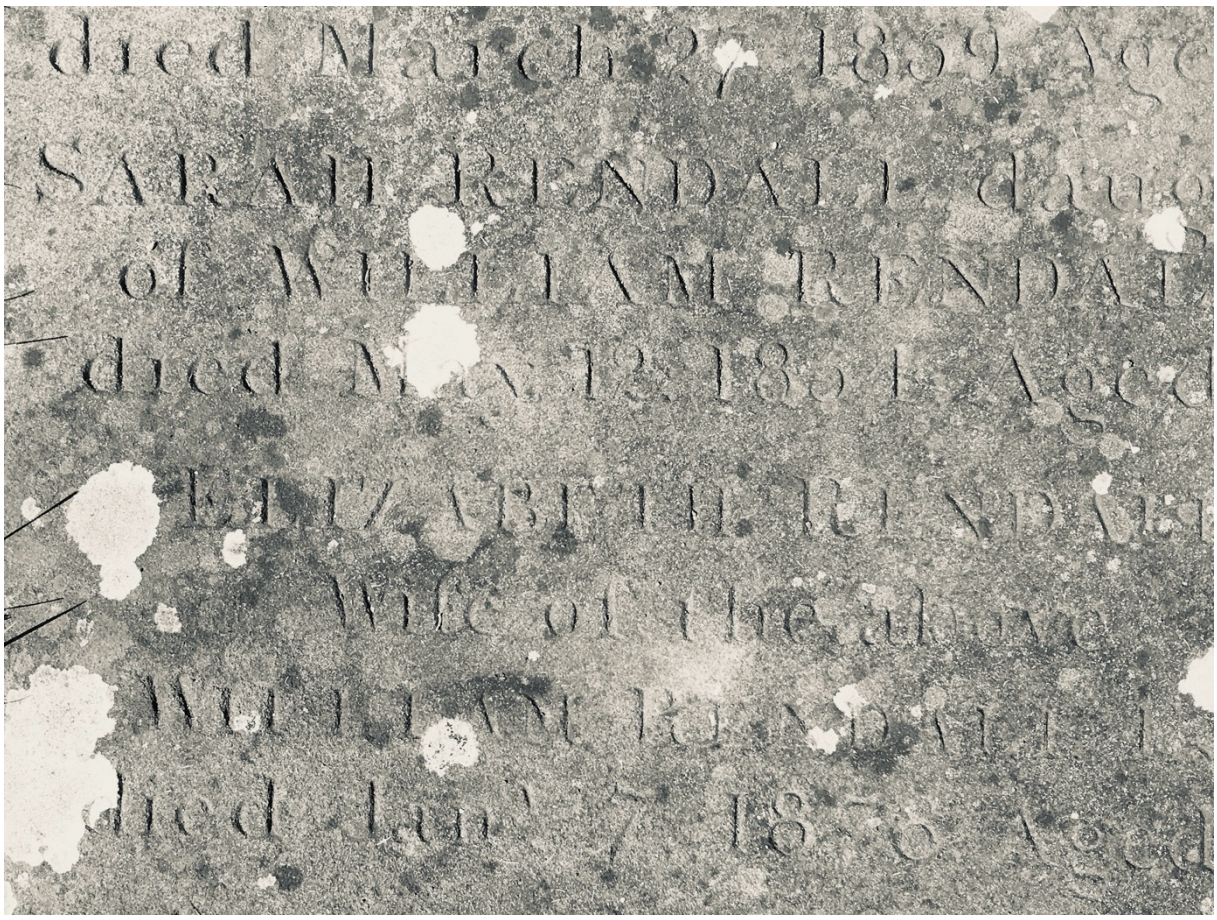
[195] De Certeau, The Practice of Everyday Life. 107.

[196] Lippard. The Lure of the Local, 13.

[197] Aubrey Cannon and Katherine Cook, Infant Death and the Archaeology of Grief, *Cambridge Archaeological Journal*, Volume 25, Issue 02 (May 2015): 406.

> *Not surprisingly, it is highest for the upper-middle class, much lower for the lower-middle class and very low for the lower class... Proportional representation of burials on stone monuments appears to be tied most clearly and simply to economic means.*[198]

Evidence exists that memorials of a perishable (and affordable) nature such as wood or metal crosses were in use throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries but have since been lost. This underlines the problematic nature of attempting to understand the past through the extant evidence remaining of elite practice.



1876 Gravestone, St Mary's Churchyard, Litton.

[198] Cannon and Cook, Archaeology of Grief, 408.



18th and 19th century gravestones and chest tombs, St Mary's Churchyard, Litton.

Photograph:

When my Mother died I found four photographs of my grandfather amongst her possessions. They are all taken around the same time I think, towards the end of the war. In one he is working at the Hartlepool docks. The image is jagged and blurry, perhaps a discarded print taken by a professional photographer. My grandparents didn't own their own camera; they didn't own very much, not a camera, or a car, or the house they lived in for most of their lives.



Tom Dixon, Iron Moulder. Hartlepool. C 1940.[199]

There is a cigarette clamped tightly between his teeth as he pours molten iron into the waiting mould. He wears no protective gloves or goggles, his shirt is open beneath his waistcoat, sleeves rolled up, arms gnarly and muscled from a lifetime of

[199] Photographer Unknown.

hard work. He is totally focused on the task. (The docks are gone, the skill, the way of life.) He died in 1958 many years before I was born, killed by the cigarettes or the iron; his lungs stopped, either way, by smoke and dust.



Tom Dixon and Bill Dixon. 15 Harrow Street, Hartlepool. c 1945-1947, photographer unknown.

In juxtaposition to this paucity of images, when my mother-in-law Deirdre died we found, amongst the accumulated objects of her long life, hundreds of black and white photographs. Some were neatly arranged in leather bound albums, most stacked in tins and envelopes. Though disordered in time and place, they documented her life from birth through childhood and marriage, to old age. [200]

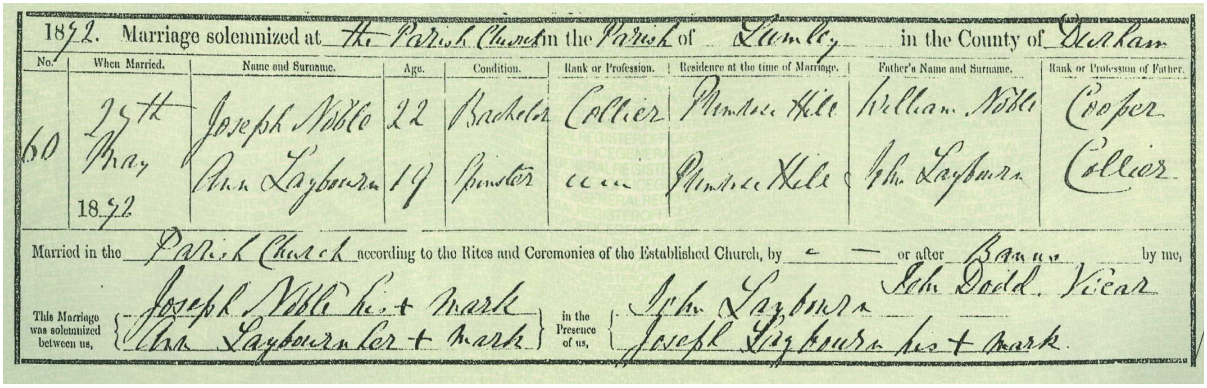
[200] Born in 1932, a few years before my mother in 1937, and both of Irish origin, the difference between their respective childhoods was stark. I have one photograph of my mother as a child and hundreds of my mother in law.



Deirdre Samson. Melbury, Dorset, c 1950, photographer unknown.

We base our assumptions of the past on what has survived into the present, a partial picture made of small traces, that reflect the social boundaries and inequalities of the time in which they were produced. Deirdre's family owned things: cameras and cars and their own Cotswold stone house in the Dorset Hills. With such material possessions came the ability to control their own story and the residue left behind of their place in the world. Not for them a few blurred cast offs remaining to state that they were here and had a story as deep and profound as any other.

We live with a skewed perception of time and presence; the archive (and memory) untrustworthy sites for what they hold and what is forgotten. Like many others, the remaining material and memory traces of my own family are opaque and fragmentary. My family history is cast in iron, burrowed out of coal, stitched and hooked and dug and buried, belonging to an ancient writan/unwritten world, that has left little archival or material trace, there are no gravestones to visit that I know of. The earliest document I have found is an 1872 marriage certificate in which my Mother's great-grandparents Joseph Noble and Ann Laybourn, aged twenty two and nineteen, mark their names with a cross.



1872. Marriage solemnized at the Parish Church in the Parish of Lumley in the County of Durham

No.	When Married.	Name and Surname.	Age.	Condition.	Rank or Profession.	Residence at the time of Marriage.	Father's Name and Surname.	Rank or Profession of Father.
60	25th May 1872	Joseph Noble	22	Bachelor	Collier	Pittsmoor Hill	William Noble	Cooper
		Ann Laybourn	19	Spinster	" "	Pittsmoor Hill	John Laybourn	Collier

Married in the Parish Church according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Established Church, by — or after Banns by me, John Dodd Vicar

This Marriage was solemnized between us, Joseph Noble his + mark; Ann Laybourn her + mark

in the Presence of us, John Laybourn; Joseph Laybourn his + mark.

Marriage licence between Joseph Noble and Ann Laybourn 1872. [201]

My mother took us back once to the street in Hartlepool where she was born. In the red brick of the old doorway she searched for the initials her brother once scratched – *BD* for Bill Dixon. We traced the marks with our fingertips, as if our touch could summon the ghosts of her childhood.

At the site of the docks where her father and his father had worked we found landscaped lawns sloping down to the blustery North Sea, concealing the foundations of the old shipyards, of scraps of smelted iron, of layer upon layer of the coal dust that clogged my grandfather's lungs.

[201] Joseph Noble and Ann Laybourn, certified copy of marriage certificate dated May 25, 1872, owned by the author. Joseph was a collier in Lumley Pit, County Durham, as was his father in law. He died in 1879 from black lung disease or Coal Worker's Pneumoconiosis aged 29.

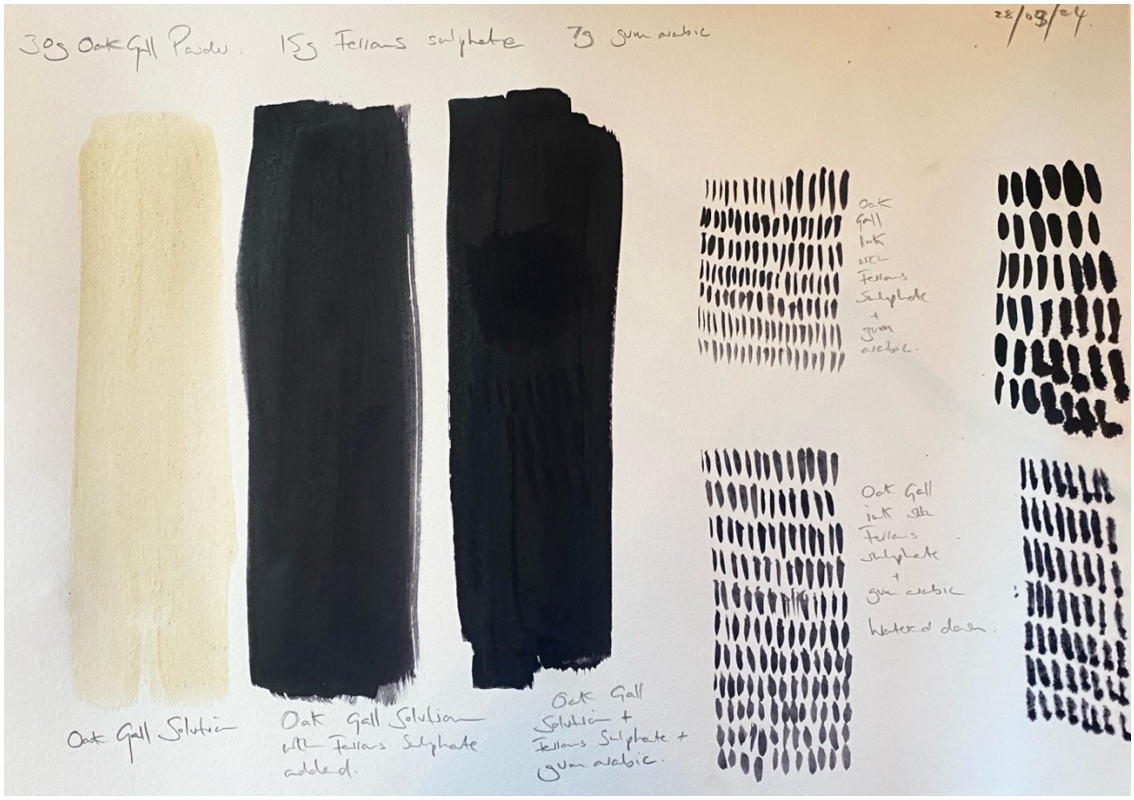



15 Harrow Street in 2013 and my mother in Harrow Street 1947. [202]

Literate and landowning men inscribe their named belonging into the material of place, and are easily found in the archive. The ancient gravestones of St Marys churchyard project the past grief of certain groups into the future. Other stories remain hidden within the features of the landscape, unrecorded and unnamed; scratched into walls; concealed beneath the turf, individual and specific experience subsumed within larger narratives. The lack of literacy in the general population (school was first made compulsory in some form in 1870), the inability to vote without property ownership (which the Reform Act of 1832 only partially ended), meant that, until the recent past, most people remain anonymous. I am close in blood and memory to people who could neither read nor write, only a small gap separating me from the crosses they made to mark births, marriages and deaths.

[202] My photograph of Harrow Street. Image of my mother taken by Ivy Campling.

Monoprint Archive:



First Oak gall ink trials, I did not include Gum Arabic after these early trials.

The etymology of the word book is thought to derive from the Old English word *bōc*, meaning Beech,[203] a hidden link remaining in the words we use to the earliest form of written document. Until very recently both paper and parchment were expensive commodities, unless a document needed to be preserved in perpetuity most writing would have been inscribed into wood and wax tablets.

> *Wax tablets are the oldest records of handwriting from England, with some recently discovered from London between 43 and 53 CE... They were wood with a thin surface of wax, which one could incise and then erase... erasability was the value of these tablets.*[204]

[203] Philip Durkin, "When is a book a tree?" *Oxford University Press* (blog) June 15, 2014. https://blog.oup.com/2014/06/origin-word-book-etymology

[204] Daniel Wakelin, *Designing English. Early Literature on the Page* (Bodleian Library, 2018), 32.



The Fortunata Tablet. Found in the Walbrook river, London in the mid 1990s.[205]

Only when the stylus bit so deeply through the wax surface that it scored the wooden layer beneath would traces of writing be retained. This residual and accidental trace remaining in the wood tablet holds a resonance with what is left behind in both landscape and in memory. I have discussed the connection between Freud's wax tablet and the theory of neuron connection in the introduction to this research. Memories are formed through a process of synaptic plasticity in which active connections, or those memories that are repeatedly revisited, become progressively stronger whilst those that aren't used weaken until they disappear entirely.[206] The same is true of the features of landscape, unused paths disappearing; the knowledge of why the hillsides are ridged, eventually lost and forgotten.

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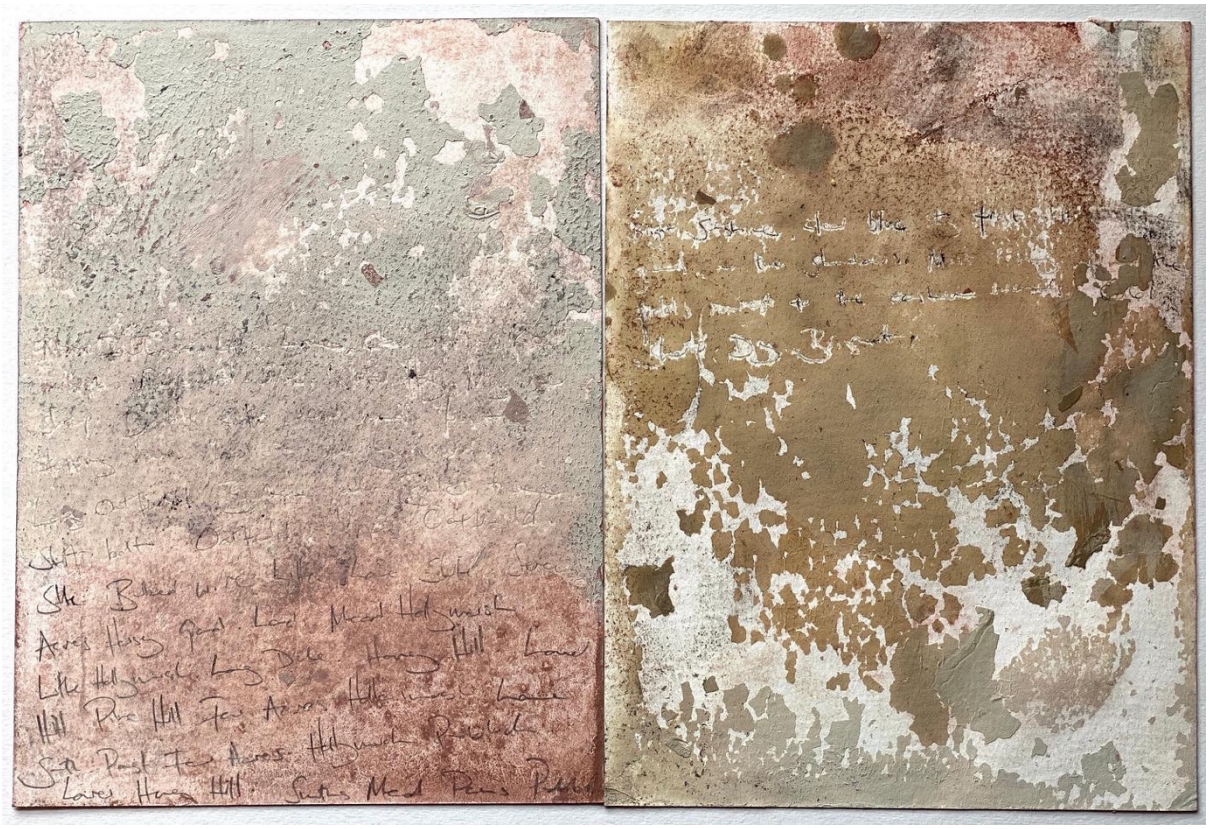
[205] "*Walbrook Discovery Programme, Museum of London, Archaeology,*" Wax on, Wax off. November 2012. https://walbrookdiscovery.wordpress.com/2012/11/30/wax-on-wax-off/ Image copyright London Museum.

[206] "*Queensland Brian Institute,*" How are memories Formed? Accessed December 10, 2024. https://qbi.uq.edu.au/memory/how-are-memories-formed

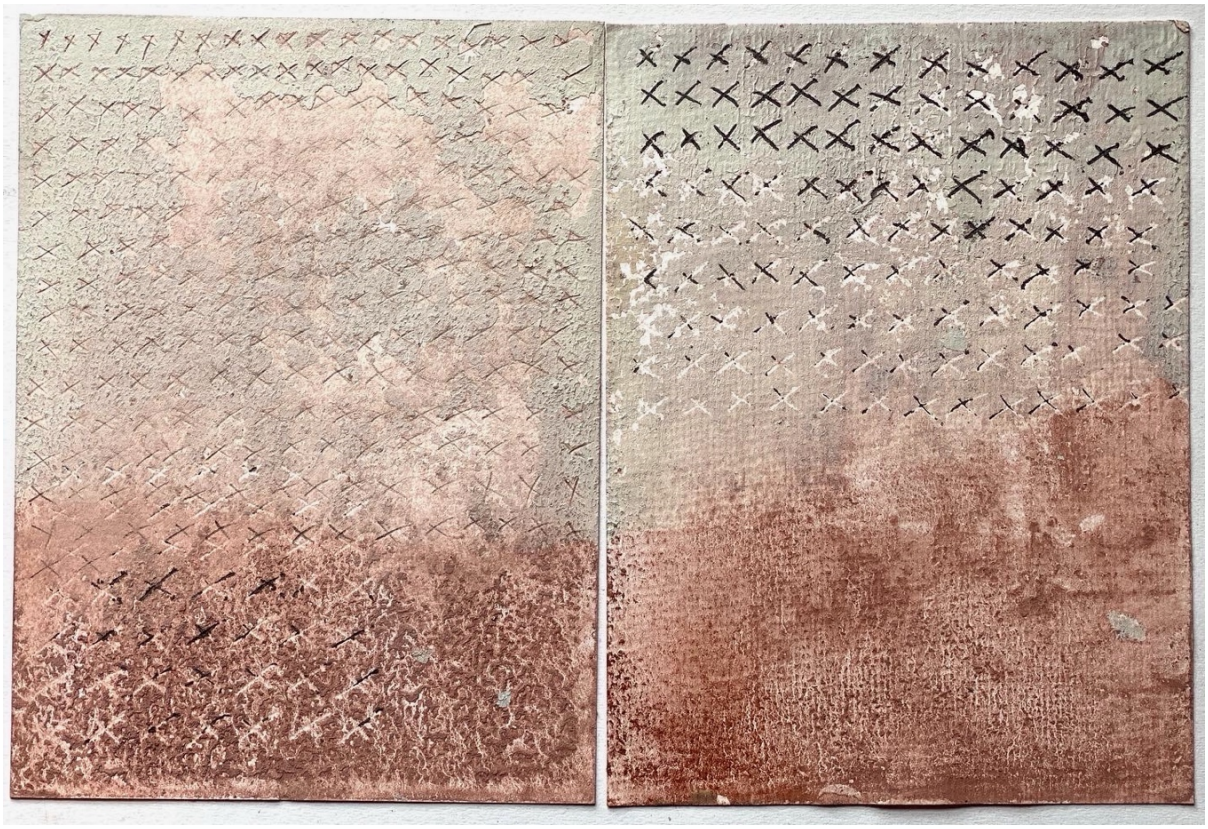
The materials of the archive - wood, wax, parchment, paper, ink and clay, are the materials of landscape. When my ancestors made their mark in the marriage register in 1872 they used oak gall ink. This ink, used in England from the fifth to the nineteenth century, was produced from materials common to the British landscape. I make my own ink using Iron Sulphate and Knopper Galls which I gather from the ground beneath Oak trees in Autumn.[207] I began a series of work using the materials traditionally found in the archive – paper, oak gall ink and wax.

I layered Hahnemuhle paper with black slip, Litton clay slip, and stoneware casting slip. I did not intend to fire these pieces. They were transient and temporary, if left for too long they would return to the earth. In the first 'book' I scratched the Litton Field names into the clay. The slip surface cracked and fractured where the writing broke the surface. Using the field names, as beautiful and evocative as I found them, once again linked paper documentation to ownership, rather than to the presence of the anonymous generations, traced into the surface of the landscape. Instead of these names the 'mark' began to take precedence over all other forms of inscription.

[207] Adapted from a recipe by Jean Duncan http://www.livingfield.co.uk/art/jean-duncan/making-ink-from-oak-galls/



Book form 1: Litton Field names.



Book form 2: his mark, her mark. Scored and Monoprinted marks.

Series of fifty prints in an archive box:

Litton church has cast its solid shadow across the earth every day for more than seven hundred years, echoing the solid and regular presence of the Harewell family in the weave of this landscape's history. In contrast, the experience of most of the people who dwelt here in the past seems allied more to the relationship between the earth and a wildflower – Dandelions and Docks, Hogweed and Teasles. These apparently fragile and transitory elements of landscape are part of an ancient cyclical temporality, reappearing every spring, with deep tap roots beneath the ground.



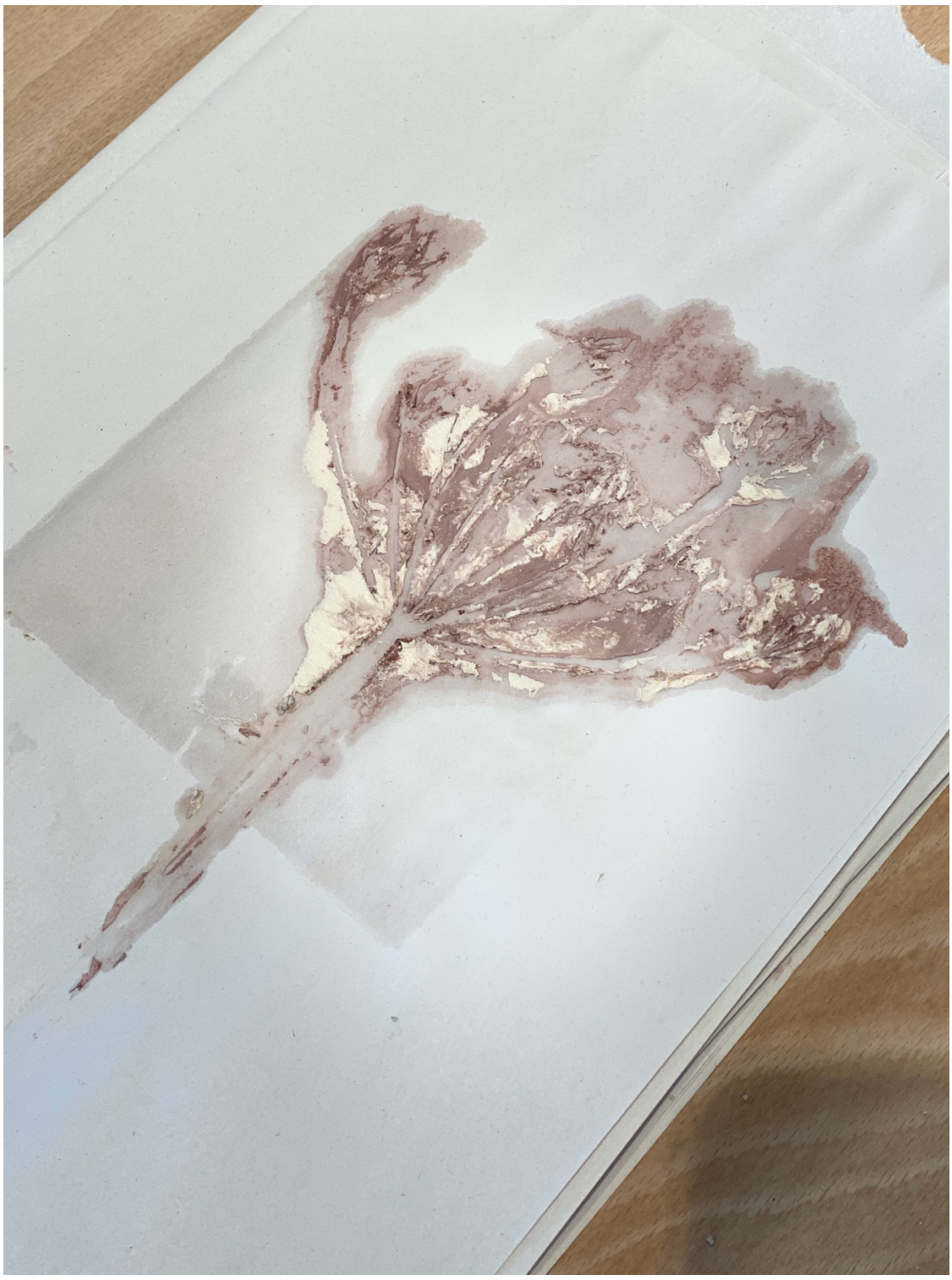
Dandelion clocks. Litton. Spring.



Photographs on Hahnemuhle paper with oak gall ink and Litton clay dust.

I used the dried seed heads of Cow Parsley, Hogweed, Teasles and Docks within this next series of work to represent, alongside the 'mark', the anonymous generations that I belong to and which have shaped this landscape. I combined elements developed in the pages above (sgraffito and monoprint) with direct relief print from plant material using clay pigments on heavy weight 300gms paper.

The process created two prints – the first direct print, and a second 'ghost' impression left on the top paper. This ghost print could be reprinted, creating two impressions from the same process, with the first clearly showing the plant material used, and the second its absence, delineated in the material surrounding the missing seedhead.



Ghost print of a Hog weed seed head.





First print and ‘ghost’ print showing the absence of the teasels.

The surface of each page was monoprinted or inscribed with ‘marks’. The nature of these marks, whether scored into, or added on to the surface of the clay is explored in greater depth through the next sequence of work. The print sequence was stored in a closed box built to reflect an archival storage box. The presence of the stacked pages, invisible within their container, echoed the impenetrability of landscape and of the past.

As the pages dried out fully the slip surface became unstable, cracking away from the underlying paper. I overcame this by dipping the pages in liquid beeswax, which saturated both the clay and paper, and bonded the surfaces. Drying the wax surface with a heat gun removed excess wax. Although the paper used here was too thick to achieve translucency, thinner paper sheets soaked in beeswax allowed light to penetrate through the surface of the paper. This quality of translucency became very important in the next series of work.



Series of Prints using imprinted and printed seed heads, inscription, sgraffito and monoprint marks.



A brickmaker's kiss:

Throughout this research I have interrogated the meaning and method behind each process in the light of my original research questions: Can methods of making operate as analogous to processes of landscape creation and temporality? What are their possibilities as carriers of concept, and are the processes involved in making important?

I questioned whether imprinting plant material onto, or scratching marks into, the surface from above, as with the paper prints, allied with my perception of the formation of landscape. This sense of how to perceive the surface of the earth is discussed by Ingold in his influential essay *The Temporality of the Environment*. People, he writes, as they live and move and dwell in place, do not inscribe their histories on the surface of the earth, as writing is traced on to the page:

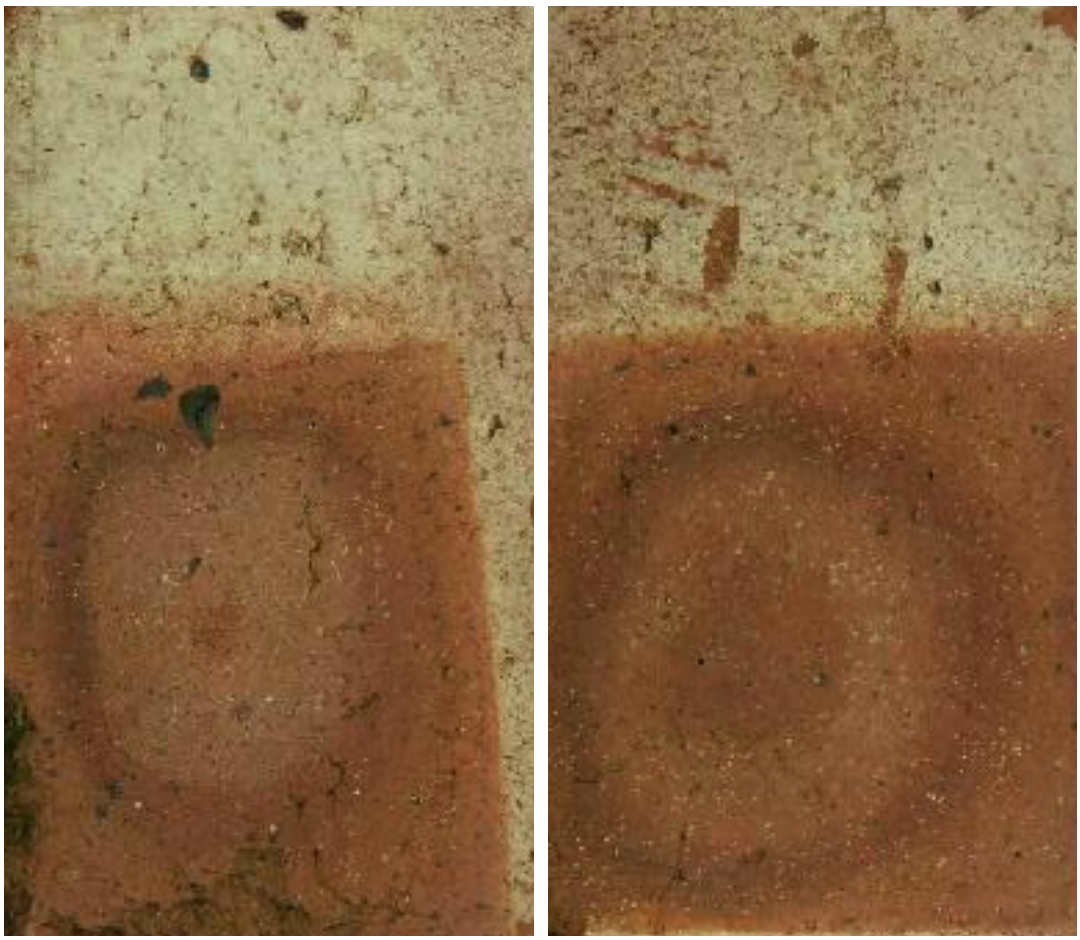
'rather, these histories are woven, along with the life cycles of plants and animals, into the texture of the surface itself.'[208]

The interaction between the clay slip and paper in the series of printed pages, in which clay slip remained on the surface of the paper rather than entwined with it, felt superficial, an aesthetic response which did not interrogate aspects of landscape formation. There was no reciprocity between the print process and the underlying material, they remained separate. The paper a carrier for the print, rather than enmeshed with the print process.

I speculated that leaving paper to soak in clay slip, rather than brushing slip on to the surface, would create a greater reciprocity between the paper and the clay. I left paper to soak in Litton clay slip for periods ranging from a few days to a few weeks. As the pages pressed against each other in the liquid clay, the contact was imprinted into the paper. When bricks touch in the kiln as they are fired the fleeting contact remains as a permanent trace mark on the surface of the clay, brickmakers refer to this as a 'kiss.'[209]

[208] Ingold, The Perception of the Environment, 198.

[209] Rosanna Martin, "Brick Piles and Waste pits: A Future of Caretaking," (paper presented at A-B Projects. State of Ceramics. Architectural Ceramics Series, April 20, 2024). https://static1.squarespace.com/static/66be6dba619f6e4fde4e71ad/t/673a8d459e7a35034105fc30/1731890514343/Summary_StateofCeramics_RosannaMartin.pdf



Brick 'Kiss' marks.

This very simple transference of experience from one material to another is fundamental to my research practice. The reciprocity of the touch between our bodily presence and the places we inhabit. The printmaking process can be visualized as an exchange: between plate and paper, slab and tree, etching plate and ground, between my fingertips and the grooves carved into the wall of the church - the surface not as a passive recipient but intertwined with and exchanging properties; the process leaving its trace.



'Kiss' mark left by a sheet of paper in Litton clay slip.

Clay Monoprint:

I constructed a series of clay monoprints using a mix of Litton clay, porcelain paper clay slip and paper pulp. I created these pieces concurrently, so that each would relate directly to each other. The clay monoprint process creates an interaction between different layers of accumulation both on the bat, and after the slab has been removed. Later interventions create gaps, breaks and interruptions between these layers, muddling the temporal linearity of the process. The surface of the slab accrues layers, as does the ground. The process of pulling the slab from the bat inverts the time process, meaning that the oldest layer is revealed on the surface, obscuring those below.



Monoprint slabs drying on the plaster bats, and revealed.

I marked directly onto the plaster bat before covering this with slip and cut into the surface of the slip monoprint once dry, filling the marks with contrasting slip. Plant material was impressed into the surface of the slabs and layered onto them. Once

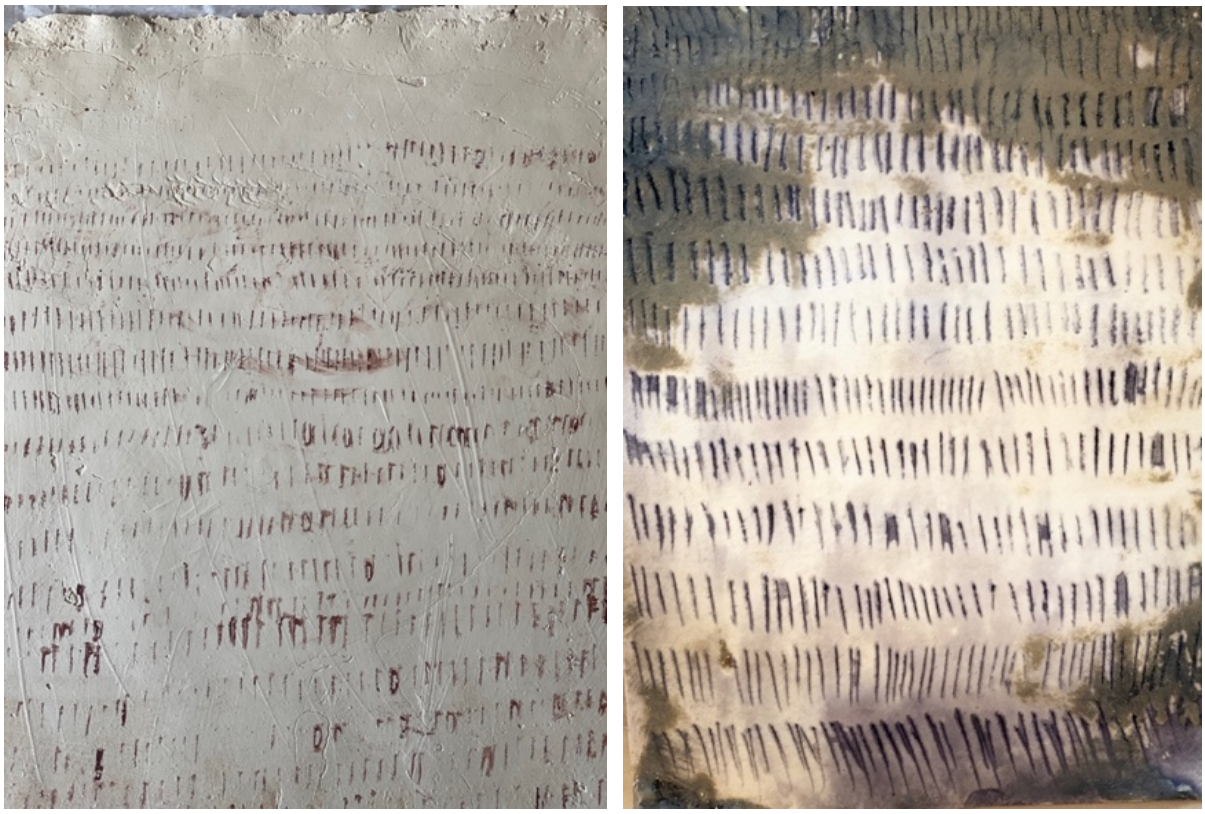
fired the slabs were further incised and marked with oak gall ink, smoke, wax and graphite. Some of these processes permanently transformed the clay surface, others remained ephemeral and fragile, able to be erased.



Archive

Through these two comparable processes (paper and clay relief print with monoprint marks and sgraffito; clay monoprint with relief print and sgraffito) I was able to interrogate the meaning inherent to alternate methods of mark making. The clay

monoprint method (*Archive*, above) connected to my conception of past presence embodied within the surface pushing into consciousness from below, and inscribed by present occupation from above. This is in contrast to the paper relief prints in which all interaction was enacted from above onto the surface. There can be no definitive answer to which of these processes allies most with methods of landscape formation, the question is rather what potential such processes have to extend this understanding. Could I find a method of making '*that enters into the very weave of the world*'?[210]



Monoprint marks pushing from below. Sgraffito marks incised from above.

[210] Ingold. The Ground and the Page, 138.

Opacity/multiplicity:

Ingold asks whether we are fated to read and write about a world whose substance hides from us, relating the opacity of the page to the world's impenetrability. This is a sense of frustration that I have experienced often in this landscape, where I long for these places I am so invested in to reveal the ghosts of past presence. I kept returning to how the action of light and shadow on the earth can conceal and reveal aspects of past presence remaining within the fabric of the landscape.

I had previously developed a method to create a print from cast shadow, (Chapter 1: Print) but even here there remained a distance between the immediacy of the shadow and the resulting image. The shadow created the *plate*, not the print. I was seeking a process in which cast shadow *directly* imprinted paper or clay.

Cyanotype solution can be used on paper and ceramic surfaces. It develops in daylight and uses non-toxic materials. The images are responsive to interaction with other materials, such as clay, oak gall ink, tea and oak bark solution (which creates a natural bleach). I could also create compound images, using existing acetate images together with cast shadows and gathered plant material. I was excited by the potential for creating an interaction between the clay or paper surface, already imprinted and incised layers, and light and shadow.



Compound Cyanotype image on paper created using birch catkins and an acetate print.

I speculated that the high iron content of cyanotype solution would enable a cyanotype image on clay to be retained after firing. Below are a sequence of small test pieces soaked in cyanotype solution and fired to 1000°c. The iron content meant that the solution fires a deep red. Although I felt there was great potential in this process, it was not something I decided to pursue.



Fired cyanotype on clay test.

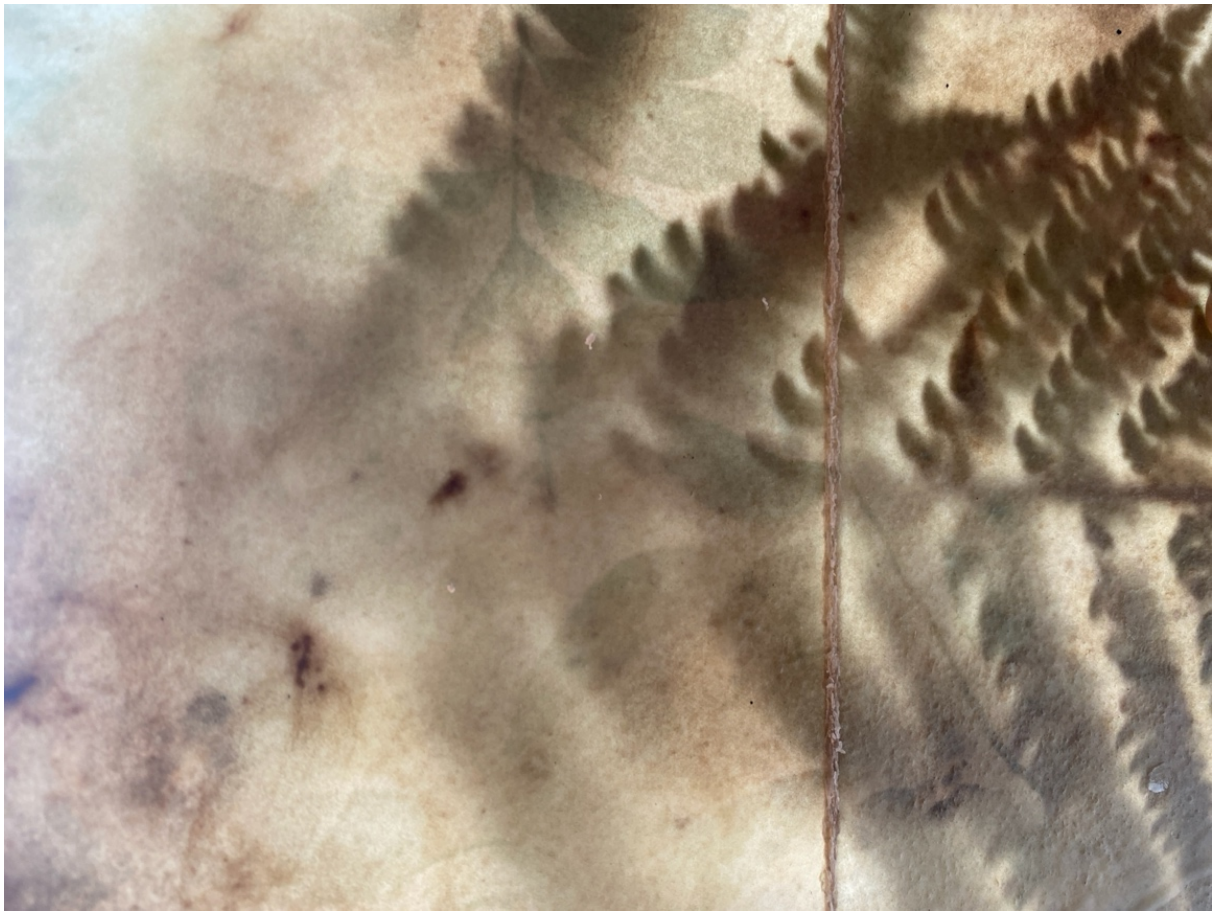


Cyanotype image printed on to fired porcelain and stoneware clay, using natural light.

The realisation that paper soaked in liquid beeswax becomes translucent, meant that a seemingly opaque surface would reveal features hidden within the material of the paper when held to the light. This ability to reveal aspects of practice embedded within the page, rather than being incised onto the page related to how obsolete features in the landscape can become revealed through strong light and shadow, disappearing when light conditions change.



Holding a page stained with Litton clay and dipped in beeswax against a window.

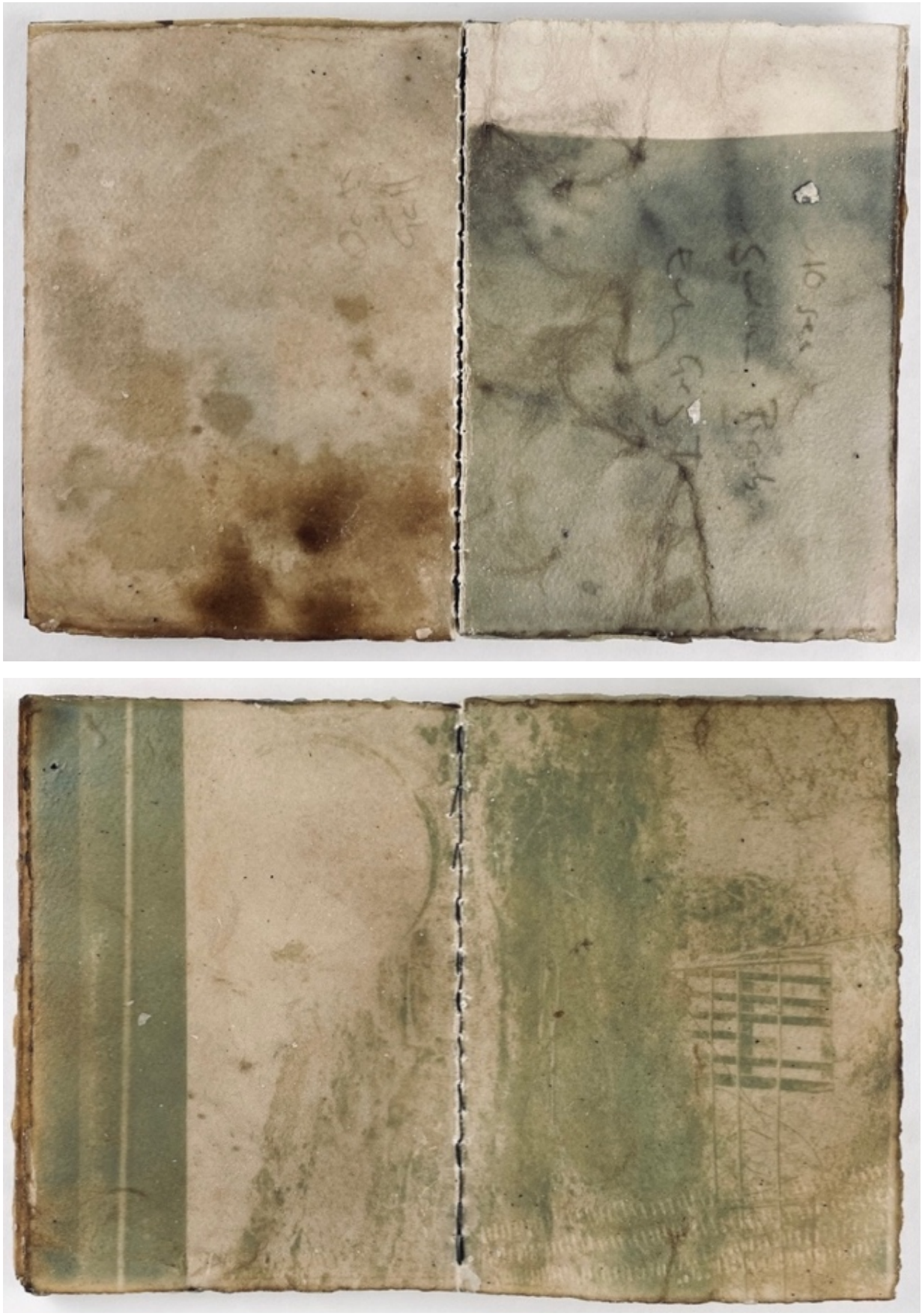


Cast shadow through wax dipped cyanotype on clay stained paper.

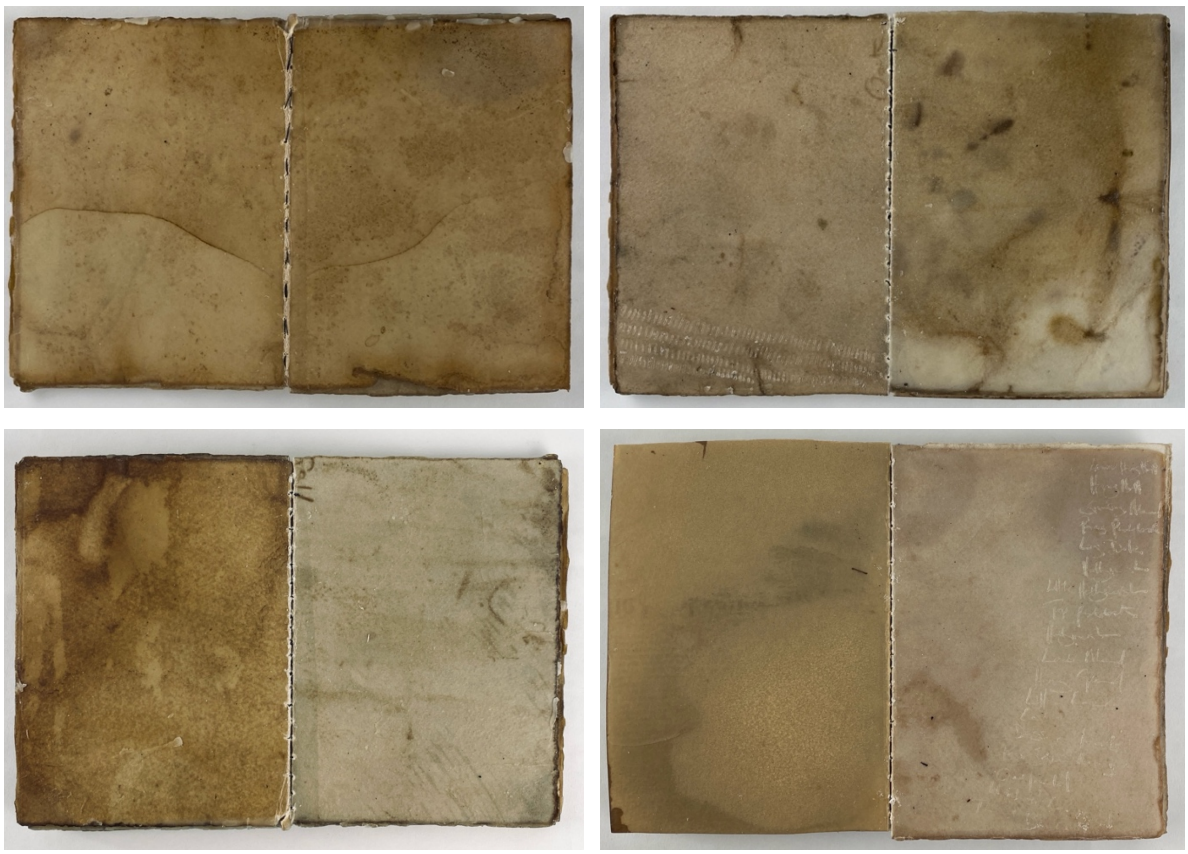
Book form: Paper.

Whilst until this point my practice had focused on the page, the slab, the surface, I had become increasingly fascinated by the theoretical capacity of the book form. When closed the book form hides the information it holds, which when opened is revealed. The book is an object that can be handled and interacted with, meaning each person's perception of it is different.

I constructed a book using pages created from cyanotype cast shadows, images from the landscape and pages stained with local clay, oak gall ink, natural bleach, or green tea. Most were dipped in beeswax. I bound the book with thread, without deliberate placement of the pages, creating unplanned engagement between material and imagery. Writing or marks made on the reverse of the waxed page were revealed when held to the light, or disappeared when closed into the body of the book, only fully revealed through one's interaction with the object and with light. I began to relate traces of human presence within landscape to the marks made in the marriage register, each mark I made in clay or paper a recognition of an unrecorded life.



Cyanotype, beeswax and oak gall ink sewn book form.



Pages from the first book.

I used these methods to create a series of books using cyanotype, photographs, oak gall ink, beeswax, local clay, charcoal gathered from the site of the burnt tree and other found materials from the landscape such as blackberries. In later books I placed seed heads dipped in oak gall ink between the pages of the bound books imprinting the same object on two surfaces. This moment of contact and trace between the page and material echoed the relationship between the ground and the touch of a hand.

Most of the pages were washed with water before being constructed into book forms, this erased and eroded the surfaces in unpredictable ways.





Book 2: Oak gall ink, photographs and beeswax



Oak gall ink prints of cow parsley on paper stained with local clay, washed.



Oak gall ink print of cow parsley on paper stained with local clay and washed.

Book Form: Clay.

The opacity of the ground hides what it holds; sometimes light, cast on the surface reveals past traces, but what lies below the surface is impenetrable to sight. As much as I might hope to uncover individual stories from this place, much of what I experience and sense here of the past is closed from me. Fragile traces become subsumed into the earth and are hidden; objects exist which I have no way of deciphering. I might handle the small ampulla and the lead musket ball unearthed at Badgers mead field, but why, or by whom they were placed in the earth will remain a mystery. It is only a few generations into the past before my own family fades into obscurity and illiteracy, their stories lost. They linger in stories of the Irish Diaspora; in records of military service; a tin of faded photographs; a post office savings book; initials carved into the red brick of a terraced house in Hartlepool.

Ingold writes that the features of landscape are potential clues to meaning, if we can find methods to attend to them.[211] I have dwelt already on the remaining evidence of the past life of this landscape manifested by the strip lynchets, the mass dial, the deer park boundary; and in objects such as the field names map, ampulla and musket ball. But even relatively recent interventions in the landscape such as the cutting of the reservoir in the mid nineteenth century remain opaque. The presence here of over a hundred working men for over a decade is glimpsed only in census returns and in the remaining physical presence of Litton lake.

> *The population in 1851 was 421, and in 1861 had decreased to 313, owing to the return home of the labourers who were engaged, during the taking*

[211] Ingold, Temporality of Landscape, 208

of the last census in cutting the reservoirs for the Bristol Water Works Company, which are partly in this and partly in the adjoining parish. [212]

The hundred men labouring through the 1851 census and then leaving were predominantly Irish Catholic. A small chapel was created for them in the old Button Factory at Sherborne. In the same decade, my own family left Cork to find work in the Darlington Steel Works, where they remained until the shipyards shut in the 1960s. A different economic diaspora later drove my mother and her brother south. My connection to place, and sense of belonging is hidden within fragments of political acts, social change and the forced response to an overwhelming disaster that coalesce here in the physical structure of this landscape and my own presence.

The opacity and difficulty of finding specific information about the majority of the people once present in this, and other, landscapes (and concurrently the past history of my own family) led to a move away from book forms which could be opened and explored. I used the methods developed through previous work to create a series of work exploring absence and impenetrability.

[212] Kelly's Directory of Somerset (1861) in Miscellaneous Somerset Documents. Parish Information Packs. Litton 1086 – 1935. South West Heritage Trust. Somerset Archive Catalogue. https://somerset-cat.swheritage.org.uk/records/A/DIF/121/259



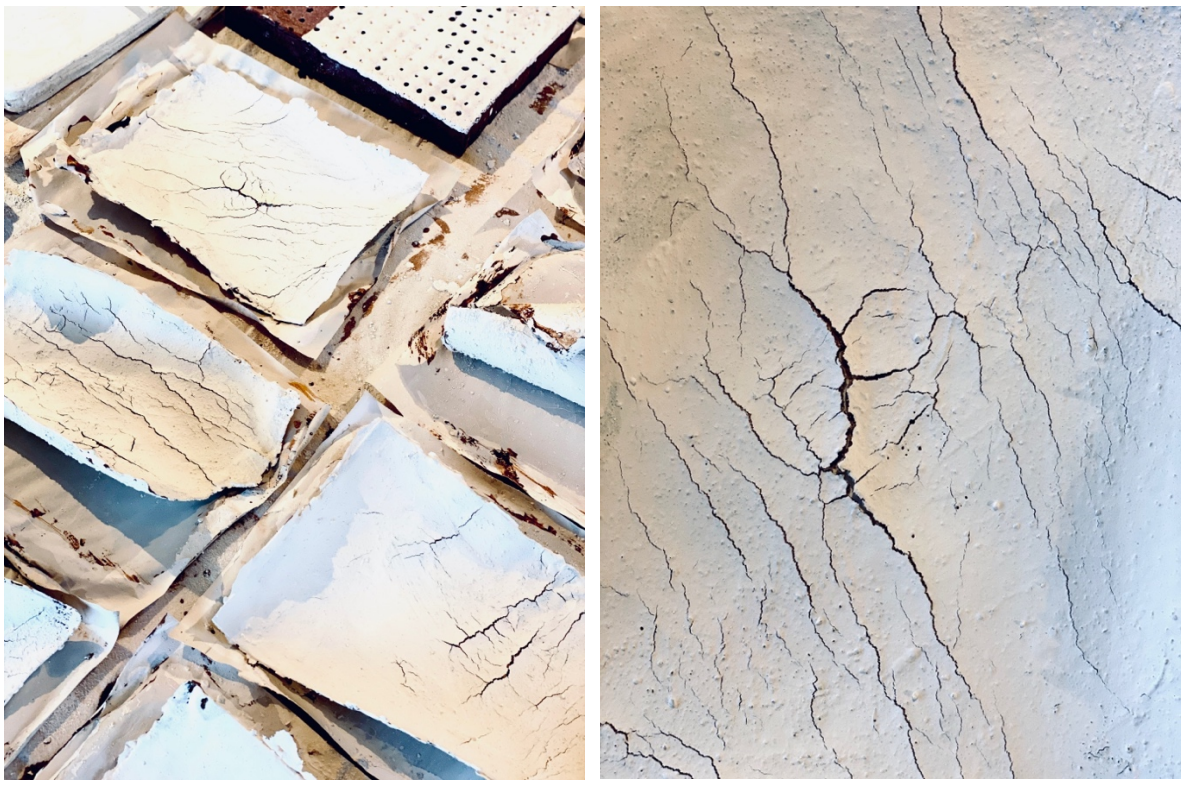
The old Button Factory at Sherborne.

Technical:

I soaked 300gms Hahnemuhle paper in black clay slip. I coated this surface with a further layer of porcelain paper clay slip, which I sprinkled with molochite and porcelain powder. I hoped that the shrinkage rates of the different clay bodies meant they would not fit easily with each other, but warp, buckle and crack in unexpected ways.



Paper dipped in black clay slip followed by porcelain slip. Drying.



Dipped clay slip and paper pages, drying.

The dipped clay pages all survived firing to 1000°c but were extremely fragile. Depending on the thickness of the clay slip, the pages either remained intact or were able to be separated into two halves. Separating the fragile cocoon of the burnt paper revealed the black slip concealed within. Sometimes the Kaolin within the paper remained as a trace mark on the inside of the black clay.

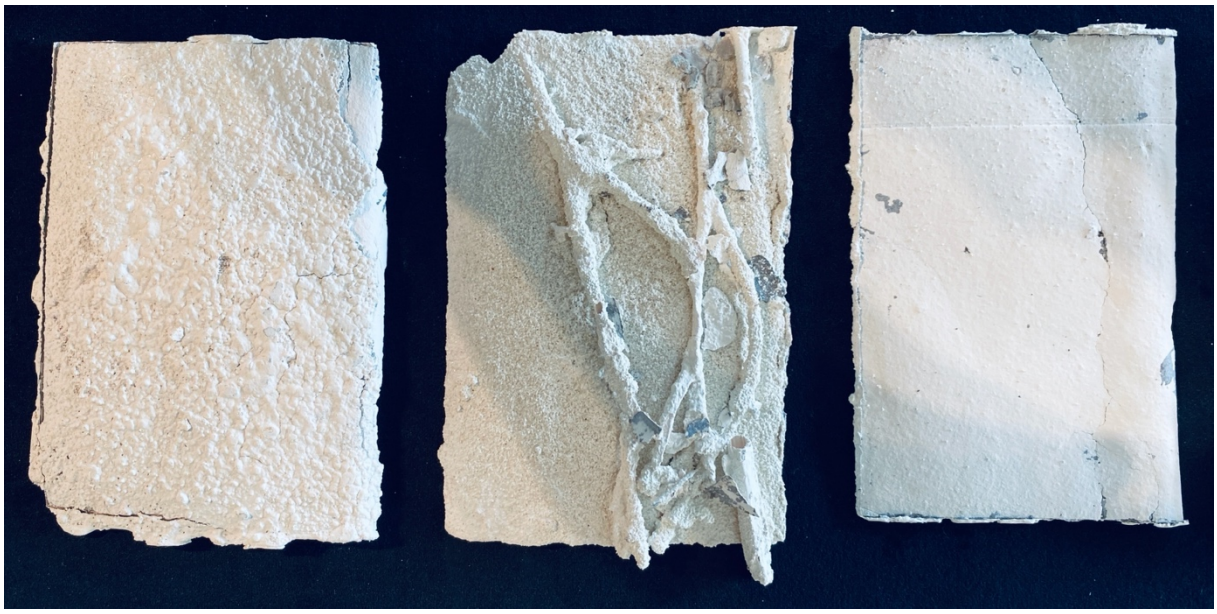
As the individual pages were so fragile, rather than treat each one as a separate entity I began stacking and combining them into book forms. This material necessity created a further connection to my sense of the landscape and the difficulty of perceiving so much of what has passed in place.



Ghost Kaolin mark remaining on the inside surface of the split open ‘page’.



Maquettes. Porcelain and black clay cocooned paper pages, bound with thread and slip.



Porcelain and black clay cocooned paper pages with molochite and cocooned plant material.



The inside impression of paper revealed after firing.

The paper cocooned within the clay slip burns away in the kiln, leaving a remaining trace in the surface of the clay. Despite the absence of the original paper, marks and delineations left in the clay surface speak of its past presence. This is how I perceive the landscape. Each mark, wall, tree, track... all speak of the absent presence here of past generations. I do not know who built Litton church, or dug the reservoir; who buried the ampulla for good luck; dropped the musket ball; ploughed the strip lynchets; planted the Hollowmarsh Oaks, or dug the ditches, but I do know that they were here. I can acknowledge them through practice, and foster an acknowledgement of the extraordinary entanglement of people and place through time which has resulted in the landscapes we know.

I Was Here:

> *Different events and times endure and come together in the material forms of inhabited places, in the traces and remains of the past in the present.*[213]



Tomb of John Harewell, Bishop of Wells. (c1322-1386)

A way to find the 'lost voices' of the past, writes Matthew Champion, author of *Medieval Graffiti*, is to look at the names, marks and symbols scratched into the walls and surfaces of buildings. Ancient graffiti offers us a window into '*lives that otherwise have left almost no mark upon the world they inhabited.*' [214] The tomb of John Harewell, Bishop of Wells (Uncle to Richard Harewell who commissioned the building of Litton Church), is the most heavily graffitied sarcophagus in Wells Cathedral. Inscribed with 534 marks of which '*364 are initials (some with dates), 21 are names, 14 are symbols and unaccompanied dates and 135 are believed to be ritual protection*

[213] Michael Shanks, "Pearson|Shanks - Theatre|Archaeology," *Michael Shanks, Archaeologist* (blog), February 7, 2013. https://mshanks.com/2013/02/07/pearsonshanks-theatrearchaeology/ (Accessed 07/07/22)

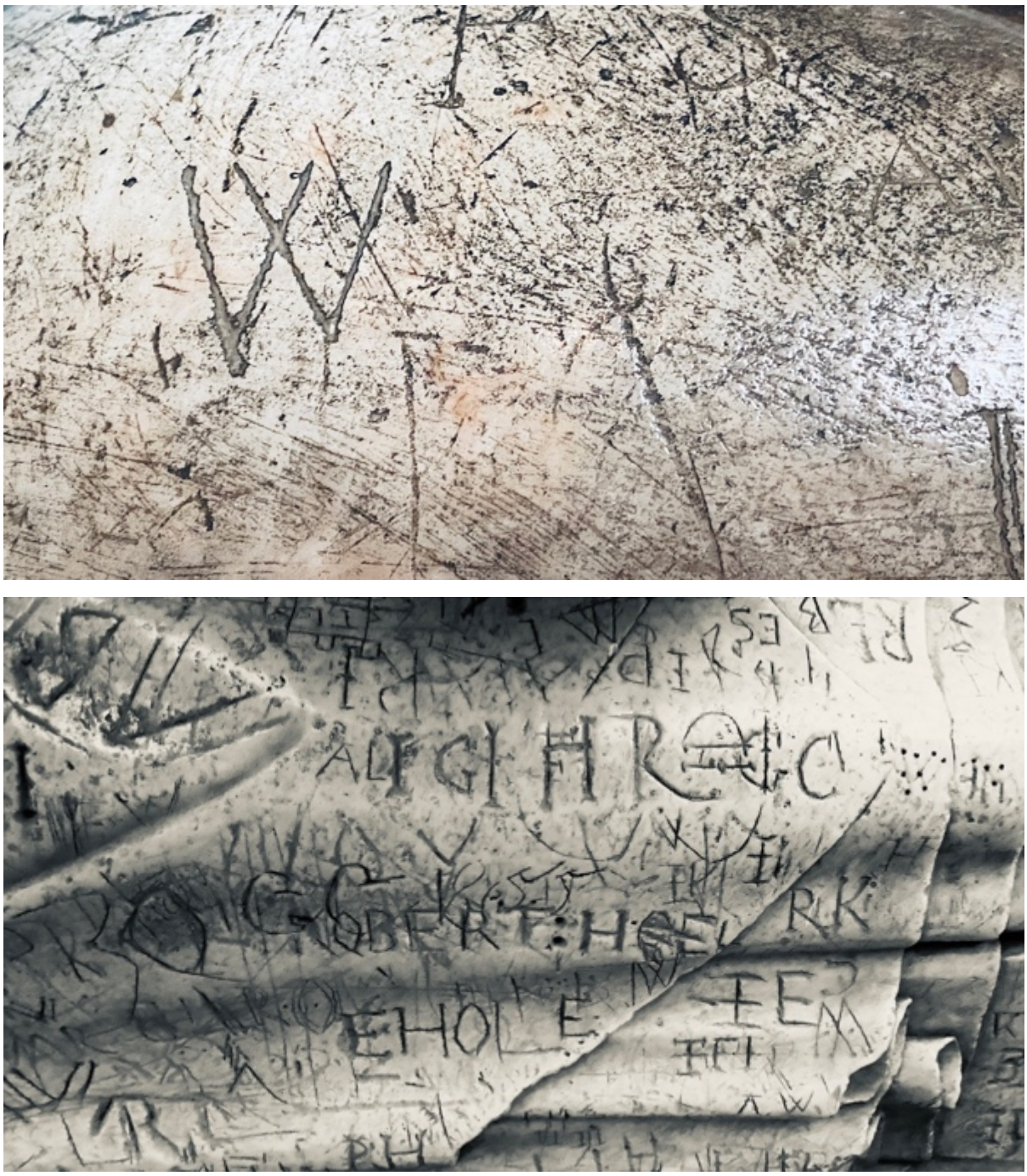
[214] Matthew Champion, *Medieval Graffiti. The Lost Voices of England's Churches* (Penguin Random House, 2015), xii.

marks'.[215] These protection marks often take the form of two crossed Vs (VV) for Virgin Virginius and are thought to relate to mythology surrounding the presence of the two Hares at John Harewell's feet. Many of the marks are superimposed on others, obscuring the older marks.



Graffiti on the tomb of John Harewell, showing multiple VV symbols.

[215] Christopher Binding, *Summary of graffiti and ritual protection marks On the sarcophagus of Bishop John Harewell in Wells Cathedral, Somerset* (Self-Published, 2015), Np. https://www.academia.edu/42356173/Summary_of_Grafitti_and_Ritual_Protection_Marks_on_the_Sarcophagus_of_Bishop_John_Harewell

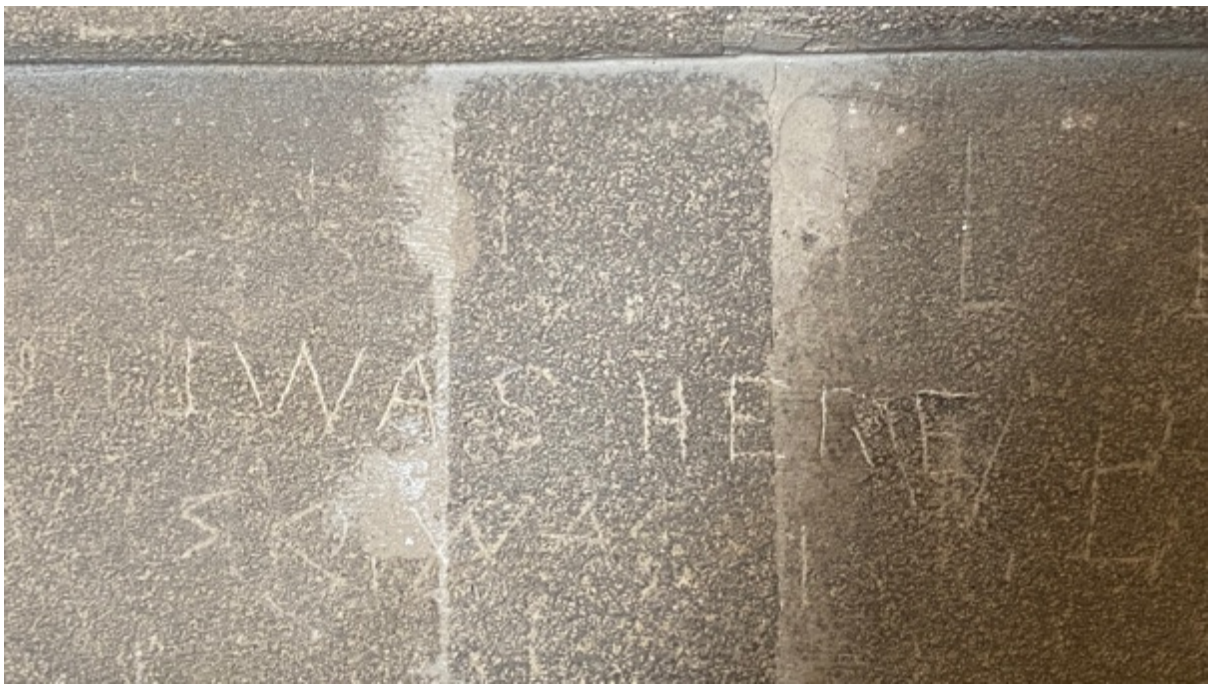


Graffiti on the tomb of John Harewell.

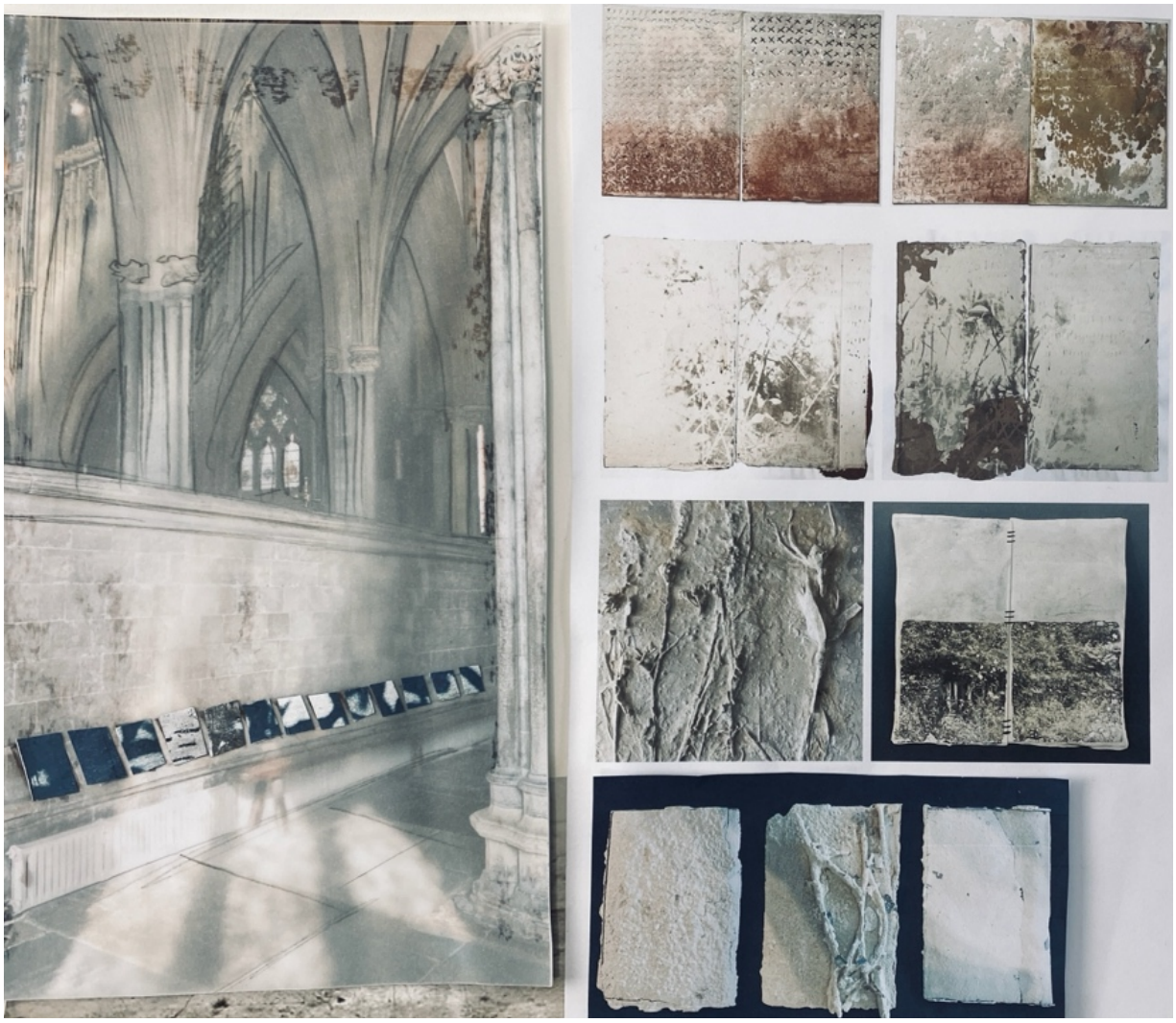
The title of this thesis - *Every Contact Leaves a Trace* - was chosen because it encapsulated my sense of landscape as an archive of all that has occurred within it, whether that is still tangible, or subject to erasure through time. '*We are given to where we have been*', writes the poet Brendan Kennelly, to what '*our hands have touched, our eyes have seen.*'[216] But as I repeatedly explore, the extant traces of the past that remain within the material of landscape, and within the archive, often prioritise the stories of a literate elite. The presence of the many others who inhabited these places remains intangible. John Harewell's tomb is one of the few instances where an elite monument has become subsumed by the trace marks of a predominantly illiterate public, determined to leave their mark, their name, a statement of presence: I Was Here.

As I looked more closely at the walls of the cathedral, I realised that I was surrounded by trace marks of past presence, stones scored with the chisel marks of medieval masons; dates, witch marks, symbols and initials subverting the power and prestige of the ancient tombs. These ephemeral marks, revealed by light and shadow, stated that here, in this place, stood people whose existence might otherwise remain without physical trace. The sublimation of authority they represented led to the creation of a site specific installation in Wells Cathedral through which I could illuminate these memories and traces, the glimpsed stories, scratched and scored into the stones of the cathedral.

[216] Brendan Kennelly, "We are Living," in *Familiar Strangers: New and Selected Poems 1956-2004* (Bloodaxe, 2004)



I Was Here. Incised graffiti found in the west aisle of Wells Cathedral.



Wells Cathedral Installation Proposal Images. 2024.



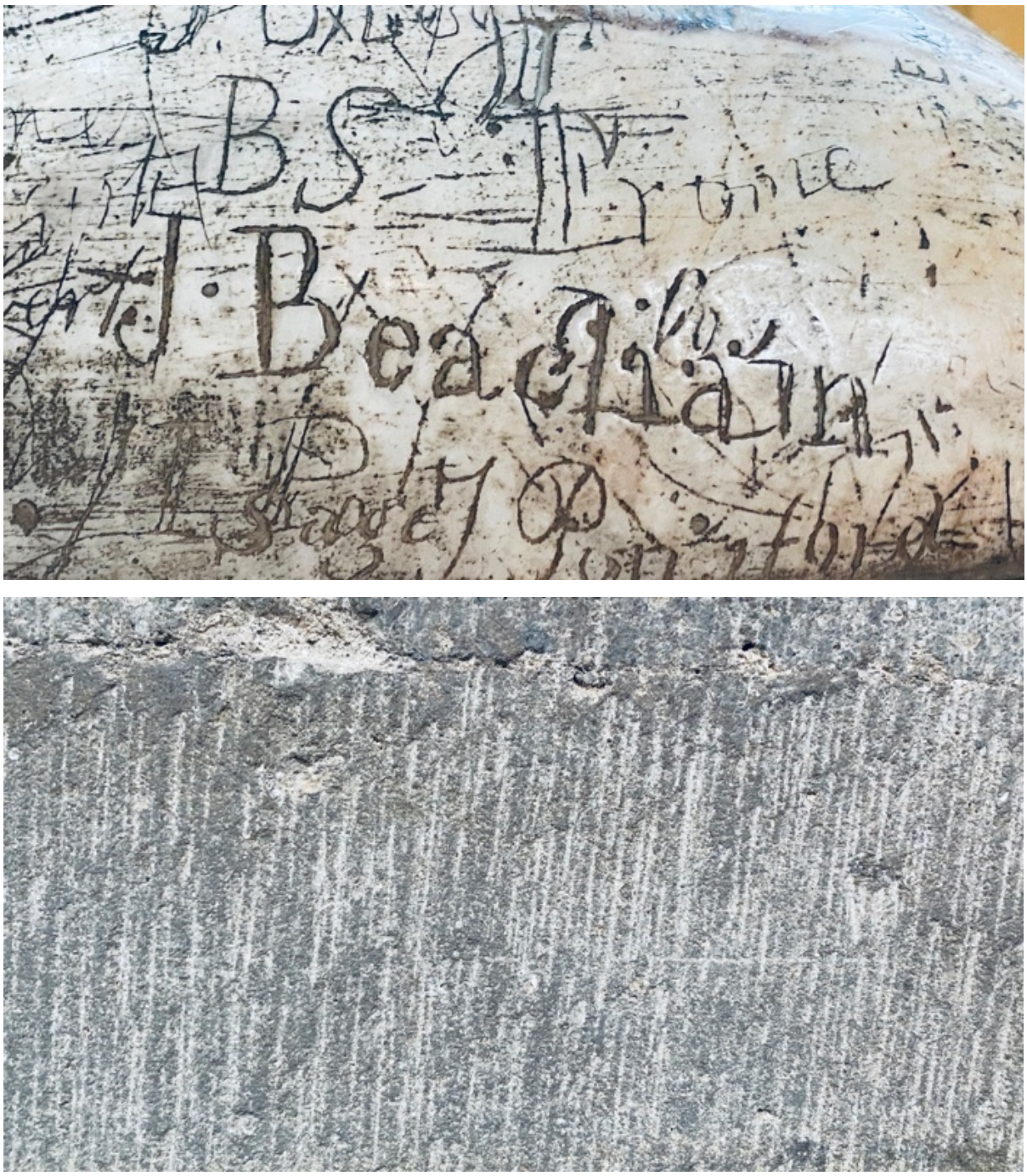
Wells Cathedral Installation Proposal Images. 2024.



Graffiti. Wells Cathedral, South transept.



Graffiti. Wells Cathedral.



Graffiti and tool marks in the stone, Wells Cathedral.

I Was Here:

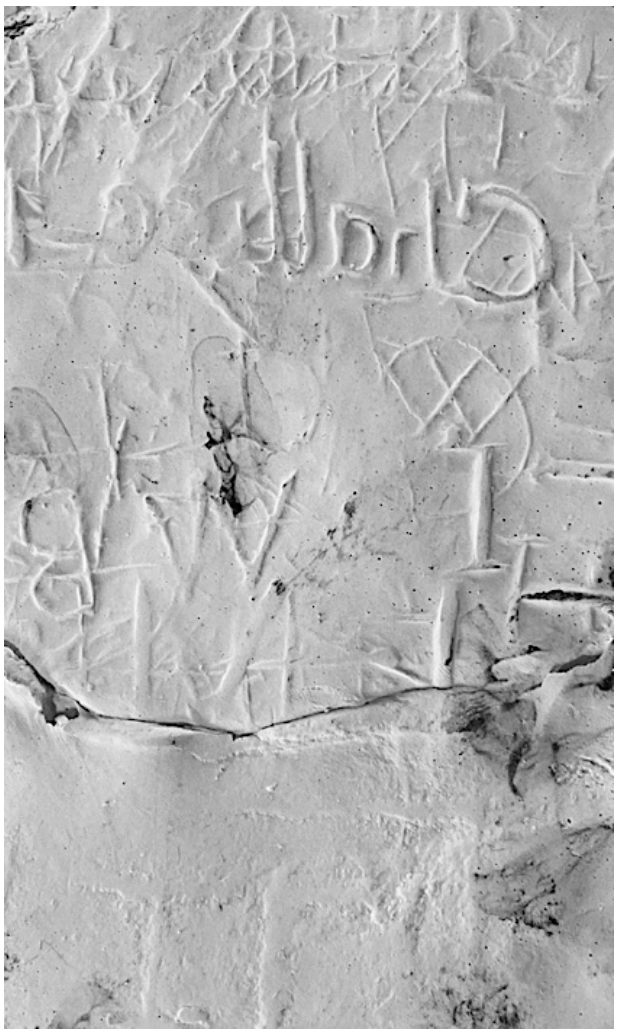
Site Specific Installation Wells Cathedral.

In many ways this project forms the conclusion of my research enquiry. Whilst in the next chapter I discuss a project I ran later in 2024 with my village community and the local primary school, much of this work was collective rather than an individual response.

Given permission to interact with a place as densely marked by traces of past presence as the Cathedral was a profoundly moving experience. I was able to impress clay directly into the incised marks scored into the walls and tombs, revealing the inside of marks scratched deep into the wall, that were invisible to the eye, and the faint marks made outside the letter as the hand holding the implement or tool once sought purchase on the stone.



Imprinted letters in porcelain clay from the walls of the cathedral.





Porcelain clay mould of graffiti on the walls of the cathedral.

Cast slab from a porcelain mould.

I used porcelain clay imprints, casts, photographs, decal imagery, Litton clay, thread, wire, oak gall ink, beeswax and marks taken from, or responding to, the walls of the cathedral to create twenty two book forms.

The majority of the books were constructed from pages of Hahnemuhle 300gms paper, soaked in porcelain paper clay slip. Constructed whilst still wet, book pages adhered to each other, some collapsing, others offering glimpses of the obscured pages within. I bound some shut with thread or wire.



Hahnemuhle paper soaked in porcelain slip and stacked once dry.

Needing to find a method to cast from the walls of the cathedral without leaving any trace, I pressed porcelain slabs directly into the marks on the wall, using the cast as a mould, or firing them with the inverted marks standing proud of the surface of the clay. Wanting to remain as faithful as possible to the marks that were not able to be cast, I developed two processes:

- slip monoprint from a photograph
- sgraffito monoprint from a photograph

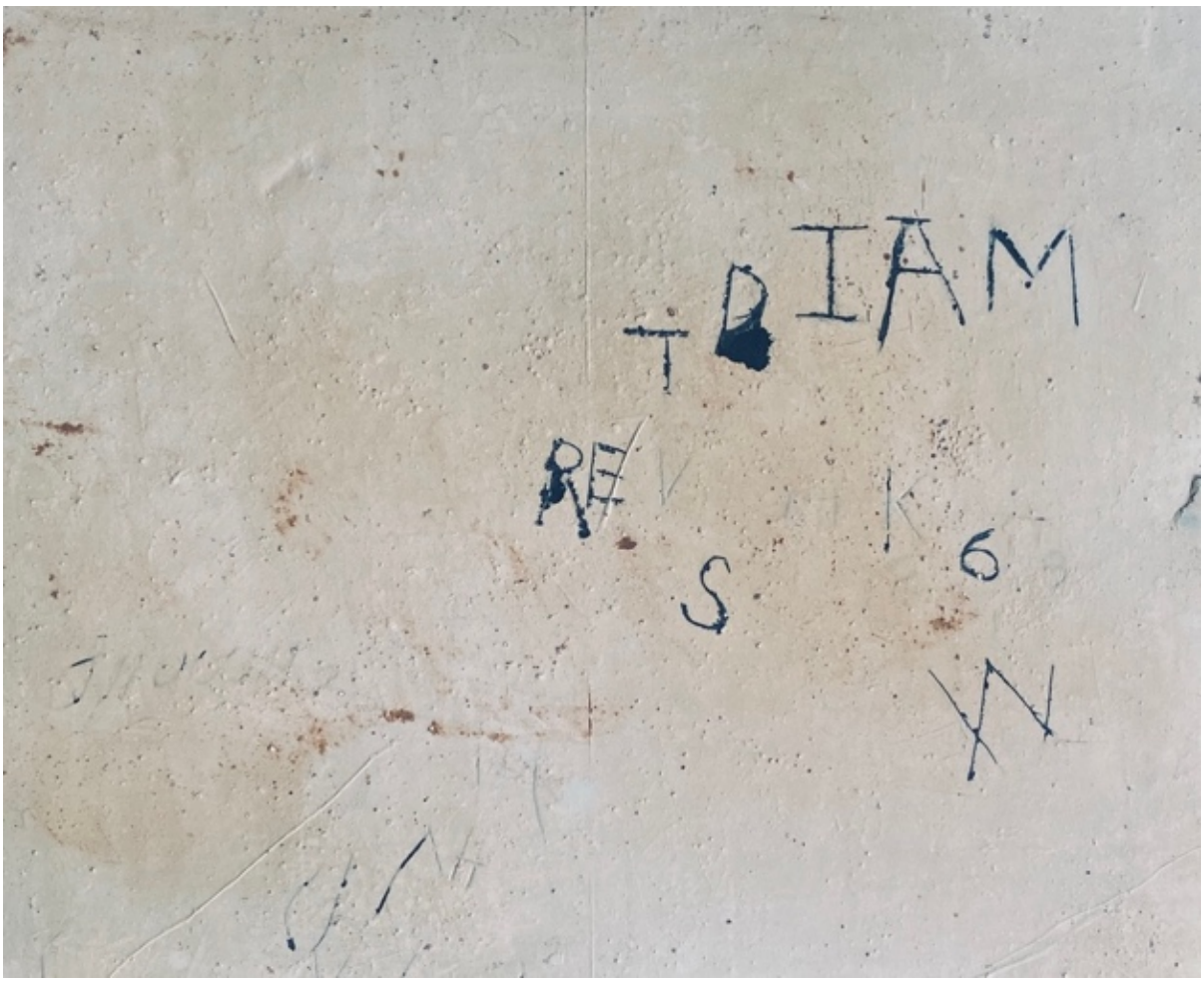
Slip monoprint from a photograph:

I used masking tape to create an aperture on the plaster bat, brushing the surface with porcelain slip and a thicker layer of black stoneware slip. I laid an inverted photocopied image of the graffiti marks onto the surface of the clay, tracing the marks into the clay surface beneath and filling the scratched grooves with black slip. I could not see or control the surfaces I was creating meaning some marks were strongly delineated, whereas others seemed to emerge faintly from behind the slip surface.

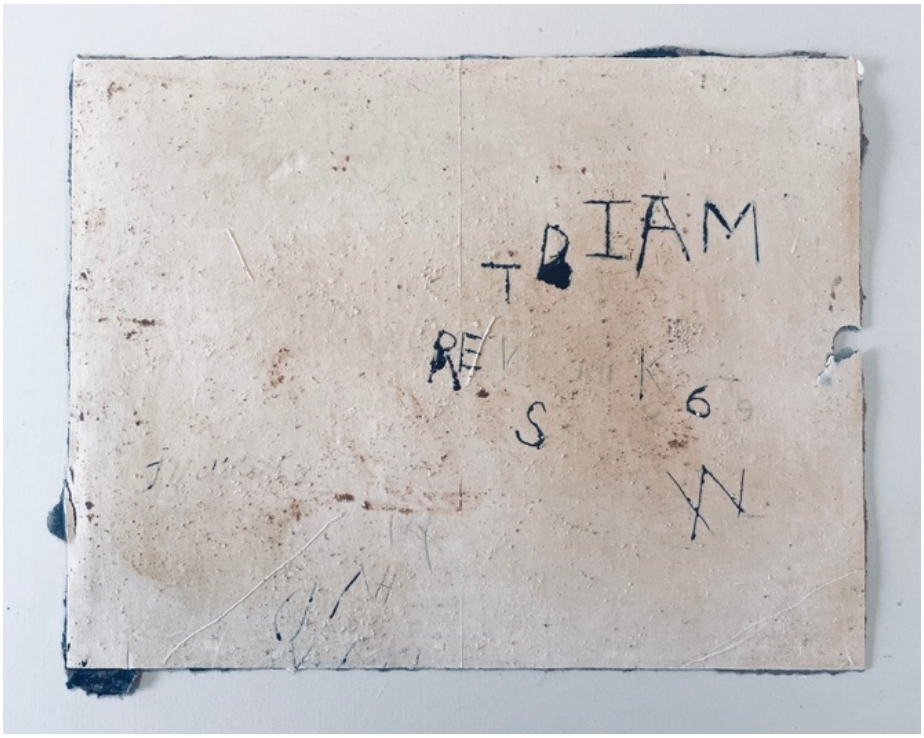
Sgraffito monoprint from a photograph.

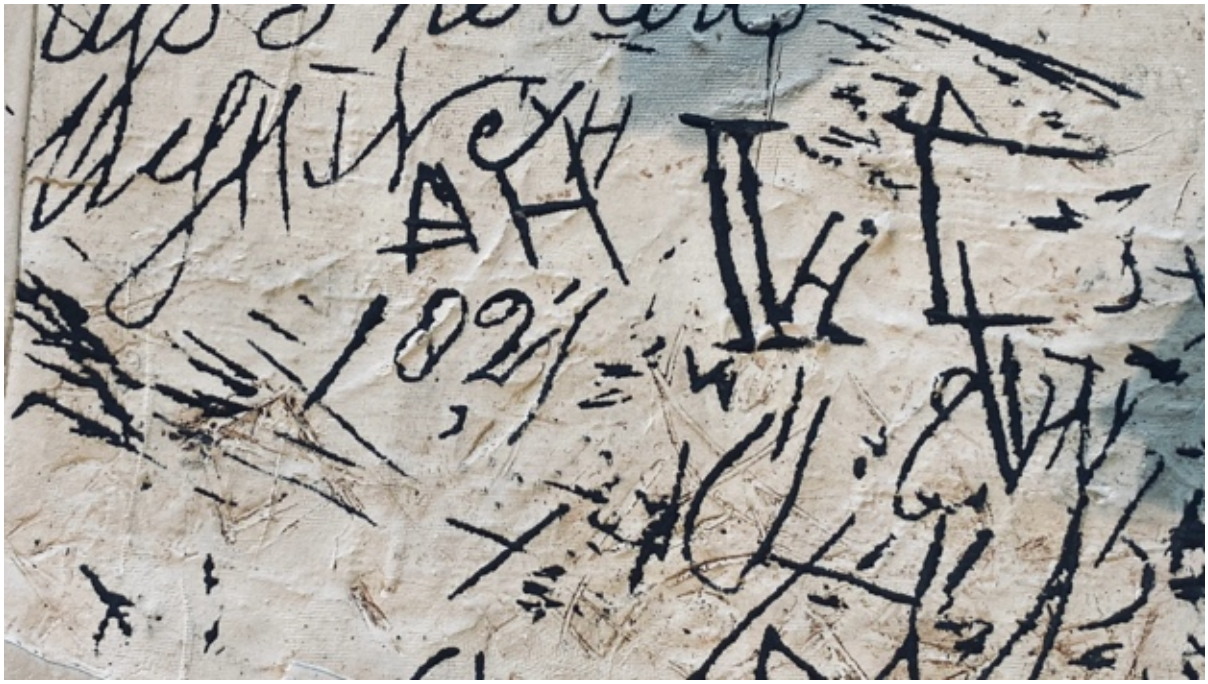
I coated thin printer paper with black decorating slip. Once dry I placed this face down on the surface of the porcelain slip dipped paper, beneath a photocopy of photographs of the cathedral graffiti. I drew over the marks in the photographs using a biro pen which pressed into the paper surface without ripping. The black slip transferred the traced marks onto the porcelain clay surface.

I was able to dampen the used monoprint sheet and print this onto a porcelain slip dipped paper page, creating an image which was the reverse of the original image.



Slip monoprint slab with graffiti marks.





Sgraffito monoprint marks on porcelain slip soaked paper.



Print on porcelain from a sgraffito sheet.

The books were sited along the low stone wall which forms a divide between the altar and the lady chapel. I chose this site because its position in relation to the cathedral windows means it changes and adapts throughout the day. Directly illuminated at dawn through the eastern windows, lit obliquely through the windows of the south transept at noon, darkening as the sun reaches the west. Marks and images contained within the pages of the books, and scratched onto the wall itself, are revealed or obscured by changes in light. As in a landscape, what is able to be seen and what is cast in shadow, transformed the installation; ephemeral marks and scratches made visible, or diminished.

Because the books were on public display in the cathedral I was able to talk to many different people about their response to the installation.[217] Many felt moved by the acknowledgment, inherent to the piece, of the unknown people once present within the walls of the cathedral, embodied by the graffiti. They looked more closely at the cathedral walls, tracing their fingers into the marks that they found, seeking more evidence of past presence. Some were frustrated that the books could not be opened. If I had the opportunity I would explain the reasons why they were either fired closed, or bound shut with thread or wire.

Matthew Champion writes of his frustration that although graffiti was left by all levels of society, it is still often the literate elite that can be connected to specific instances, which is not the case with the majority of the inscriptions:

> *We may be able to point to the marks they left – and they may indeed be the only mark they have left in this world – but beyond that they are nameless.* [218]

[217] The installation won the Bowe Memorial prize at Wells Art Contemporary 2024.

[218] Weird Walk. A Journal of Wanderings and Wonderings from the British Isles. *Interview with Matthew Champion*. Number 1 (Colophon, 2019), 26.

I created the books to acknowledge the past presence of these nameless people, but I did nor delude myself that I would be able to find their particular stories. The singularity of the lives of these many people remained closed to me. The most I could do was bring an awareness to their presence. John Harewell's tomb becoming an acknowledgment not only of his life, but of all the others who scored their mark into the stone.





Hahnemuhle paper coated in porcelain paper clay slip. Monoprint graffiti marks on the surface and inside the book. Bound shut with slip coated thread. Crackle glaze applied, then fired to 1000°c. Oak gall ink wash after firing.



Hahnemuhle paper coated in porcelain paper clay slip, rolled porcelain paper clay on the exterior. Incised marks on the surface and inside the book. Crackle glaze applied, then fired to 1000°c. Oak gall ink and Litton clay applied after firing.



Hahnemuhle paper coated in porcelain paper clay slip. 1 sheet of rolled porcelain paper clay on the exterior. Incised marks on the surface and inside the book. Photographic decal on inside page. Crackle glaze applied, then fired to 1000°c. Oak gall ink and Litton clay applied after firing.



Black clay slab, coated with white slip and incised with marks and letters. Inside pages are Hahnemuhle paper coated in porcelain paper clay slip, fired to 1000°c. Oak gall ink and Litton clay applied. Bound shut with thread coated with beeswax after firing.

Conclusion:

'Stories about places are makeshift things..' wrote De Certeau, created from the scattered fragments of what is left behind:

> *The surface of this order is everywhere punched and torn open by ellipses, drifts, and leaks of meaning: it is a sieve-order. The verbal relics of which the story is composed, being tied to lost stories and opaque acts.*[219]

When the ancient library of Nineveh was destroyed by fire in circa 612 BC whilst the papyrus scrolls burnt, the many thousands of cuneiform tablets, made from raw clay and usually left unfired, were vitrified by the conflagration. The heat turned the collapsing library into an enormous kiln. This accident of history makes these cuneiform tablets '*among the best preserved documents from thousands of years of Mesopotamian history.'*[220] Most of the tablets record the everyday ephemera of life - grain receipts, lists of beehives and livestock being brought to market, that detail the everyday existence of ordinary people in their own words. Had it not been for the destruction of Ninevah they would have sunk back into the earth, taking their stories and information with them.

Words written in clay, writes Jennifer Lucy Allan:

> *have a longevity that guarantees they will outlast their inscriber... clay as a surface for inscription preserved the legacy of individuals that was otherwise made invisible by the time in which they lived.*[221]

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[219] De Certeau, *Everyday Life*, 107.

[220] Jonathan Taylor, "A Library Fit For a King," *British Museum* (blog), 25 October 2018, https://www.britishmuseum.org/blog/library-fit-king

[221] Jennifer Lucy Allan. *Clay. A Human History*. (Hachette, 2024), 129.

But if Ninevah hadn't burnt, our sense of what had happened there would be skewed by the absence of the tablets. It is easy to make assumptions about what place is and why it is as it is. Places become erased and eroded, the original stories lost as the last person who understood dies, or they are retold incorrectly, a new narrative replacing what really happened. In *Landscape, Memory and History*, Stewart and Strathern contend that maps 'lie and distort reality by simplifying, omitting, selecting and making choices about what and what not to record':

> *What is marked on the map exists; what is not marked does not. What is named is considered significant; what goes unnamed is not.*[222]

I cannot name the people whose actions shaped this place, but I can record what they left behind, acknowledge their presence and bring a greater awareness of the fragility of such traces to a wider audience. Running like a thread through all the preceding work is how I as a practitioner of ceramic and print process can bring illumination and understanding to the traces of the past that still exist within landscape.

In this last chapter: *Landscape*, I put into practice many of the methods developed through the course of this research to work with my local community in this landscape.

[222] Stewart and Strathern, eds., *Landscape, Memory and History*, 73.

Chapter 5: Landscape



Hollowmarsh lane looking north. November.

Overview:

In the summer of 2024 I received funding from Somerset Art Works and Arts Council England to work with my local community. This final chapter details the development of this collective project and reflects on how the ideas explored throughout the thesis might extend beyond individual studio practice into communal engagement with landscape.

The focus of the brief was to raise awareness of the fragility of a rural landscape often taken for granted or assumed to be functioning as it should, beauty obscuring the truth of environmental degradation and collapse. Fundamental to the project was the hope that, through artistic practice, I might contribute in some way to the growing debate around the distinctive precariousness and significance of our local landscape.

Working with members of the village and the local school, the project invited encounters with landscape through walking, gathering and making with clay, ink and wax. These shared acts of attention encouraged participants to notice the ordinary materials, traces and stories that shape place - the hedgerows, holloways, terraces and fields formed through generations of interaction between landscape and people.

The project sought to reconnect people physically and emotionally with the landscape they inhabit. In doing so, it explored how small acts of attention and care - noticing environmental change, sharing stories, or handling materials gathered from the land - might encourage a renewed sense of responsibility towards the fragile landscapes that surround us.

Writing shifted between poetic and experiential encounters with place, to reflecting more analytically on the forms of belonging and attachment that emerge through inhabitation of landscape.



Place:

I stand, barefoot on the cold stone threshold of my home, watching as the sun slowly breaches the line of the high eastern hillside, pooling in the deep ridges scoring the steep earth, flooding the valley with light.

At the back of the house where the western hills lie lower, the fields remain blue and shadowed, brittle with frost.

By noon, the low winter sun will have barely risen above the roof of the church or the Copper Beech in the graveyard. But its light will flood the scored lines of the mass dial; cast elongated shadows on to the old stones of my home; reveal the undulating trace of the ridges and furrows in the Hollowmarsh fields.

It will set across fields, which were once orchards; turning the contrails scarring the sky, pink and gold.

I may experience many thousand such days here, until my place is taken by another and another, in the ceaseless accumulation of inhabitation which has shaped this place. I want to bury my feet in the soil, wriggle my toes beneath the roots of the Oak tree and the Beech, catch hold of the glimmering light in my hands, gather this place into me, become a part of the soil and stone and light. More than a shadow, fleeting and transient.





Whitehouse Lane looking west towards the reservoir.

Introduction:

As Bachelard writes, it is not in tallying the days spent somewhere, but in the depth and quality of the attachment formed that one feels a sense of belonging:

> *How we inhabit our vital space, in accord with all the dialectic of life, how we take root, day after day, in a corner of the world.*[223]

The process of slow, methodical attentiveness to place that I developed over the last five years created a way into this landscape. The narrow geographical parameters allowed a depth of emplaced knowledge to develop as I walked and photographed, printed and gathered, researched and wrote, creating connections through time

[223] Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space* (Beacon Press, 1994 Edition), 4.

between the stories of my family and the landscape in which I live. An archive of my material and ontological interaction with this place.

The stories held within the material of this landscape gradually revealed both the intimacy and stability of long inhabitation and emplaced belonging, and the concomitant alienation, entrapment and lack of opportunity which such a boundaried existence might represent. Attachment, warns Yi-Fu Tuan, is a word of ambiguous meaning – '*whether it is applied to people or place. On the dark side, it is bondage, and we are glad to be freed of bondage.'* [224]

The destructive undercurrents that exist within contemporary rural communities mirror those I was seeking in the past: internal displacement through social and demographic change; lack of opportunity; the hardships of making a living from the land. *'Feeling you belong to a place in no way necessarily entails that it belongs to you'* [225] writes Massey. I represent of a wave of 'incomers' that have gradually replaced what was, until recently, an entirely agricultural village, where many families lived for generations. The house in which I live was once a farmhouse, it was sold along with most of the land and the barns in the 1980s; the barns turned into homes for Bristol commuters, the old stone calving shed, now my studio.

Lorimer writes that the greater acceptance of personal memory, oral history and informal archives as research methods opens up '*sites and sources, as yet only partially explored.'* He exhorts the researcher to:

> *Tune in again, and then once again, to what exists, there, then, in the moment. To ask, what yet can be grubbed up and snuffled out? With*

[224] Yi-Fu Tuan, The Farewell Lecture, np.
[225] Doreen Massey, "Landscape/space/politics: an essay," *The Future of Landscape and the Moving Image, RCA* (2011), np. https://thefutureoflandscape.wordpress.com/landscapespacepolitics-an-essay/

whom can conversations be struck? What living memories remain? What kinds of return can be made? [226]

Although individual voices played an important role in my research, in particular Colin Budge, Pip Osborne and the unnamed Detectorist, these were often people with specialised knowledge, who were as absorbed by the past lives of this landscape as I was. In my search for a sense of emplaced belonging, and focus on the past I risked neglecting the living stories of belonging, alienation and connection to landscape, that each inhabitant of the village would hold.

Soon after we moved to the village a van pulled up outside our house, the driver was selling fresh fish, which I did not want. As he turned to leave he said, "I was born in this house". I asked if he wanted to look inside and as we walked through the house, I knew that his eyes were seeing both the rooms as they were now and the memory of the place he had known as a child. His father had lost the family farm, and I understood that this man had lived as an exile from the life he had grown up thinking would be his. As he left he asked if I had seen the ghost yet, and I thought that his presence here and the memories he had shared with me would now haunt these rooms. I wondered if he would regret this return, preferring to keep pristine, those memories of his past in this place.

There will be countless such stories entangled with this place, held within the memory of the people that live here, but rarely told. I wondered what I could do to enable the sharing of such experiences.

[226] Lorimer, Archives and Fieldwork, 258.



Oak tree roots at the Long Field gate.

Collaboration/Community:

In 2023 I collaborated with local historian Colin Budge in a community event in the village hall, displaying a series of a hundred and fifty photographs of the Litton landscape. Many people approached me that evening, and over the next few weeks and months, wanting to talk about the sites I had documented, telling me their memories of these places and what they meant to them. They often expressed regret or anger over how this landscape is treated, how little importance is given to the small, ostensibly insignificant places - a field, a tree, a patch of wildflowers, which hold enormous personal significance. I was struck by how much they cared and their often repeated sense of powerlessness. I realised that although the village community is deeply engaged with this landscape, they had little way to express this, or feeling of agency over the places they felt so connected to. We walk the lanes and tracks and mourn felled trees; vent our frustration on the village WhatsApp group over the destruction of acres of wildflower meadow or the barring of a footpath, but these are often singular responses, as mine had been to the spraying of Long Dole field and the loss of the burnt tree.

My experience during Colin's talk made me realise that an arts practice could become a vector, allowing the vulnerability of sharing what are often deeply personal, and sometimes hidden, reflections and memories of place. This experience became the basis for the methodology I employed throughout, which focused on creating opportunities for village inhabitants to interact with the landscape, share their stories of this place, and create new memories and connections through making. Initiating a discourse on what this landscape means to them and including people whose histories are deeply entwined with this landscape, but who might not readily visit my studio, or engage with arts practice.

The project would encompass the following methods:

- Walking: gathering, drawing, photographing and talking with groups in the landscape.
- Ceramic and print workshops in the village hall, in my studio and in the landscape using gathered clay and plant material.
- A final community event centred around a bonfire firing and exhibition of the work produced.

Environmental sustainability was at the centre of the project. I prioritised local materials and practices that worked with the landscape, rather than seeing it as a resource to be squandered or damaged; developing techniques with minimal environmental impact, which echoed a slower, more reciprocal way of working. The project would result in the creation of two bodies of work: firstly a series of book forms using local clay, paper clay pulp, paper, beeswax, cyanotype, oak gall ink and iron mordant; and secondly a series of clay objects made with locally gathered clay, fired in a pit kiln. The firing of the kiln was significant, creating the opportunity for a gathering around the fire, where the community could talk and share memories of the project, a form of communal interaction we have mostly lost.



Deckle formed paper clay sheets drying, the surface sprinkled with charcoal dust.

I planned to use local clay, and a ceramic material I had developed using a fifty/fifty ratio of pulped newspaper, egg boxes and Litton clay, to which I sometimes added a high proportion of charcoal. This mixture, left to dry on plaster bats, or passed through a paper making deckle, allowed the formation of large sheets of thin, malleable paper clay, which I used to take imprints from the landscape or create book forms. Once dry the sheets were both extremely resilient and light allowing large scale imprints to be taken. They could also be further stained and dyed and crucially they did not need to be fired.





Litton clay, charcoal and paper pulp trials, imprinted with bark.





Imprinting a dead Oak tree off Whitehouse Lane. Clay and paper pulp book form stained with charcoal and Litton Clay.

My first foray into collecting memories of place was a failure. I handed out packs containing drawing paper and details of the project, to each of the hundred pupils at Chewton Mendip Primary school before the summer holiday. I asked them to record, in whatever form they wanted, places in the landscape that had meaning to them or to their neighbours, parents and grandparents. Very few were returned in September.

The feelings and memories I was asking to be spoken and recorded can seem unimportant or even ridiculous unless a space is created to allow vulnerability. I realised that the presence of the artist in a project such as this is crucial. The strangeness or perceived eccentricity of the artist or arts project can create a space which allows people to express previously hidden thoughts and emotions about place. I am approached by people I don't know quite often now, who want to tell me

about a fallen tree I might like; a source of local beeswax going begging; or to show me their photographs of reflections in puddles.



Neil's Beehives, off Litt Hill.



Alison's favourite trees. Hollowmarsh.

Hollowmarsh Walk:

> *Place is also a way of seeing, knowing and understanding the world. When we look at the world as a world of places, we see different things. We see attachments and connections between people and place. We see worlds of meaning and experience. Sometimes this way of seeing can seem to be an act of resistance against a rationalisation of the world that focuses more on space than place.*[227]

The exposure attendant on such communal practice made me feel vulnerable, pushing me outside my usual boundaries. I often occupy a space of solitary observation and quiet studio practice; now I was asking others to share stories and

[227] Tim Creswell, *Place. An Introduction*, 2nd ed. (Wiley Blackwell, 2015), 18.

memories and open my practice up to the scrutiny of my community. As I have often done, I overcame this fear and unfamiliarity by walking.

The first group walk was through the Hollowmarsh on a late July afternoon. I had intended to use the walk to gather local clay and seed heads for later printing workshops, but decided to bring some small slabs of clay with me, showing the group how to press the clay into the earth and trees. As this was a familiar method to me, I hadn't realised how alien this would initially seem to the group. I numbered each interaction and photographed the placing of the clay, this created a material record of the walk, which I later curated into a standing form.



Paula and Jodie pressing clay into Hollowmarsh Lane.

As they pressed clay against the gnarled bark of Oak trees and onto the cut stems of cow parsley lying on the track, I realised that without the clay, there would have been an awkwardness to this prolonged interaction. The clay gave a reason for the group

to stop and connect with the tree, or the track without feeling embarrassed. As we continued to walk, many in the group spoke almost shyly of their favourite tree, or site, and why this was so. Witnessing the permission that this small material intervention created to interact with the landscape was very moving. When I now walk through the Hollowmarsh I remember their favourite trees.



Alison.



Cow parsley imprints on Litton clay, fired in a pit kiln.

Chewton Mendip School workshop.



Felled Ash tree in the top field, Chewton Mendip.

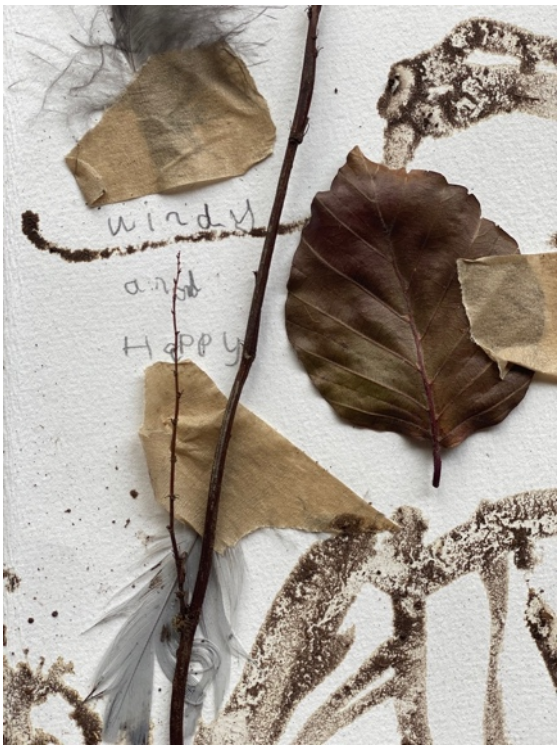
After the failure of my initial attempts to engage the pupils of my local school, and with the knowledge I had gained from the Hollowmarsh walk, I returned to Chewton Mendip School to run a workshop centred around a recently felled Ash tree. I spent a day outside in the field creating opportunities for the pupils to materially interact with the tree. They explored its textures and colours and created pigment from found material such as rotten bark, or earth, grass or leaves. Once they realised that they were allowed to freely explore and become messy many of the children wandered further afield, finding charred sticks to draw with, squashing nettles and beech leaves onto the paper and making ink from blackberries. As they explored, the children began to speak to me about particular places they loved; they asked why this tree had been felled, and talked about changes to their own familiar landscapes and why these often made them sad.

The tree project encouraged free range, active exploration of materials, whilst also asking the children to be creative and thoughtful. A demographic of children, who

would shrink away from such interaction in a more formal setting, were engaged with and enjoyed this process.

I liked using the charcoal. I put it in my cup and Sally added water to make a brownish yellow. Whan I painted it on it reminded me of the tree.





I liked getting bits from inside the log, mixing it with water and making brown paint/ That's called pigment/ It was fun when we were using different things from nature/ We made a tree picture of our own/ I liked the different textures/ We used bits of bark that the animals might have smooshed up/ I liked making our own dye and being outdoors/ Peaceful/ It made me feel calm/ Being outside and hearing birds.[228]

[228] Individual responses when the children were asked about the project the next day. Permission requested and received from parents to use all images on this and the following page.

It is a year since I ran this workshop, and each time I return to the Chewton field a little bit more of the tree has been removed and chopped up for firewood. As with the burnt tree I often take a small piece of this tree with me as I walk past, a twig, a rolled piece of bark. The tree still exists in the record created through the children's material interaction with it, and in their memories of that day. Unlike the burnt tree this is a shared memory, that has become part of the story of this place. I have become the 'Tree Lady'.

I curated the individual interactions with the tree into a series of book forms. These were displayed in an exhibition alongside work I had created in response to the project brief.



Participants in the tree day looking at the finished books.







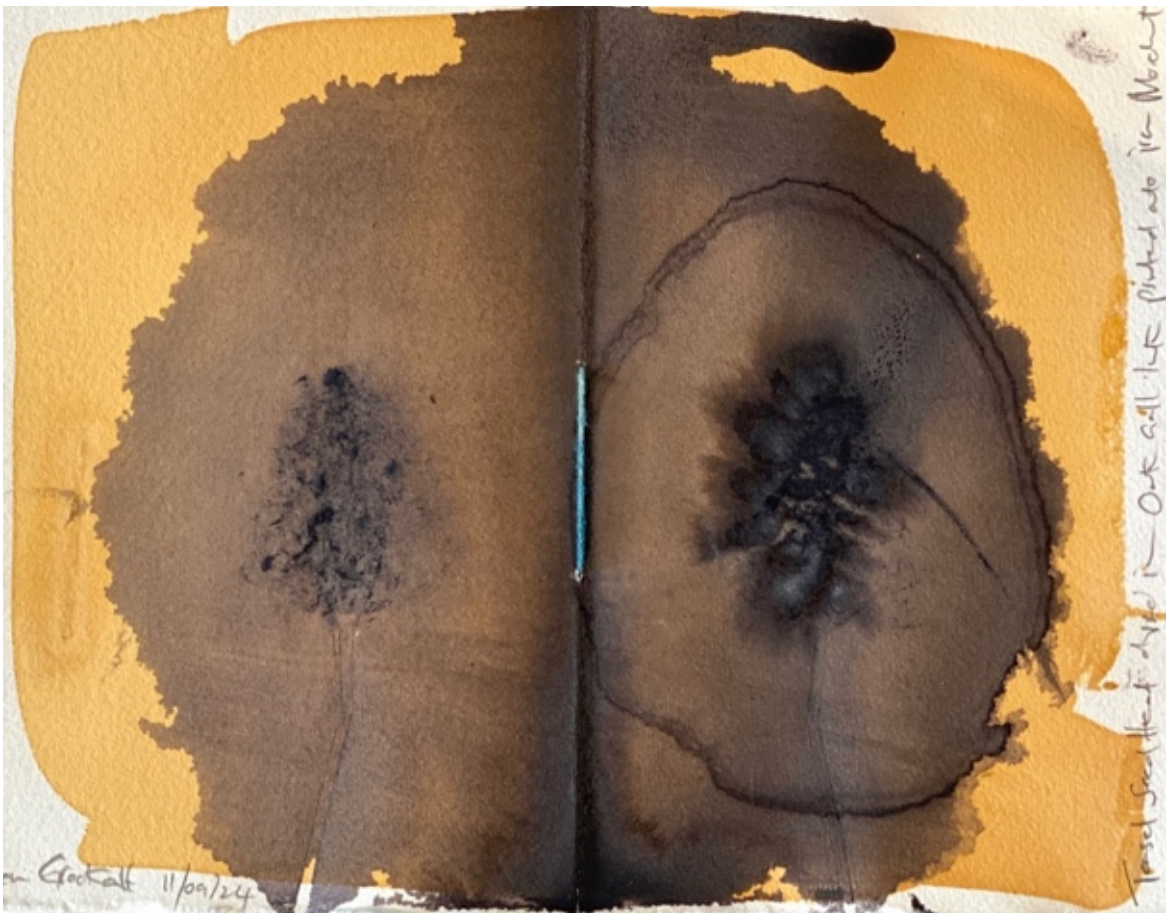


Community print and clay workshops:



Porcelain and Oak gall prints on Litton clay stained paper made by Kelly Harris.

I ran five community workshops between June and September 2024. These focused either on handbuilding with local clay, or more exploratory processes in which I provided clay slip, paper, cyanotype, oak gall ink and its constituent parts, a relief printing press and gathered plant material. Attendance at the workshops grew over the course of the project. A core group of village residents came to all the events, and brought their family and friends as information about the project spread. Because the workshops were free, people who might not typically engage with an art project dropped in for half an hour to see what was happening, and became involved. The relaxed setting allowed a reciprocal relationship to develop between myself and the participants. Few had any experience working with these materials, but this lack of knowledge allowed a freedom of approach which I learnt and benefitted from. Had I anticipated and forewarned participants of all the pitfalls they might encounter they would have lost this freedom and inventiveness.



Teasle soaked in oak gall solution, on iron mordant, put through a relief press, by Ben Crockatt. The teasle remained as a print within the pool of saturated ink.

As the workshops progressed I realised that they were facilitating conversations, both with me and between participants, about the materials they were using, where they had been gathered, about walks they had taken, or planned to take, and again about what this landscape meant to them, and what they hoped it would be in the future. The tactility of holding a ball of Litton clay, printing with gathered seedheads, or watching the reaction as oak gall solution interacts with Ferrous Iron, encouraged or deepened their connection with this place through material interaction.

Now whenever I see these fired pieces, I remember that walk and sense of connection it gave us all... a little bit of Litton sitting on our mantlepiece - the clay beneath our feet, shaped with plants from the hedgerows and burnt and charred in a fire we gathered round.[229]



[229] Jodie Chan, Chewton Mendip resident and member of the Landscape Flux and Flow group.



Community cyanotype, clay prints, and oak gall ink drawings.

The physical legacy of this project will be slight, all the materials used will eventually return to the earth, even the little pots, although these will take longer. What I hope will remain is a lasting awareness and connection to the ordinary stuff that is the landscape in which we live. I thought back to the moment early in this research process, when I realised that the Hollowmarsh was an enormous clay bed, and that afterwards I saw traces of clay everywhere. Creating an interaction with the materials that make up this landscape imbued them with a significance that they may not previously have held.

There is a power inherent in how we describe and therefore perceive landscape writes Robert Macfarlane - *words make worlds*:

> *In English, we 'it' rivers, trees, mountains, oceans, birds and animals: a mode of address that reduces them to the status of stuff, and distinguishes them from human persons.*

Perhaps the people who took part in these walks and workshops would worry more now when the wildflowers verging the hedgerows are cut back, seeing the intricate forms of the cow parsley, hogweed and teasle seedheads they had printed, rather than a messy tangle of weeds; would remember the heavy weight of the clay in their hands, the rough texture of oak bark, the smell of squashed nettles, and the purple of ink made from blackberries. Through interacting with the materials of landscape, the divide between them and 'it' had become smaller.

It isn't very far in the past before the notion that the environment is somehow separate from humanity would have seemed absurd, a world in which it was known that survival rested on a healthy reciprocal relationship between the human and non-human. We have mostly lost this entanglement, and the small individual choices we make in an attempt to live life on a trajectory less likely to do harm often seem rendered obsolete, overwhelmed by the detritus of consumerism, and the economic imperative for growth. We are leaving, everywhere, writes David Farrier:

> *constantly, and with the most astonishing profligacy... a legacy that will endure for hundreds of thousands or even hundreds of millions of years to come.*[230]

The overwhelming damage wrought on the environment since the Industrial revolution calls into question what impact an individual arts practice can have, whether what I do has value and can change attitudes. This project allowed me to see the influence, however local, such a project can have.

> *Folks Around here feel quite passionate about the local environment and so it was quite something to be able to integrate our landscape with ideas, poetry and people. Even people who don't usually get involved in*

[230] David Farrier, *Footprints. In Search of Future Fossils* (4th Estate, 2020), 11.

events became curious about what was happening, sowing seeds for deepening relationships within the village.[231]

Looking back over the photographs taken during the project I was struck by the number of images of hands: touching the bark of a tree, rubbing blackberries into paper, pressing clay into cow parsley, pulling little vessels from the ash of the pit kiln. I realised that, by not providing an intermediary, in the form of paintbrushes or pencils, all mark making, printing and shaping was created through direct contact between hand and material. The Chewton children ended the day with their hands, and sometimes faces stained with mud and berries and ash.

[231] Annie Coyle, Litton resident and member of the Landscape Flux and Flow group.





Landscape Flux and Flow project, Autumn 2024. [232]

[232] Permission received from participants to use these images.

In the post-industrial society in which we live, we are increasingly isolated from haptic interaction with landscape, and from the production of many of the objects and products that we use. Where once these would have been created from the materials available in the places in which we lived, the means of production have become oblique and separate, haptic skills which previous generations would have grown up knowing have largely disappeared. I was lucky to have a headmistress in one of my early primary schools who was a potter, and brought clay into school. Without her, I might never have known what this material meant to me. By bringing this arts practice into schools I hoped that I could give others the same opportunity to interact and understand material that I had once been given. This project was predicated on the hope that by showing the ordinary stuff that makes this landscape, by creating the opportunity for the children of Chewton School, and the inhabitants of this village to touch and sense and gather what is all around them, I could help to reestablish a modicum of the haptic relationship between people and place that once existed.

Conclusion:

And that will be England gone,

The shadows, the meadows, the lanes,

The guildhalls, the carved choirs.

There'll be books; it will linger on

In galleries; but all that remains

For us will be concrete and tyres [233]



Hollowmarsh Lane looking south.

[233] Philip Larkin, *Going, Going* (1972) https://thepoetryhour.com/poems/going-going/

We are, incrementally, but insistently, allowing the loss of something precious and irreplaceable; the fragile fabric of an ancient landscape, the hedgerows, trees and wildflowers, the ecosystems these support, the terraces and holloways, the accumulated work of a thousand years, vulnerable to the drag of metal teeth across the mud, the dumping of rubbish, the spraying of pesticide, to inertia and othering.

The '*informal, un-commodified aspects'* of mundane rural landscapes, writes Rebecca Wheeler, are often ignored, yet these spaces '*deepen our understanding of the role that the past plays in shaping places and identities and open up a multiplicity of vernacular memories and relationships*.'[234]

This is a landscape in which one is continually made aware of the past, a place shaped by the tangled accumulation of repeated actions, both cultural and natural, that form landscape: motion and time articulated as walls or paths, ridges and furrows, hedgerows and puddles. To dwell here means navigating along ancient lines, scored through generations into the earth; to walk beneath trees planted many centuries ago; and inhabit buildings built by hand from the materials of this landscape. But it is not a static landscape, and the future of what it will remain or become lies in the hands of the people who inhabit it now. The intervention that this project created, over the Summer and Autumn of 2024, and which the growing number of such landscape and place driven projects are able to provide, is an opportunity to reconnect both physically and emotionally with landscape, stopping it from being something other, or over there. A quiet form of resistance to the commodification of landscape, to the sense of powerlessness which has been inculcated through centuries of gradual separation from the land.

Acts of resistance can be small: questioning the repeated strimming of the verges in the summer months; anger over a barred footpath and determination to find the

[234] Wheeler, Mining memories, Introduction.

perpetrator and put it right; noticing and recording environmental damage; planting trees; restoring hedgerows; gathering and telling the stories of the landscape so they won't be forgotten. Or placing a ball of Litton clay in the hands of someone who has never held clay before. But these acts, like the acts of slow violence they counter, are cumulative, and begin with the sense that the landscapes we live in cannot be left only to others to utilise for profit, or damage without notice or thought. This is what a project such as this can provide, a way of seeing the landscape, noticing and so caring more, and maybe then acting.

Conclusion.



Conclusion to the Thesis:

> *Now is life very solid, or very shifting? I am haunted by the two contradictions. This has gone on forever: will last forever; goes down to the bottom of the world – this moment I stand on. Also it is transitory, flying, diaphanous. I shall pass like a cloud on the waves.*[235]

In *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle states that whilst some things are given to us through nature - such as our ability to see or hear – of which we first acquire the potentiality and later exhibit the activity, others can only be found through action:

> *For the things we have to learn before we can do them, we learn by doing them.*[236]

In my early interaction with this landscape, through walking, photography and printmaking, encapsulated in the *puddle print*, I sensed an opportunity to combine aspects of particular interest and expertise which had until now remained separate: knowledge and research skills learnt through my history degree, and experience as a ceramic artist. I felt that here lay the potential to advance new knowledge at the intersection of a number of disciplines, including ceramic, print and photographic processes, historical and archival research and embodied knowledge of place, or psychogeography.

Practice based research in the arts is not a linear process, it is fluid, messy and unpredictable. At the start of this research I did not know the route I would take, or what I might discover, only that I wanted to develop methods of engagement with this landscape which would illuminate and extend my understanding of the past through material interaction with traces of the past in the present. I returned

[235] Woolf, Virginia, *A Writer's Diary*, ed., Leonard Woolf (A Harvest Book, 2003), January 4, 1929. 138.
[236] Aristotle, Nicomachean ethics, book 2, chapter 1: 31-2)

repeatedly to places encoded with lost meaning, endeavouring to perceive within landscape the 'minimal residue out of which historical processes can be discerned and made knowable,'[237] predicated on an understanding that most people left no written or archival trace.

As I began to isolate what it was that I wanted to understand, I identified three areas of practice that I felt had the potential to develop new knowledge in the intersection between print and ceramic process, and as a means of understanding landscape.

1. Engagement, through photographic and print process, with light, weather, season, shadow and transience.

2. Engagement with earth, ground, buildings, the archaeological and the temporal, through the material of clay and ceramic process.

3. Engagement with memory, history and archive through writing, walking and research.

From these initial parameters developed the five distinct phases of process driven research: Print, Hollowmarsh, Anarchive, Book and Landscape, that are detailed in this thesis.

Early research focused on practices that operated as *analogous* to the temporal processes through which landscapes are formed, investigating the conceptual correlations between material process and landscape. This work established a set of repeatable parameters using photogravure and soft ground etching processes to explore aspects of repetition, time, reproduction and erosion; subverting established print methods and developing new methods though which print could be taken into ceramics. The new knowledge generated is of interest within the wider ceramic field,

[237] Matthew Fuller and Eyal Weizman, *Investigative Aesthetics, Conflicts, Commons and the Politics of Truth* (London Verso, 2021), 143.

and generated a framework of technical expertise which I continued to develop throughout my PhD.

As I became increasingly familiar and entangled with the cyclical rhythms and material of this landscape, print and ceramic processes moved away from the studio. I developed and interrogated new print and ceramic methods that enabled an entering into, an interaction, a gathering of what landscape is through collaboration between this place and the material I was working with. This necessitated technical research and the development of new processes for material recording in landscape, including soft ground etching in place, imprinting using shadow and natural light to create photogravure plates and developing imprinting processes with clay and alginate.

As material and theoretical processes began to weave in and out of each other in unforeseen ways, an iterative methodology developed. New knowledge was generated through an entwining of material practice, embodied presence, memory and historical research which did not describe, copy or represent landscape, but was created on, with or through it. By positioning making as an epistemological tool, I demonstrated that practice is indexical and processual rather than mimetic - a direct response to the Locardian principle that every contact leaves a trace.

The challenge of practice based research lies in the creation of methodological processes which, whilst interweaving practical and theoretical research, do not create a form of material illustration of theory. Susan Kozel pinpoints this dichotomy when she describes ideas as '*felt, touched, lived, and breathed*' *and practice as 'ephemeral, changeable, invisible, and disappearing.'*[238]

[238] Kozel, Susan. "The Virtual and the Physical: A Phenomenological Approach to Performance Research," in *The Routledge Companion to Research in the Arts*. M. Biggs & H. Karlsson (Eds.), (New York: Routledge, 2010), 206.

The technical specificity of early work, in which I sought an analogy within method to processes of landscape formation became subsumed by a fluid and interrogatory process of learning through making, writing and recording with and in the landscape. Work moved away from more documentary processes towards a speculative use of material process, emplaced writing and focused research, to understand the social, historical and geological formation of this landscape and my own place within it, so as to offer a provisional model that others can adapt to their own situations. Through the discovery and interrogation of objects such as the marriage certificate, musket ball and ampullae I became attuned not only to the cumulative gathering of extant traces of past interaction with place, but also with the loss or absence of such trace and the reasons for this, both in the landscape and the archive.

This led to the formation of an interdisciplinary methodology, developed through iterative practice, which demonstrates how landscape can be understood through emplaced haptic interaction between material process, historical enquiry and embodied experience. Illuminating why we dwell as we do in the places we have created, and recognising that practice need not result in a singular object; the experience of making with and in landscape can be enough.

The structure of this research mirrors the processes through which landscapes themselves are formed over time, moving from encounter, to trace, to archive, and finally to communal engagement. Early chapters establish methods of attentive encounter with landscape through walking, photography and print processes. Subsequent chapters recognise landscape as an entanglement of accumulated traces, revealing how both landscape and archive hold partial and uneven records of past presence. The final chapter extends this methodology beyond the individual practitioner through a community project that invited others to engage materially with landscape. In this way the research demonstrates how artistic practice can

operate not only as a method of enquiry, but also as a means of fostering renewed attention to the fragile landscapes we inhabit.

For example, my repeated material interaction with the burnt tree, followed by its loss, initiated an investigation into past instances of alienation and dispossession within this landscape, and within my own past, which expanded the parameters of my research. I used this new methodology of collective material and ontological processes to gather and understand other sites within this landscape.

Searching for a method of practice analogous to the sense of transient memory within landscape, generated a new method of soft ground porcelain print through smoke firing, allied closely to the concept of the palimpsest. My fascination with the palimpsest and book form, combined with technical necessity, led to the development of new beeswax, cyanotype, monoprint and paper and plant cocooning processes, which were later utilised in my installation series in Wells Cathedral and in the final community project.

Repetitive interaction with, and documentation of, this landscape, as I witnessed change and damage, revealed the capacity of the material record as a form of witness to a mutable and threatened landscape. Artistic practice can become a form of resistance to the slow violence enacted upon the landscape by making visible the fragile material traces, histories and ecological change that shape the places we inhabit, influencing wider perceptions of landscape and renewing or restoring the connection between people and place.

Across the course of this research it has been demonstrated that studio and field-based practices can operate as analogous to processes of landscape formation, allowing material engagement to illuminate the temporal and accumulative nature of landscape itself. The development of new print and ceramic processes show how

print can function not only as an image-making technique but as a carrier of concept and as a methodological tool within ceramics. Embodied interaction with place revealed how material practice can deepen understanding of the landscape, whilst also shaping decisions made within studio practice. The inclusion of other voices, memories and experiences from within the community revealed how placemaking is shaped through collective inhabitation as much as individual perception.

Across the five phases of research outlined in this thesis - *Print, Hollowmarsh, Anarchive, Book and Landscape* - a number of distinct technical, methodological and conceptual findings emerged. Taken together these form an archive of practice-based discoveries demonstrating how material engagement with landscape can generate new knowledge at the intersection of ceramic, print, and photographic processes, archival practice, and research-based, autoethnographic and poetic registers of writing. These findings are gathered and summarised in an appendix to this thesis so that they may be accessible to other practitioners and researchers working across similar interdisciplinary fields.

The methods I will take forward into the future are those which do not impose, or attempt to illustrate, but enter into the weave of what landscape is. This research develops a methodological approach which allows a place to be seen and understood through the vulnerability of past experience and memory; historical, theoretical and archival research; emplaced knowledge; the voices of others; and material practice. Through this inter-disciplinary framework, landscapes can be understood across material, historical and experiential dimensions. Such an approach acknowledges the muddled entanglement of past and present, absence and presence, ugliness and beauty, and offers a way to comprehend what a landscape is, why it is, and how it might be in the future.



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Appendices:



Section 1: Practitioner Archive.

Key Findings from the Research.

Section 2: Writing:

All the rooms I have ever lived.

Writing for '*The Cure for sleep'* project.

https://thecureforsleep.com/open-house/#sallywetherall

- Birth/thread
- Valley
- Memory

Section 3: Material Process

Material research not included in the main body of the thesis:

Book Forms

Nest

Foundation work

Relief press photogravure trials

Alginate

I was here. Wells Cathedral Installation.

Section 1: Practitioner Archive:

Key Findings from the Research

Across the five phases of research outlined in this thesis - Print, Hollowmarsh, (An)archive, Book and Landscape - a number of technical, methodological and conceptual discoveries emerged through iterative material engagement with landscape. The following archive gathers these findings as a practical record for artists and researchers working across ceramics, print, landscape and archival methodologies.

Rather than presenting fixed conclusions, these notes record processes, observations and insights that emerged through sustained practice.

Foundation Work

Several core principles shaped the research from its earliest stages.

- Material processes such as printmaking, clay practice, firing and cocooning proved most conceptually powerful when they behaved analogously to processes occurring within landscape itself - erosion, accumulation, repetition and trace.

- These processes reflect my understanding of landscape as *Writan* surface – scratched, torn and scored through the accumulated interactions of people, time and environment.

- Printmaking revealed a particularly strong relationship to memory and time. Fading impressions mirrored the erosion of memory, repeated printing or re-inking evoked the revival or reinterpretation of past traces.

- Walking became the central methodological structure of the work. A cyclical rhythm developed:

Walk → photograph → translate into material process → return to site.

Through repetition, subtle details and changes in the landscape gradually became visible.

The value of controlled risk: cracks, partial transfers, plant burn-out and other unpredictable material events strengthened the conceptual alignment between process and landscape.

Knowledge emerged through sustained, cyclical and material engagement with landscape. Process itself functioned as research.

Chapter 1: Print

Early work explored how printmaking might function as a direct engagement with landscape, light and temporality.

Print processes proved most effective when they behaved like landscape processes rather than representing them. Photogravure and soft ground etching allowed the recording of repetition, erosion and accumulation.

- Natural sunlight and seasonal conditions were successfully used as exposure tools, embedding temporality directly within the image-making process. Weather and environmental exposure also acted as collaborators, producing marks that could not be generated within the studio alone.

- Working with locally sourced clay further integrated landscape materially into the work.

- Limiting scale, palette and materials helped deepen the investigation, allowing repeated formats to reveal patterns over time.

- Printmaking became a form of landscape research when light, weather, local materials and temporality were embedded within the process.

Chapter 2: Hollowmarsh

This chapter shifted the research from studio experimentation to direct engagement with a specific landscape.

- Repeated walking and observation revealed the Hollowmarsh as a palimpsest landscape in which political, ecological and personal histories accumulate as layered traces. Evidence of past activity — paths, ridges, boundaries — became perceptible only through sustained presence.

- Soft ground etching plates and clay impressions were used directly in the field, allowing the ground itself to function as a surface of inscription.

- Returning repeatedly to the same sites gradually produced an archive of traces and observations. Loss, decay and removal of objects became meaningful elements within the work.

The research also revealed how environmental degradation often occurs incrementally, producing what has been described as slow violence.

Place-based practice becomes politically and ecologically potent through attentive, longitudinal engagement with landscape.

Chapter 3: (An)archive

This chapter explored the relationship between landscape, memory and archival practice, developing the concept of the **(An)archive:** an expanded archive that incorporates materials and experiences often excluded from conventional historical records. These included plant matter, local clay, personal recollection and gathered objects.

- Clay, glaze, decals and found objects were used to materialise ephemeral traces, allowing memory and transience to be embedded within the work.

- Rather than presenting stable documentation, the archive was understood as fragmentary, layered and incomplete, reflecting the uneven survival of memory within landscape.

An archive can be active, material and processual rather than a static repository of information.

Chapter 4: Book

The book form provided a structure through which fragmented traces could be layered and encountered, enabling the exploration of hidden or marginal histories, particularly those belonging to people whose lives were not recorded within official archives.

- Materials such as clay, wax, paper, oak gall ink, plant matter and printed imagery created layered surfaces that echoed the palimpsestic nature of landscape.

- Handling and interaction with the book forms became important. The act of turning pages mirrored the process of uncovering traces within archives and landscapes.

- The waxed pages altered what could be perceived under different light conditions. The closed book form related to experiencing the erosion or inaccessibility of past experience within place.

The book form functions as an interactive material archive through which memory, landscape and history can be encountered.

Chapter 5: Landscape

The final phase extended the research beyond the individual practitioner through community engagement. Workshops using clay, print and locally derived materials encouraged participants to record their own relationship to landscape. These activities revealed how embodied making can transform perception from detached observation to relational engagement.

- The project demonstrated how artistic practice can function as a form of witnessing, making visible traces of environmental change that often remain unnoticed.

- Embodied, collaborative engagement can foster care, awareness and responsibility toward landscape.

Conclusion:

Across the research several overarching insights emerged.

- Material processes such as erosion, accumulation, fading and layering proved effective in revealing the temporal dimensions of both landscape and memory.

- Walking and repeated return to sites generated a deeper understanding of place than isolated observation.

- Working with locally sourced materials - clay, plants, pigments - embedded landscape directly within the work.

- Unpredictable outcomes within material processes often proved conceptually generative, reinforcing the alignment between artistic practice and natural systems.

- Knowledge emerges most powerfully through active, cyclical and materially embedded engagement with landscape. Process itself becomes research, site and archive. In this way the structure of the research mirrors the processes through which landscapes themselves are formed over time.

- Finally, the research demonstrated that material engagement with landscape can generate new knowledge at the intersection of ceramic, print, and photographic processes, archival practice, and research-based, autoethnographic and poetic registers of writing. Operating not only as a means of representation, but as a method for understanding landscape through material interaction, trace and inscription.

Section 2: Writing.

Most of the rooms I have ever lived.

First, a small room I don't remember.
Then, cot in a corner, slate shed, Skelsmergh.
(a rat ran over me.)

A Stone barn in a steep northern valley.
The river far below.
Scorch of gas fire; damp lime plaster, rain.

When it snows we walk home
down the steep slope
from the Shap road.

South, to a square room with my sister.
An army base, flat and tarmacked;
houses, furniture identical.

There are rental people in the barn.
We stalk them round the garden,
peer in to their (our) rooms.

We walk down the side of the valley to swim.
A deep pool carved by the waterfall.
At its edge a perfect circle in the rock.

Another army house I do not like,

and another and another.
House. Base. Barbed wire surrounded.

Bus to school, wrong money, knowing no one.
Ugly and tarmac and raining.
Cul de sac, semi-detached, brick.

My dormitory is seven rows of metal bunks.
high ceilings, long corridors, endless evenings.
I do not know the rules.

Stone house, in a valley, near a river.
We plant things, put down roots.
I circle the garden, greet each apple tree, plum and pear.

The monkey puzzle whispers outside my window.
I walk up Codden Hill, learn the lanes,
my particular river and trees.

We are scattered.
To an island in the ocean, a white house by the sea.
And I, untethered, skim the surface of the earth

The edge of the Downs.
Rooms dug into rock.
Steep stairs. A baby.

A stone semi, bulbs pushing weedy shoots through tarmac.
Cars, roads, neighbours, noise.

Three children wheel madly in a small stone garden.

The steep slope of the Mendips.
A river, an old stone house.
Graven Angels keeping watch.

My feet burrow into the earth,
I greet each apple tree, plum and pear.
Smell the damp from the old lime plaster.

Birth/Thread:

In a hospital in Kendal, I am cut from my panicking mother. Scar tissue rings the birth canal, tight and ungiving around my skull. I am close to dying.

Six months before, as a small, translucent, fish creature, curled tight inside, I am stitched into my mother. For there have been others here before me, who, without a stitch looped taut beneath them, grew too heavy and dropped out. And there was one, a long time ago, fully grown, but the wrong way up. She took three days, arriving blue and still, nearly taking my mother with her.

My Mother, who has waited fourteen years for this day, feels the scar tissue, residuary of the one that was still and blue, constricting, gripping me tight inside her, my heartbeat fluttering and swooping.

"It's happening again! It's happening again..." she shouts. Into the hot, blood panic of the birthing room, into the doctor's ashen face.

She is sedated; I am cut from her. I survive.

I am tethered to her by this slender thread, a single stitch, that is also a story. Of blood, and loss, and miraculous birth. Of the baby girl, born still and blue; the glancing fishtail of existence felt only by my mother, of those others before me that didn't stay.

Of the panic in the birthing room; of her fear and grief and joy. Of all the many reasons that I lived. This story that is mine, but really hers, woven into my memory; told to a child too young to bear such a weight of revelation and confidence.

Her miracle baby, her golden child. Her love a thread binding me tightly to her, and I, straining at its tethers, feel its pull, taut between us.

Valley:

A yew tree grew in the garden of the house where I was born. Needled, bitter green, studded acid red with berries tempting as fruit. Some remnant of Victorian planting, incongruous in our moss green northern valley of beech and oak.

I'd climb high into its wide embrace of sun dapple, skin shadow, branch, twig and scented bark. Beneath the tree, slippery flagstones, slimed with fallen berries and the leaf matter of years.

The tree loomed high above valley slopes so precipitous I felt – if I only ran fast enough – I could leap from our side to the other, high over the river, the stony fields, and weaving walls, to where sheep grazed on ridges grooved horizontally into the sloping earth.

I knew my way down to the river pool; the damp home smell of lime plaster, and scorched tang of the electric fire. Knew, when the sheep began to bleat incessantly in summer, that their babies had been taken. I wondered, when they stopped, whether they had forgotten.

I was eight when we left. To brick cul de sacs, borrowed army furniture. Straight privet hedges and neat flat lawns. The smell of hot tarmac made soft by a southern sun.

I returned only once. Walking down the steep track from the Shap Road, where my parents once cleaved a path through deep snowdrift, my new sister in a carrycot on my father's shoulders. Down the ridged valley, past the river pool, where in summer we swam naked in clear water, emerging, dripping, at dusk.

The Yew tree was gone, leaving only a raw wound of naked wood, ringed with stone. The house had the vulnerable, naked look of a newly shorn sheep without the dark old tree centring it, and the flagstones were dry and clean.

Memory:

I sit, still and quiet beside my mother, as she sleeps, or dreams, or hovers somewhere outside herself waiting to leave.

She lies, as if carved from some pure clean material unrelated to flesh, skin stretched taught over the fine bones of her face; eyelids waxy pale. I shake her, gently, hoping to make her stir, to see her eyes find mine, as they always have, see a recognition of sorts break over her face. But I feel only her warm bones, like a small bird, fragile beneath the blankets. Taking her hand, I sink with her into the muffled warmth of this place of fading.

A glimmer of something pulls me back. A perfume bottle, startling amongst the detritus of sickness; nearly empty, just a slick of amber gleaming at the bottom. Tipping the glass against my wrist, the golden scent the ghost of my mother as she once was. Her vivid cleverness and badly concealed vanity; her stubbornness and laughter; sharp prickliness and sudden kindness.

All day I am startled by the presence of this scent that does not belong to me. It is with me as I collect my children from school; as I stand in my kitchen preparing supper; as I move around my house at dusk, preparing for bed.

I remember how, as a child going away to boarding school, I sprayed this perfume into a small soapstone box, trapping the scent inside. At night, in the dormitory unable to sleep I would inhale the smell of my mother and feel some comfort, feel that I had her with me.

That night I take the small bottle from where I have hidden it under socks and slips in my chest of drawers, as if it were stolen contraband. I touch the scent to my pillow.

Section 3: Material Processes:

Book forms:

Porcelain flax paper clay, photogravure and relief print, monoprint, thread, porcelain slip and oak gall ink. To be included in the viva exhibition.








Photogravure plate using black body stain ink, on porcelain paper clay and porcelain and black body stain slip. Printed using the Relief press rather than the etching press. Although the print is not as perfect as those produced with the etching press, the eroded surface is really interesting and worth investigating.



Further photogravure slabs using the relief press. The relief press is much easier to use than the etching press o this later development is really welcome for the production of future work.

Nest:

A series of cocooned plant, porcelain paper clay and black clay slip nest forms. Their scale allowed the plant material to remain almost untouched, apart from being soaked in slip







Foundation work:

- Black clay, coiled and slabbed, with white slip, porcelain paper clay and yellow body stain.

- Stoneware clay imprinted on walls, constructed without looking, with terra sigilatta slip, and Litton clay.





- Slab constructed porcelain paper clay standing piece, imprinted on the ground, with terra sigillata slip, black clay slip

- Monoprint stoneware slabs impressed with plant material, with terra sigilatta slip, black clay slip, yellow body stain. Bound with thread and porcelain paper clay slip.





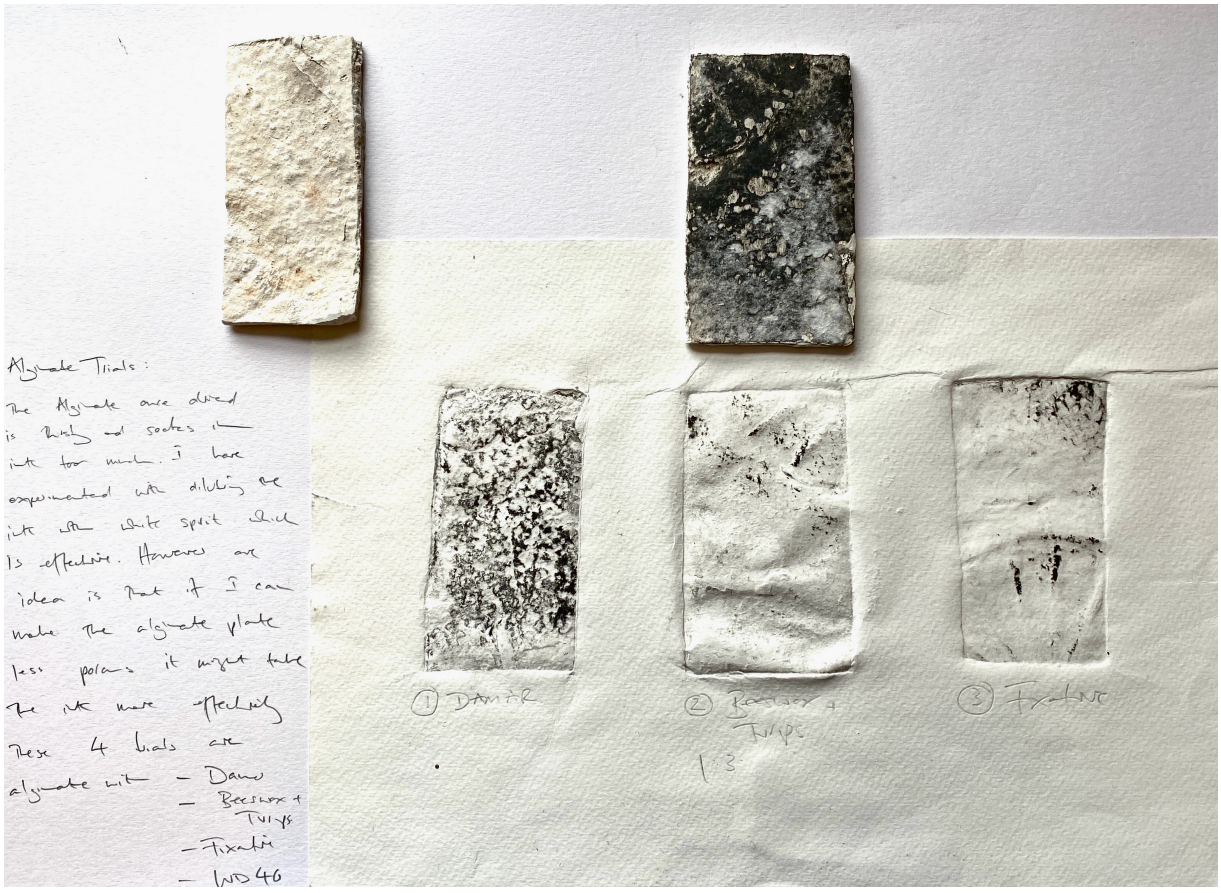
Alginate:

Alginate trials using materials to make the alginate plate less porous.

- Damar
- Beeswax and Turps
- WD 40

None of these were very effective. I am sure there is scope for using this process to take prints from landscape. At present it is only possible to take 1 print with ink before the plate is permanently stained with that ink colour. If a method could be found for making the dry alginate surface non porous more prints could be taken.

If only one print is necessary then this process is really effective.



Wells Cathedral Installation: I Was Here.

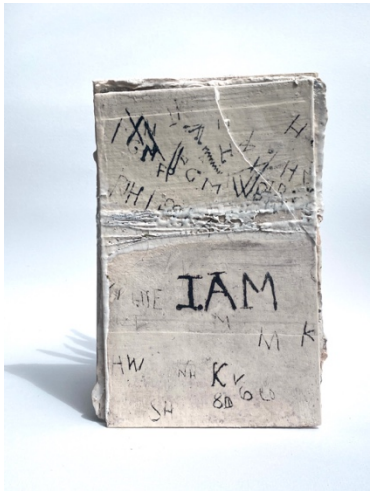
22 Book forms. Porcelain Paper clay, Litton Clay, Stoneware clay, Cocooned paper, thread, oak gall ink, beeswax. Sgraffito, monoprint, cast.







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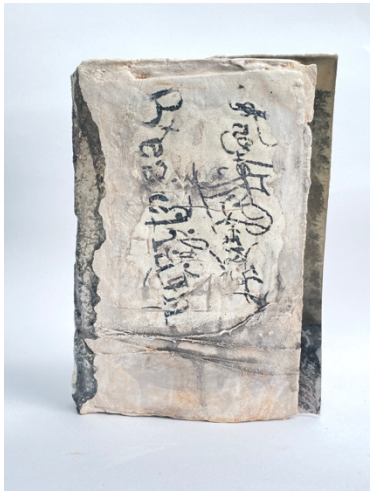





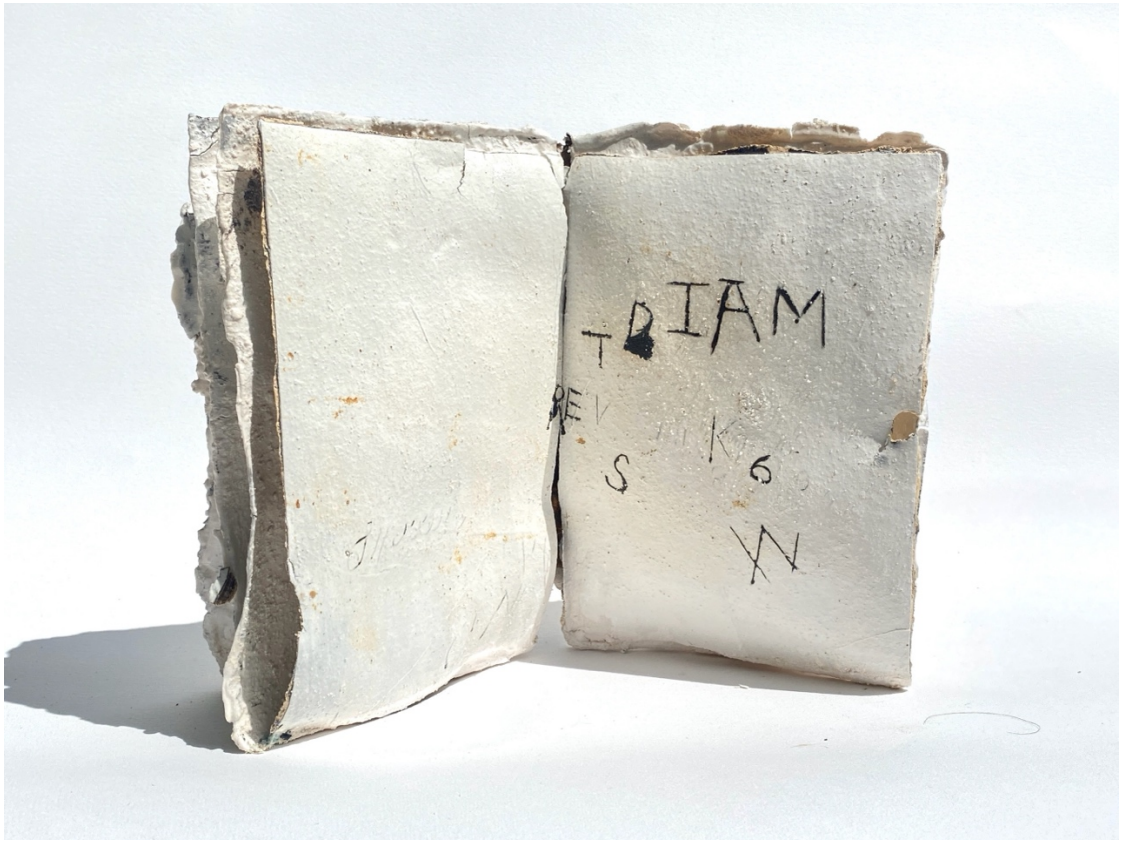
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