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Please cite the final published version:

Timothy J. Wilkinson & David C. Harvey (2017) Managing the future of the past: images of Exmoor landscape heritage, *Landscape Research*, 42:8, 862-879, DOI: [10.1080/01426397.2017.1315390](https://doi.org/10.1080/01426397.2017.1315390)

Publication metadata

Title:	Managing the future of the past: images of Exmoor landscape heritage
Author(s):	Timothy J. Wilkinson & David C. Harvey
Journal:	<i>Landscape Research</i>
DOI/Link:	10.1080/01426397.2017.1315390
Document version:	Accepted manuscript (post-print)

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Managing the future of the past: images of Exmoor landscape heritage

Abstract

Tarr Steps is a footbridge across a river but it also bridges two temporal landscapes: the present and the 'deep past'. Although the origins of the site are uncertain, the bridge is often represented as objectively authentic and 'ancient'. The historicity of this claim is challenged by secondary production of the site. We unpack the discursive construction of the bridge and argue that Tarr Steps' connection to the deep past is a cultural imaginary based on a selective interpretation of its morphology. This imaginary connection authenticates representation of the site as resembling the origin of sequence of cultural evolution in Britain. We explore implications of this in relation to three metaphors of landscape used in the cultural heritage management tool called Historic Landscape Characterisation. In so doing, we raise questions about the future of the past, specifically in terms of the conceptualisation of temporality, authenticity and the politics of representation.

Introduction

Tarr Steps is a stone footbridge across the River Barle, in the county of Somerset, in south west England. It is known as a 'clapper' bridge; a structure comprised of large stones leant together so as to form a bridge over a river (see Figure 1). Tarr Steps is a scheduled ancient monument, whose primary origins are variously attributed to the 'deep past'; prehistoric and medieval periods. In Nov 2016¹ and December 2012², substantial sections of the bridge were washed away by floods; events that received national media attention. The Steps were last rebuilt later in 2013. . It has been reassembled at least 11 times since 1930, but popular representations still tend to identify the clapper bridge as 'ancient'. Even recent media coverage by newspapers and television news reports of the rebuilding events call Tarr Steps 'medieval' or 'prehistoric', implying a material continuity and authenticity that is objectively absent.

This paper investigates issues of temporality, authenticity and national identity through a textual analysis of how Tarr Steps is invoked with meaning. The identification of essential historical features of Tarr Steps is problematized by arguing that the historic character of Tarr Steps is a matter of cultural convention, rather than history. Following the implications of this heritage process, we explore how the Tarr Steps case study has consequences both for issues of authenticity, and for landscape management approaches, such as Historical Landscape Characterisation (HLC). As a management tool, HLC is a useful practical device for classifying heritage that draws on a broad range of concepts of landscape from archaeology, human geography and environmental psychology.

¹ <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/nov/21/storm-angus-floods-hit-south-west-england-with-more-rain-to-come> (accessed 21/11/16)

² <http://www.itv.com/news/westcountry/topic/tarr-steps/> (accessed 22/8/16). For wider media coverage, see for instance e.g. (all last accessed 22/8/16) ITV: <http://www.itv.com/news/west/update/2013-01-02/tarr-steps-hit-by-floods/>, BBC: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-somerset-20878388>, Daily Mail: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2277567/Tarr-Steps-3-000-year-old-bridge-devil-sunbathed-rebuilt-floods-washed-away-tonne-stone-slabs.html>

By identifying, discussing and challenging these concepts in this paper we open up the possibility of a more critical HLC with intensified interpretative purchase.³

Landscape and heritage can both be understood as culturally produced entities through which notions of the past are ascribed in an on-going present with an eye to the future. Broadly speaking, it is the cultural production of landscapes and heritage that explains their imbrication in identity politics. They are – directly or indirectly – made by people, reflect their values, and are thus political entities. As an important feature of the identity of social groups there is often a desire to protect chosen and specified elements of landscape and heritage ‘for future generations’. To ensure the future of the past, therefore, elements such as Tarr Steps are declared authentic and important. Thus validated, their material form is protected. Protection usually means management and/or designation, which afford the reproduction of heritage. Both rely on the identification of important features of landscape as ‘heritage’. This paper investigates this process of heritageization, uncovering a narrative of ‘ancientness’, through which a nationally-bound Authorised Heritage Discourse (Smith, 2006) is authenticated through reference to an undifferentiated ‘deep past’, which acts a baseline for cultural evolution allowing technological advances to be measured and celebrated. This examination of how Tarr Steps has been represented through a range of non-cartographic texts necessarily opens up the wider questions revolving around the materiality of the site and its landscape: what is Tarr Steps? From when does it originate? In what way is it ‘authentic’? And what do these questions mean for how it should be characterised and managed?

The first section of this paper addresses some basic questions about the supposed origins of Tarr Steps as a physical object. In particular, we focus on what the on-going and enduring practices of rebuilding mean for such a site. Paradoxically, we find that Tarr Steps as a physical object can be said to have both ‘primary’ and ‘secondary’ origins, with its primary – or ‘original’ – origin dependent on its subsequent (and on-going) secondary management practices. Despite having been washed away on numerous occasions, an image of Tarr Steps as an enduring, ancient site persists in cultural representations. The site is a symbol of an ancient bridge; a cultural image in which a connection between the materiality of the bridge and a sense of ancientness has been constructed and claimed as authentic. In the second substantive section of this paper, therefore, we explore Tarr Steps as a cultural artefact, through investigating two interconnected discourses in which Tarr Steps is represented in a variety of non-cartographic texts. Finally, the paper reflects on some of the implications of this complex relationship between landscape and heritage; materiality, authenticity and temporality.

Methodology

Methodologically we have deployed a variant of discourse analysis known as Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), this approach is associated with Norman Fairclough (1989, 1992, 1995), Wodak (1989, 1996) and van Dijk (1984, 1993). It has been productively mobilised in the field of heritage studies by Smith (2004, 2006), Waterton et al. (2006), Waterton and Watson (2010), Waterton (2010). CDA is part of a wider ‘a discursive approach to heritage studies’ reviewed by Wu and Song Hou (2015), which draws on Foucault (1972). We take the key assumptions of CDA to be that language is a social practice (N.Fairclough and Wodak, 1997) and that language (in the form of

³ Such an ambition lies at the heart of the HERCULES EU funded programme, *Sustainable Futures for Europe’s Heritage in Cultural Landscapes*, see <http://www.hercules-landscapes.eu> (last accessed 22/08/16).

written and oral texts) is used to realise power and ideology. Discourses shape knowledge, values and identity as they circulate through social practices, discursive practices and texts (N. Fairclough, 1995). Using Tarr Steps as a case study, we employ CDA to unpick and question the systematic ways that heritage and landscape are understood, managed and reproduced. Through close reading of texts and an iterative process of data collection and analysis, we highlight and think through the heritage discourses in which narratives of Tarr Steps are entangled. In doing so we raise questions about how temporality and authenticity are dealt with in the practice of Historic Landscape Characterisation.

Visual and representational approaches to heritage (Lowenthal, 2015; Waterton and Watson, 2010), landscape (Cosgrove and Daniels, 1985, Barnes and Duncan, 1991, Matless, 1998) and tourism (Alder, 1989; Fish, 2005; Jaworski and Pritchard, 2005, Jenkins, 2003; MacCannell, 1976; Urry, 1990) are well established. However, the 'turn to affect' has raised pertinent questions for such approaches in relation to more-than-representational (Lorimer, 2005, 2008; Wylie, 2002) aspects of social life such as embodiment, emotion, atmosphere and experience (Anderson and Harrison, 2006, Edensor, 2012; 2015; Macpherson, 2009; McCormack, 2003; Wylie, 2006). This has problematized the dominance of visibility and privileging of the representational in the conceptualisation of social life. On the basis that affect is in excess of discourse (e.g. Thrift 2004, Anderson 2006, Lorimer, 2005, 2008), a methodological separation between discursive approaches and studies of affect has opened up (Wetherell, 2013, 2015). In the context of critical heritage studies, dialogues at the interface of affect and discourse approaches are articulating the politics of affect (Tolia-Kelly, 2006, 2016; Waterton, 2015) and expanding conceptions of the semiotic landscape to include the more-than-representational (Waterton and Watson, 2014).

Despite emergent theories of affect, in this paper we foreground discourse and text because conventional heritage management tools take textual representation as central to designation, planning and policy. In this paper we focus on Historic Landscape Characterisation, itself a representational approach based on texts, particularly the interpretation of maps and the production of G.I.S visualisations of units of landscape with particular historic qualities (G. Fairclough, 1999).⁴ Using CDA, we think through a wider set of texts than commonly deployed in HLC including guidebooks, newspapers, postcards and stamps to explore the conceptualisations of heritage and landscape. In our view, the incorporation of affect into landscape-scale heritage management tools is still some way off. However, the expansion of HLC to include a wider set of texts represents a modest and practical potential modification to existing approaches which would help to articulate the complexity of landscape heritage.

Tarr Steps as a physical object

Tarr Steps is situated at the eye of a storm of heritage designations. It was deemed of 'national importance' in 1925 and therefore scheduled as an ancient monument (Historic England, 2015). In 1959, it was listed as a Grade 1 building and thus deemed of 'special architectural or historic interest' (Historic England, 2015).⁵ The landscape in which Tarr Steps is situated therefore, is subject

⁴ This paper emerges from Tim Wilkinson's Economics and Social Research Council funded PhD in collaboration with Exmoor National Park, exploring perceptions of Exmoor National Park and engagements with the national landscape.

⁵ <http://www.historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1247822> (last accessed 22/8/16).

to a double designation. Furthermore, its immediate environs, 'Tarr Steps Woodland', were made a National Nature Reserve in 2004, and more broadly, it is located within the territory of Exmoor National Park; designated 1954. Inscribed by these multiple designations, Tarr Steps is clearly marked as 'national heritage' and, as such, acts to sustain and reproduce what Smith (2006) might describe as an Authorised Heritage Discourse. But how did the actual bridge originate, and how old is it?

Figure 1. The form of Tarr Steps. ©Co-author: David Harvey

The physical form of Tarr Steps comprises three components: large stone slabs ('clappers'), piers that raise the slabs above the riverbed, and raking stones that protect the piers (Riley, 2013: 4). The slabs lie on top of 17 piers, which on the upstream side are shielded by raking stones (see Figure 1). The structure is approximately 55m long. A morphological description of Tarr Steps as a physical object, however, is only meaningful as part of wider narratives. As we will show, representations of Tarr Steps reproduce the materiality of the bridge as relating to an origin in prehistory or Medieval times. Despite multiple designations marking Tarr Steps as 'heritage', the morphology of Tarr Steps is not a natural signifier of 'heritage' or 'pastness'. Rather, its morphology is conferred meaning by claims about the origins of the site.

Primary Origins: Dominant narratives of Tarr Steps beginnings

Tarr Steps is represented as having a primary origin in either 'prehistoric' or 'medieval' periods. Within these narratives, the bridge appears to be objectively 'authentic', but the historicity of these claims is challenged by secondary processes at the site – its repeated rebuilding following floods (described in the following section).

Dominant archaeological narratives about the site ascribe its origins as being prior to the earliest confirmed reference to a bridge at Tarr Steps, which appears on Day and Master's (1782) *Map of*

Somerset as 'Tar Bridge' (Grinsell, 1970; Riley, 2013). An earlier textual reference to 'Tarr Steps' in 1644,⁶ seems to imply the existence of a bridge (Riley, 2013: 7-8), but technically marks a farm nearby rather than the bridge itself. These historical references suggest the presence of a river crossing at the site by the 18th century, although the morphology of the 'river crossing' is not recorded until 1884 (Boyd-Dawkins, 1884).

The two dominant archaeological narratives of Tarr Steps code material descriptions of the clapper bridge as signifying a temporal period. The exegesis of Tarr Steps' origins differs in each narrative; one attributes the site as being 'prehistoric', the other of 'medieval' origins. The idea of Tarr Steps as 'prehistoric', (either Bronze Age or Neolithic) relies on analysis of etymology, dating via morphological analogy, and its landscape position. Early etymological interpretation connected the word 'Tarr' with the Celtic 'Tochar' meaning 'causeway' (Boyd-Dawkins, 1884: 65). This connection was combined with morphological analogy with causeways in Ireland to develop the idea that 'this (Tarr Steps) is an ancient Celtic causeway' (Boyd-Dawkins, 1884: 65). Later interpretations focused on the site's position in the landscape. The existence of prehistoric barrows in the vicinity of Tarr Steps afforded the attribution of a 'Bronze Age' date to the site (e.g. Bourne, 1960).⁷ It has been represented as 'form[ing] a line of communication between the Ridgeways on either side of the [river] Barle' (Boyd-Dawkins, 1924: xxxiv). The practice of positioning Tarr Steps as part of a prehistoric ridgeway continues to circulate in archaeological narratives; Castleden (1990: 116) argues a Neolithic ridgeway 'connects Brightworthy Barrow and its stone setting on Withypool Common with Green Barrow, Old Barrow and Tarr Steps'. The prehistoric origin of Tarr Steps is also claimed in local histories. For instance, Bourne (1968: 16) argues that 'there can be no reasonable doubt that these cyclopean blocks are one with the longstone and the barrows', while Burton (1969 [1974], 105 parenthesis in original) found that 'certainly it [Tarr Steps] was sited to link ancient (i.e. prehistoric) trackways'. One might speculate that the megalithic form of the stones at Tarr Steps tacitly supported this interpretation, although Exmoor's prehistoric remains are now perhaps better known for their 'minilithic' qualities (Gillings, 2015; Gillings *et al.*, 2010; Riley & Wilson-North, 2001).

Since at least Leslie Grinsell's (1970) review of the archaeological evidence at Tarr Steps, a medieval origin for the site has gained purchase, for instance in media representation.⁸ Claims about a medieval origin dismiss the prehistoric interpretation through morphological analogy and the interpretation of a historic text from 1279. Morphological analogy with clapper bridges on Dartmoor was deployed by Grinsell (1970: 150), who cites Worth (1953) to suggest that clapper bridges on Dartmoor were built post-1400. Grinsell (1970: 150) also notes that clapper bridges were built long into the post-medieval period, for instance in 1808, one was built over the North Teign River (Gill, 1970: 187). Given the early modern textual evidence, such a late date for Tarr Steps seems unlikely,

⁶ The source for this date is not cited by Riley 2013

⁷ A date reproduced in media representations e.g. "Restoration Of Tarr Steps." Times [London, England] 21 Sept. 1949: 2. The Times Digital Archive. Web. 25 Nov. 2015. URL : <http://find.galegroup.com/ttda/infomark.do?&source=gale&prodId=TTDA&userGroupName=exeter&tabID=T003&docPage=article&searchType=AdvancedSearchForm&docId=CS34425141&type=multipage&contentSet=LTO&version=1.0> (last accessed 22/8/16) URL : <http://find.galegroup.com/ttda/infomark.do?&source=gale&prodId=TTDA&userGroupName=exeter&tabID=T003&docPage=article&searchType=AdvancedSearchForm&docId=CS34425141&type=multipage&contentSet=LTO&version=1.0> (last accessed 22/8/16)

⁸ e.g. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/destinations/europe/uk/9024479/Exmoor-into-the-wild-with-stags-and-stars.html> (last accessed 22/8/16). e.g. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/destinations/europe/uk/9024479/Exmoor-into-the-wild-with-stags-and-stars.html> (last accessed 22/8/16)

however this possibility illustrates the limited utility of morphological comparison. In light of this, attribution of a medieval temporal code relies heavily on the interpretation of an historic text describing the Exmoor Perambulation (or boundary walk) in 1279. Since the site does not appear in it, the date of this text is interpreted as a *terminus post quem* for Tarr Steps.

MacDermot's (1973 [1911]) interpretation of the text of the Exmoor Perambulation from 1279 is crucial to the representation of Tarr Steps as medieval and his argument has been used by archaeologists (Grinsell, 1970: 149), historians (Riley, 2013: 6) and in official designation documents (Historic England, 2015). Our close reading highlights the ambiguity of MacDermot's interpretation, his potential misreading of an earlier text (Rawle, 1893) on which he bases his view and Grinsell's selective use of MacDermot's interpretation. MacDermot (1973) traced the boundary of the Royal Exmoor Forest according to a textual record made in the 1200s of a perambulation that marked the Forest boundary in 1279 (Rawle, 1893). This text makes reference to a 'great way' from Road Castle, via Wambarrow and between 'the two Ashways' to the river Barle. MacDermot's interpretation is that the Perambulation crossed the Barle 'at a point somewhat lower than Tarr Steps, perhaps at Three Waters' (MacDermot, 1973: 12). He claims that the 'great way' 'must have reached the Barle in the neighbourhood of Three Waters and not at Tarr Steps' (MacDermot, 1973: 119). Reproduction of MacDermot's argument (e.g. Grinsell, 1970) frames his interpretation as unequivocal, yet he also states that the 'great way' met the Barle '*possibly* at Tarr Steps' (MacDermot, 1973: 12 italics added) and that 'we cannot satisfactorily fix the course of the "great way"' (MacDermot, 1973: 12). Furthermore, close reading of Rawle's (1893) text (on which MacDermot based his interpretation) suggests that MacDermot's interpretation may be based on a misreading.⁹

Archaeological claims about the origins of the site are based on etymological interpretation, landscape analysis, morphological comparison and interpretation of historical texts. They do not, however present an over-riding case for the origin of Tarr Steps as either prehistoric or medieval. It is not so much that both dominant archaeological narratives rely on ambiguous empirical evidence, but rather the significance attached to the origins of Tarr Steps, despite this uncertainty. The value placed on the origins of Tarr Steps can be illustrated by the archaeological response to a representation of Tarr Steps on a postage stamp in 1968 (see Figure 2).

⁹ The section of text that MacDermot considers evidence for the absence of Tarr Steps includes this section from the Perambulation text translated by Rawle (1893):

And thence, by the great way between the two Ashways [an old track across Varle Hill, continuing along the ridge above Ash way side, between Old Ashway and Ashway] as far as the water of Barle and along by the water of Barle, to where the Danesbrook falls into the Barle [Castle Bridge] (Rawle 1893 parenthesis in original).

MacDermot does not appear to recognise that the Perambulation went 'as far as the Barle' but did not necessarily cross the river at the point he suggests (between the two Ashways). The text describes the Perambulation as going '*along* by the water of Barle' (*ibid.* italics added), hence the Perambulation may have crossed the Barle near Castle Bridge next to Mounsey Castle. This point weakens MacDermot's interpretation but certainly does not foreclose Grinsell's (1970) interpretation of the medieval origins.

Figure 2: Left: 4d stamp, Tarr Steps, Prehistoric Stamp (1968). Right: First Class stamp, Tarr Steps, River Barle (2015) © Stamp Design Royal Mail Group Ltd. (2016)

The stamp on the left of Figure 2 formed part of a set called 'British Bridges'. It represents Tarr Steps in a line drawing and is anchored with the word 'Prehistoric'. In a short, irate letter to the editor of the *Times* entitled 'Wrong Dating', the archaeologist Lady Aileen Fox asserted that Tarr Steps 'has no claim to be prehistoric' (Fox, 1968: 11). In her view it was 'built...probably in the Middle Ages, and reconstructed after damage by floods fairly recently'. This point was reiterated in an Editorial in the archaeological journal *Antiquity*, which explained how 'to our horror, there appeared offensively on many of our letters the new 4d stamp of Tarr Steps in Somerset erroneously described as "Prehistoric"'. It seemed so sad that our first British "prehistoric" stamp should not be prehistoric at all' (*Antiquity*, 1968: 249). In a letter from the Post Master General (reprinted in *Antiquity* 1968), the 'inaccurate description' of the Steps was acknowledged. The 'offence' caused to some archaeologists at the representation of Tarr Steps as 'prehistoric' highlights the importance of the temporal identity of the site.

Perhaps to make amends for the 1968 stamp, the image of Tarr Steps was reproduced on another stamp (shown in Figure 2), produced in 2015 with the time-tag 'pre-1600'. This tag suggests a medieval origin for the bridge while leaving the possibility of a prehistoric origin open. Conflicting claims about the origins of Tarr Steps almost certainly predates the earliest archaeological accounts of the site. Folklore narratives also provide multiple explanations for the genesis of the site by invoking the Devil.¹⁰ This seems to account for an alternative toponym for Tarr Steps; the 'Devil's Bridge'.¹¹

¹⁰ In a story first recorded by Boyd-Dawkins (1884), and subsequently reproduced in Snell (1903), Page (1890) and the *Observer* (1935), this exegesis of the bridge is given: '(t)he Devil formed this bridge entirely for his own benefit, and being, of course spiteful, he determined that it should be used by mortal man. He raised it one night; but toward morning coming with the finish load of stone, he apron string broke and the stones fell to the ground. Taking his seat at a picturesque spot, near the bridge, he denounced destruction upon the first creature which should venture to cross. From the one side a cat was cunningly sent over, and as it touched the other side it was torn to pieces. The spell being thus broken, the parson was the next to cross, when some very uncomplimentary words of the pot and kettle order, passed between the two. The devil called the parson a black crow; to which the parson replied that he was not blacker the devil. The Devil seems to have retired from the combat and the bridge was open, and here it was still' (Dawkins, 1884: 62-63).

¹¹ A CORRESPONDENT. "The Preservation Of Exmoor." *Times* [London, England] 25 Sept. 1935: 7. The Times Digital Archive. Web. 25 Nov. 2015. URL:

Without a clear historic narrative, and with possibly hellish origins, Tarr Steps became an official part of national heritage in 1925, when it was scheduled as an ancient monument. The 'designation notes' (Historic England, 2015) for Tarr Steps as an ancient monument obliquely avoid discussion of the site's primary origins but do claim that there is 'no evidence' (Historic England, 2015) for prehistoric origins of clapper bridges, although prehistoric sites on Exmoor are acknowledged. The notes retain an equivocal distance to temporalizing the site: 'it is *believed* to be of medieval date' (Historic England, 2015 italics added).¹² The subject that is supposed to believe in the medieval date of Tarr Steps is unattributed. This reference to a believed medieval origin, however, is almost certainly an amendment to the original scheduling in 1925, since prior to 1960s the site was generally considered to be prehistoric.

Secondary Origins: Numerous reconstructions

While designation of the site avoids any commitment to primary origins for Tarr Steps, the intensity of debate is illustrative of the importance of its origin. The official designation record closely describes the form of the bridge (Historic England, 2015), implying that the heritage designated at Tarr Steps is the bridge's morphology and the link between this and its primary origins. However, preoccupation with primary origins in dominant narratives sits in tension with recorded instances of Tarr Steps being damaged or destroyed by flood events and rebuilt. These reconstructions of the site represent a series of secondary 'origins' for Tarr Steps.

Tarr Steps has been washed away by floods on several occasions in the last century. Recorded dates for the material destruction of the site include 1930 December 1939, January 1940, November 1940 (Alves, 1950: 159), September and October 1944, August 1952, December 1970, November 2012, December 2012, February 2013 (Riley 2013), and November 2013.¹³ The site was particularly badly damaged in 1952 and 2012, when large sections of the bridge were washed away. The rhythm of these flood events has been syncopated by the restoration of the site. Given these eleven instances of damage to Tarr Steps, it is likely that there have been many unrecorded instances of rebuilding and damage reparation of the river crossing. Whether a prehistoric or medieval origin for Tarr Steps is assumed, the site has numerous secondary origins.

In 1923 it was considered 'likely that they (Tarr Steps) have been repaired so often after heavy floods, that there is very little of the original bridge, if any, in its present structure' (Boyd-Dawkins, 1923: xxxix). The absence of an 'original bridge' at Tarr Steps is further confirmed by accreted morphological changes to the form of the bridge. For instance, the central slab of the bridge has been used as part of the central pier, since 1941 (Riley, 2013: 17). Structural augmentation has also occurred; rebuilding of the Steps in 1949 required that 'shallow trenches were excavated in the stream bed and the base stones of the piers were firmly embedded on fine gravel' (Alves, 1950: 160). Despite indications that changes to the structure may have accumulated over time,

<http://find.galegroup.com/ttda/infomark.do?&source=gale&prodId=TTDA&userGroupName=exeter&tabID=T003&docPage=article&searchType=BasicSearchForm&docId=CS119876921&type=multipage&contentSet=LTO&version=1.0>

¹² <http://list.historicengland.org.uk/resultsingle.aspx?uid=1021325> (last accessed 22/8/16)

¹³ See: TARR STEPS. Observer. [London, England] 20 July 1930: 16. URL:

<http://search.proquest.com/docview/481087780?accountid=10792>; "Ship drops cargo to clear minefield." Times [London, England] 5 Nov. 1970: 2. The Times Digital Archive. Web. 25 Nov. 2015. URL:

<http://www.itv.com/news/westcountry/update/2013-11-04/tarr-steps-washed-away-again/> (all last accessed 22/8/16)

reconstructions of Tarr Steps privilege previous forms of the bridge and display a concern for faithful reproduction of the site.

In 1952, all the slabs and piers, except one, were washed away (Riley, 2013). Subsequent reconstruction restored the morphology of the bridge: '(t)he line of the old Steps had a bow in the downstream direction and this line was preserved' (Alves, 1950: 161). This line has been preserved in later rebuilding operations too (Riley, 2013), however, this bow is probably a contingent feature of the bridge caused by log strikes (Riley, 2013: 17); it is not necessarily an 'original' part of the bridge (whether 'medieval' or 'prehistoric'). Concern for the faithful reproduction of the site's morphology is perceptible in the heritage management practice of numbering the stones to allow for accurate reconstruction. The stones were numbered on a model in 1950 (Alves, 1950) and media representations suggest the stones themselves are numbered.¹⁴ Whether the stones themselves are actually marked, however, is unclear. Indeed, Riley (2013: 2) suggests that this may simply be a local tradition. Numbered or not, the idea that the stones are marked articulates a desire to accurately reproduce the materiality of the bridge according to an image of it as 'medieval' or 'prehistoric'.

The preservation of the (previous) form of the Tarr Steps is also apparent in landscape management strategies oriented towards preserving the bridge. In 1950, archaeologists experimented with placing surplus stone from the restoration work on the upstream side of the ford in an attempt to impede the flow towards the steps (Alves, 1950: 161). In 1982 cables were installed upstream to stop larger trees washing onto the steps (these broke and were replaced in 2013¹⁵). In 2014, trees along the riverbank, which could be washed downstream and damage the clapper bridge, were removed.¹⁶ Beyond the economic imperatives of these landscape management practices, protective measures place value on the 'authenticity' of the bridge's materiality.

The manner in which the rebuilding of Tarr Steps and management of its wider landscape occurs, places value on previous versions of the bridge. Rather than representing an accreted artefact with multiple 'origins' reproduced in the present, the value placed on the restoration of the bridge's form creates a symbolic connection to a primary origin. The materiality of the 'original bridge' (Boyd Dawkins, 1923) has been lost in iterations of rebuilding, but a symbolic connection to an image of the primary origins of Tarr Steps is sustained by heritage management practices. It is this image that is materialised in the morphology of the bridge.

Tarr Steps has been subject to secondary additions that challenge the historicity of the primary origins of the site. However, in terms of the reproduction of Tarr Steps as heritage, these secondary additions are indispensable. Clearly, if Tarr Steps was not rebuilt after floods, it would not exist. In order for the image of a primary origin of Tarr Steps to exist, they require secondary additions, which threaten to negate the 'original' origin of the site. Paradoxically therefore, primary origins are

¹⁴ e.g. <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2277567/Tarr-Steps-3-000-year-old-bridge-devil-sunbathed-rebuilt-floods-washed-away-tonne-stone-slabs.html> (last accessed 22/8/16) e.g.

¹⁵ <http://www.middevongazette.co.uk/Work-starts-fix-bridge-destroyed-wall-water/story-18190898-detail/story.html> (last accessed 22/8/16)

¹⁶ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-somerset-26581530> (last accessed 22/8/16)

deficient and require supplementation (Girard, 1992).¹⁷ The cultural logic of this paradox can be understood through consideration of Tarr Steps as a symbol of national heritage.

The meaning of Tarr Steps' heritage

In the two following sub-sections, the meaning of Tarr Steps materiality is explored in two wider discourses about the bridge. In the first discourse, Tarr Steps is temporally framed as ancient and we argue that this ancientness is authenticated through representation of the bridge as permanent and close to nature. In the second discourse, Tarr Steps is framed as resembling the origins of the cultural evolution of bridges in England. In both discourses, the meaning of Tarr Steps is a cultural convention, reproduced as a symbol of national identity.

Discourse 1: Tarr Steps as ancient, natural, permanent

This section discusses Tarr Steps as part of a discourse about the 'deep past', to use Harvey's term (2001, 436). In three main ways Tarr Steps is represented as a direct link to the 'deep past'; as an ancient and ancestral bridge, as a permanent feature of the landscape, and as a nearly-natural structure. Given the secondary additions to Tarr Steps (reviewed above), the historicity of the claim that the site is directly related to a deep past is problematic. It is not an objectively authentic site. For Tarr Steps, it is a matter of cultural convention, not history, that it is 'ancient'.

Reference to Tarr Steps as 'ancient' is ubiquitous in its representation. This 'ancient' temporal status is validated by the archaic register deployed to describe its morphology; Tarr Steps is represented as 'a *primitive* river crossing' (Tilly, 2002: 21, italics added), 'a *rude* bridge' (Boyd-Dawkins 1884: 63, italics added), '*cyclopean* bridge' (Bourne 1960: 16, italics added), 'the very ancient *causeway* over the Barle'.¹⁸ The materiality of stones comprising the bridge are represented as 'unhewn' (Ward Lock, 1950: 60, italics added); '*giant* slabs of stone' (Daily Mail, 2013, italics added), further enunciating its ancientness. Even the mode of construction used to erect Tarr Steps is framed as primitive: 'the old bridge...consists of large slabs laid on *roughly* piled piers' (Page, 1890: 90, italics added). This archaic register reproduces the site, its materiality, and its construction, as features of a primeval temporality; a deep past that was crude, brutish and megalithic.

Tarr Steps' ancientness is coded as significant on the basis of its ancestral status. It is represented in superlative terms, as the oldest bridge, at several spatial scales. Locally it is '(o)ne of the region's oldest bridges' (WMN, 2013), nationally it is '(o)ne of Britain's oldest bridges' (Times, 2013) and globally it is 'considered to be one of the oldest bridges in the world'.¹⁹ The significance of the ancientness of Tarr Steps is neatly illustrated by a cigarette card (c. 1938) on which the site is labelled 'The Oldest Bridge' (see Figure 3).

¹⁷ Drawing here on Girard (1992) reflections on origins refracted through Derrida's discussion of the 'supplement'.

¹⁸ PLYMOUTH, Chairman of the Executive. "The National Trust And Exmoor." *Times* [London, England] 22 Feb. 1917: 9. *The Times Digital Archive*. Web. 10 Dec. 2015. URL: <http://find.galegroup.com/ttda/infomark.do?&source=gale&prodId=TTDA&userGroupName=exeter&tabID=T003&docPage=article&searchType=BasicSearchForm&docId=CS153028694&type=multipage&contentSet=LTO&version=1.0> (last accessed 22/8/16).

¹⁹ <http://hawkridgeexmoor.co.uk/tarr-steps.php> (last accessed 22/8/16)

Figure 3. 'The Oldest Bridge'. Senior Service cigarette card (c.1938) Bridges of Britain Series no.39 of 48.

The superlative 'oldest' articulates the ancestral status of the bridge, which, implies continuity with an imagined primary origin, and its continuity confers authenticity on the site. As 'the oldest bridge', Tarr Steps is a relic of the deep past. Its continuous presence and authenticity is explained via the morphology of the bridge in which, as one guidebook remarks, '(n)o traces of cement can be found among the stones, so that the structure has *preserved itself* purely by the weight of its individual parts' (Home, 1908: unpaginated, italics added). It is as though, in the absence of cement, the bridge has held itself together in a miraculous act of self-preservation. As the oldest bridge, Tarr Steps appears as an ancestral, self-present survivor of the deep past.

Figure 4. 'Tarr Steps, Temporary Bridge'. Postcard (c.1950)

The textual representation of the site as ancient and ancestral confers a sense of permanence on the site. A postcard (see Figure 4) depicting a concrete bridge at Tarr Steps is illustrative of the determined production of the site as permanent. The postcard probably dates to the 1940s; following iterative flood damage to the clapper bridge in the 1930s a concrete bridge, underpinned by steel girders, was erected there in March 1941 (Riley, 2013: 18). The image of the concrete bridge is anchored at the margin of the postcard with the phrase 'Tarr Steps, Temporary Bridge'. Representation of the concrete bridge as 'temporary' implies the existence of a permanent bridge at Tarr Steps. Yet, the very presence of the concrete bridge highlights the absence, and therefore impermanence, of any 'permanent' bridge at the site. *De facto* the presence of this 'temporary bridge' makes all other bridges at the site temporary too. Despite this logical dissonance, however, the triangulation of ancientness, naturalness and permanence works to authenticate an image of the site as authentic.

Tarr Steps' ancientness is legitimised and reinforced through representation of its naturalness via images of the site as part of, or close to, nature. Descriptions of the materiality of the stones constituting the bridge as 'primitive', and comprising 'unhewn' stones (noted above), emphasises its minimal cultural processing and, therefore, propinquity to nature. However, the naturalness of Tarr Steps is most clearly articulated in tourist industry representations of the site, in which the bridge appears as part of a picturesque natural environment. For instance, an Exmoor National Park Authority (ENPA) image branded with the National Parks England slogan (see Figure 5) depicts a side view Tarr Steps in which the structure merges with foliage in the foreground and background of the

image. The stones seem to emerge from the river itself. Tarr Steps' affinity with nature confirms its ancientness by representing a deep time when cultural constructions were barely differentiated from the natural world

Figure 5. One of Britain's breathing spaces. © Exmoor National Park Authority. The connection between Tarr Steps and nature is also apparent in depictions of the site on tourist maps. These also present unpeopled images of the bridge and tend to illustrate the site from the east (facing west) looking towards trees and woodland. From this angle, Tarr Steps Farm, on the east bank – a potential signifier of cultural life – is not in view.

This process of authenticating the morphology of Tarr Steps as ancient is also visible in the structure of dominant narratives about the site's origins. Above, we noted the folklore narratives about the site and now we argue that they are located in relation to dominant narratives of the origins of Tarr Steps, thus acting to legitimise an Authorised Heritage Discourse (Smith 2006). While they may be presented to provide 'local colour', they are clearly considered empirically useless in as explanations of the bridge's origin. For instance, Page's (1890) *Exploration of Exmoor* prefaces the presentation of folklore by noting that Tarr Steps 'is the subject of more than one absurd story' (Page, 1890: 91). This framing of folklore is illustrative of its status in archaeological narratives too. Dominant narratives retain a critical distance from folklore, exemplified by R.D Blackmore (1869: 108) sardonic comment: 'Tarr steps a wonderful crossing of Barle river, made (as everybody knows) by Satan, for a wager' (parenthesis in original). However, it is significant that dominant narratives do not simply discount folklore as empirically inaccurate and, hence, exclude them from their accounts. Not only do folklore narratives evoke an aura of ancientness, they also work to legitimise empirically problematic archaeological and official accounts of the site's origins. They serve a specific purpose – as an apparently 'obvious' falseness that causes one to over-look the equivocation of dominant archaeological narratives. Rejection of folklore as absurd reifies dominant narratives as accurate and reliable, despite the paucity of evidence that their interpretations of Tarr Steps rely upon.

In the next section, Tarr Steps – and the ancientness conferred upon it – are shown to function as an icon for a process of cultural evolution. While being 'natural', Tarr Steps is simultaneously nominated as an important cultural achievement for the nation. This dual natural-cultural status is significant. The site traverses the boundary between human-made and non-human nature. It occupies a liminal symbolic space between the nearly-non-human and the barely-human meaning that it is an apt symbol to use as a baseline, horizon or point of departure for subsequent cultural developments.

Discourse 2: Tarr Steps as a baseline of cultural evolution

In this discourse, Tarr Steps' ancientness is expressed in representation of the site as resembling the first stage in the evolution of the bridge. Its primary place in this sequence is conferred by its materialisation of a transition from stepping-stones to bridge; it represents 'the first improvement on stepping stones' (Boyd-Dawkins, 1884: 63). 'Tarr Steps afford us the finest example in England of this evolutionary process (from stepping stones to clapper bridge). Those who connected the stepping stones by slabs were the first bridge builders in England' (Times, 1930). An imagined evolutionary event – the transition from stepping-stones to clapper bridge – is attributed to the 'first bridge builders in England'. As an icon of cultural evolution, Tarr Steps is appropriated into an image of the nation's history.

Tarr Steps is represented as a testament to the abilities of a founding ancestor; an imaginary builder of Tarr Steps. In one version, this builder is represented as a 'prehistoric architect' (Evered, 1902: 59), an expression that transfers contemporary cultural capital associated with the architect on prehistory. In more effusive accounts, the bridge is described as emerging from the moment when 'it struck some brilliant inventive genius to pile up the stones' (Boyd Dawkins, 1884: 63). The mythical status of the builder is explicit: 'for sure some ancient hero, in bygone days, must have raised and poised those vast blocks' (Chanter, 1856: 16).

It is salient that the bridge is represented as deriving from an exceptional individual – a 'hero', 'architect', 'inventive genius' – rather than emerging in a web of social relations, because this implies a concrete point for a primary origin of Tarr Steps and thus confirming its authentic ancientness. Such a celebration of a single 'author' of the structure is historically problematic. Anthropologists of technology (e.g. Pfaffenberger, 1992) highlight the social embeddedness of technology and social relations of labour in which artefacts are produced. However, the representation of an individual 'author' of the Tarr Steps has a crucial affordance, since it suggests that there was a blueprint for Tarr Steps. This is explicit in this account: 'The day came when it *entered the mind* of our somewhat less remote ancestor that it would be convenient to join these stepping stones together by connecting slabs' (The Times, 1930 italics added). In this representation, Tarr Steps can be comprehended as the idea of a 'bridge' in the mind of an imaginary ancestor to the English nation.

The ideation of 'bridge' and its subsequent materialisation in Tarr Steps is represented as a (r)evolutionary transition. The symbolic significance of this moment is double; it marks a departure from stepping-stones, and the beginning of the evolution of the bridge. This situates the site at the start of a cultural evolution of bridge building. Although the historicity of this image of Tarr Steps could be challenged, it is the way that iconography of the site conveys a preferred version of national history that is salient here.

The significance attributed to the start of the sequence of cultural evolution materialised by Tarr Steps is illustrated by a set of ten stamps printed in 2015. The set of first class stamps is called 'Bridges'. Each stamp comprises a picturesque photograph of a bridge, labelled with the bridge's name, the river it crosses and the date it was built. The dating of each bridge is presented via a

'timeline device' (Royal Mail, 2015) that links the set together in a temporal order. The sequence begins with Tarr Steps (dated to 'pre-1600') to the Peace Bridge over the River Foyle (built 2011).²⁰

The implicit message of this timeline device is made explicit by Royal Mail (2015) who represents the stamps in terms of dramatic technological progress, depicting 'ten leaps in engineering that have seen the UK's bridges evolve from humble stone crossings to iconic landmarks and construction triumphs'. Tarr Steps is located in an evolutionary narrative in which rapid 'leaps in engineering' are composed in a linear image of 'technological progress'. The timeline on the stamps implies an evolution in which each bridge determined the next. Tarr Steps is a referent that allows subsequent bridges to be marked as advancements in technology; national 'progress'. Tarr Steps affords the production of a preferred image of the nation's history as a triumphant and spectacular ascension.

Tarr Steps' ancientness confers its originary position in the evolution of bridge building. However, it is not so much the position of Tarr Steps in this sequence that is important, but rather what this position means for the whole evolutionary sequence. This position provides a marker against which subsequent bridge building can be compared. Tarr Steps is the vital referent from which to measure the nation's progress. Its ancientness is an 'other' through which subsequent cultural evolution is reproduced as progress and modernity. The site makes cultural evolution visible and affords the attribution of the scale of this evolution to the nation.

Conclusions: the future of the past, and the implications of Tarr Steps for the management of cultural heritage

The logical dissonance between the primary and secondary origins of Tarr Steps is united by the centripetal force of national identity, which spins together a linear chronological order from the entangled primary and secondary origins of Tarr Steps. In this national narrative, a primary origin is positioned prior to the secondary productions. Tarr Steps is positioned at the beginning of a sequence of cultural evolution and mobilised as part of a teleological image of national history in which a technologically advanced nation appears as a consequence of Tarr Steps. With this in mind, how can the future of Tarr Steps be preserved, and what would such a practice mean? Would exposure of the process undermine the value of its ancientness and authenticity produced by popular and media representations? Indeed, would the increased visibility of the imaginary aspects of heritage be bound to undermine a sense of national identity or could it perhaps re-affirm it?

We now reflect on the implications of Tarr Steps in relation to ideas of landscape used in the management of cultural heritage. In particular, we consider a management tool known as Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC). HLC is informed by various ideas of landscape (see Fairclough 2008). In our reading of HLC, this approach invokes three metaphors of landscape; as a palimpsest, as perception, and as a way of seeing. We discuss each in relation to our analysis of Tarr Steps.

To briefly introduce HLC, it is an approach to cultural heritage management that aims to identify distinguishing cultural, rather than natural, features of landscape (Fairclough, 1999) in a process of characterisation. In Herring's (2009: 63) definition: '(c)haracterisation ... identifies essential or

²⁰ <http://www.royalmailgroup.com/royal-mail-celebrates-engineering-genius-bridge-building-around-uk-special-stamp-set> (last accessed 22/8/16)

distinguishing features and qualities'. The reduction of multiple features of landscape into essences proceeds through a taxonomic approach that differentiates an array of human traces on landscape into categories. These traces are identified as historic features on the basis of secondary materials; maps and aerial photographs (Turner, 2006; 390). Features are classified into types of historic landscape articulated using nomenclature such as 'Prehistoric field enclosure', 'Medieval field enclosure'.²¹ In short, HLC reduces multiple histories into spatially and temporally bounded zones of landscape according to perceived historic features.

Landscape as palimpsest: temporality and process

The management of cultural heritage in HLC is informed by the idea of the landscape as palimpsest. This is an archaeological notion of the landscape as a stratigraphy of material layers. As Fairclough (2008, 67 parenthesis in original) implies this metaphor of landscape is a way of understanding temporality:

Time may manifest itself in landscape as a continuous stratification within the environment, as a sequence of partly-surviving landscape episodes or layers, or as a succession of humanly-led processes that are revealed by their long-term effects and remains (or lacunae); or it may be perceived mainly as an age-created patina on the surface of the so-called 'natural' (pre-cultural) topography

The metaphor of landscape as palimpsest is also inherent in an organising principle in HLC that historic dimensions of landscape are located in the present landscape. In HLC: 'change and earlier landscapes exist in the present landscape' (Clark *et al.*, 2004: 6). Landscape change, therefore, is inscribed in the materiality of the present landscape: 'HLC is about identifying the traces of the past within the modern landscape, and recognising that essentially the landscape has its present character because of the changes it has undergone over the past millennia' (Clark *et al.*, 2004: 12). As a material accumulation of human activity, the landscape appears as a cultural artefact that stores the past.

The idea of palimpsest is problematic in the context of Tarr Steps because, in our analysis, its secondary origins pre-exist its primary origins. History, at Tarr Steps, does not appear in 'layers'. The ascription of a single temporal category to Tarr Steps in a palimpsest of events is clearly problematic; plotting multiple origins in a 'long chain' of events (Fairclough, 2003), or visualising the site as a palimpsest would fail to capture the relationship between primary and secondary origins of the site, whereby secondary origins paradoxically precede primary origins.²²

Rather than a stratigraphy that temporally organises materiality, at Tarr Steps we find time and physical morphology unfolding together. The materiality of the bridge is emergent and in a

²¹ Types are mapped cartographically as spatial zones, increasingly using GIS (Fairclough, 1999). In resulting cartographies, HLC provides an image of the landscape's time depth by visualising its accreted layers (Fairclough, 2003). As a social practice, HLC is oriented toward managerial outcomes such as informing future landscape change (Fairclough, 1999).

²² HLC could identify different temporal periods during which Tarr Steps changed – producing a chronology of 'origins' – however this would miss the reproduction of primary origins through secondary activity. This chronology would not explain why dominant narratives of Tarr Steps as originating in a deep past (either 'prehistoric' or 'medieval') persist despite secondary productions. To explain this, we need to take into account of the politics of national identity.

processual state of becoming. Thus, another way of thinking about its materiality is as a *chiasmus*; an intertwining and crossing. Indeed, while Tarr Steps is a crossing in the sense that it is a way to cross the river, it is its 'bridginess', as a connection that is key to understanding its status between past and present landscapes, which is most characteristic of the site, not its materiality or their imagined origins.

Landscape as perception: authenticity and experts

Following the European Landscape Convention (Fairclough, 2008), HLC mobilises a metaphor of landscape as a perception, which derives from environmental psychology (e.g. Gibson, 1979). Fairclough and Wigley (2005: 93) claim that 'HLC ... defines landscape as a perception rather than as an object'. The term perception suggests the perception of an object from the outside; the perceiver is external to the object. This resonates with the expert-led and desk-based approach of HLC. Elsewhere Fairclough notes that:

If landscape must have definitions, then they should be about perception. They should be based on how people look at and experience the environment when 'constructing' landscape, not on the material things that we think it is comprised of (Fairclough 2008, 56-57).

This position resonates with the case of Tarr Steps where a 'perception' of the site materialised in textual representation is more important than the historicity of the physical structure itself. The constructivist flavour of landscape-as-perception raises interesting questions in relation to Tarr Steps; both in terms of the issue of whose perceptions carry the most weight and which perceptions are authenticated.

The scientific register of 'perception' does not adequately acknowledge politics and power, indeed it sounds neutral and flexible – as if there could be infinite perceptions. This raises questions for the engagement between experts and non-expert perceptions of heritage. As Fairclough (2006) acknowledges both have the capacity to mutually augment each other.

Because each expert world-view can modify the others [non-expert world views]...more importantly, however, these types of [expert] perception are only the tip of a very large iceberg, because there are so many different ways of seeing, at one extreme as many as there are individual people, but certainly as many as there are different nucleated communities of place, or different dispersed communities of interest' (Fairclough, 2006:210).

The danger of the landscape as perception metaphor is a retreat into a relativism where each individual's perception of heritage is equally authentic. Using critical discourse analysis, we can begin to understand why certain 'perceptions' stick and become naturalised –, and are barely recognised as a 'perception'. It could be argued that understanding the landscape through the metaphor of perception challenges expert-led approach of HLC and other heritage management practices. Indeed, in the case of Tarr Steps archaeological narratives about the prehistoric or medieval origins of Tarr Steps and gives way to a more vague sense of Tarr Steps as 'old' in the wider discourse of about its ancientness.

While we support the assertion that bottom-up or lay perceptions modify experts views, (just as top-down world-views do), we would supplement this by highlighting that the case of Tarr Steps illustrates, that expert views are caught up in the charm of wider discourses, for instance about ancientness and are entangled in non-empirical interpretations such as folklore stories, which we argued were referred to evoke an ancient aura and dismissed to legitimise empirically problematic material used as the basis as evidence for primary origins.

Landscape as a way of seeing: politics and identity

Landscape has often been interpreted as entangled in identity politics. Advocates of HLC refer to landscape as a 'way of seeing' (e.g. Fairclough, 2003, 2008; Fairclough and Wigley, 2005), a metaphor associated with notions of visual ideology, particularly via the work of Cosgrove (1985) and Berger (2008 [1972]). Through our interpretation of Tarr Steps, we have highlighted how materiality is imbricated in identity politics; the site is symbolic of nationalised cultural evolution. Articulation of the materiality of the bridge is wrapped up in politics. By looking 'through' its materiality, the site mobilises a particular 'way of seeing' the past: heritage at Tarr Steps performs an idea of nationhood.

While HLC claims to view landscape as a 'way of seeing', we argue that it does not necessarily acknowledge the political implications of this metaphor of landscape. Indeed, HLC itself might be characterised as a way of seeing. It is inherently representational (producing cartographies based on Ordnance Survey maps, aerial photographs) and orientated towards image-making; 'the intention is to produce a picture, a model, of the world or of our interpretation of the world' (Fairclough, 2006: 207). It is a meta-image that, while theoretically retaining an openness to lay knowledges of landscape (Turner, 2006) and non-visual apprehension of space (Fairclough, 2008), relies on the practices of experts (e.g. landscape archaeologists, GIS specialists etc.) to produce a detached visualisation of landscape.

Although this detached view confers a degree of objectivity to HLC and grants legitimacy to this governance device²³, we would argue that identifying 'essential' features of landscape clearly has political ramifications: what counts as historic and how are historic features ascribed a taxonomic category? The politics of categorisation in HLC are obscured by claims that 'the process of characterisation is transparent' (e.g. Herring, 2006: 67). Characterisation is depoliticised through assertion that 'evaluation and assessment are separate stages from characterisation which on its own does not dictate any particular course of action whether preservationist, interventionist or destructive' (Fairclough and Wigley, 2005: 96). Although the approach claims to deploy the notion that landscape is a 'way of seeing', it relies on the possibility of a value-neutral perception of landscape that unproblematically 'provides information, not judgements' (Clark *et al.*, 2004: 11).

²³ HLC does not put into operation the political consequences of landscape as a way of seeing: 'a way of seeing, a composition and structuring of the world so that it may be appropriated by a detached, individual spectator to whom an illusion of order and control is offered through the composition of space. That illusion very frequently complemented a very real power and control over fields and farms on the part of patrons and owners of landscape paintings' (Cosgrove, 1985: 55).

As a way of spatially representing and categorising heritage, HLC is itself caught up in the reproduction of the idea of nation; it is ‘an approach that treats *the whole of Britain* as historic’ (Herring 2009, 65 *italics added*). The approach itself evolved through English Heritage’s national programme (Fairclough, 1999) and the image of landscape it produces is tied to the identity of the nation. The imbrication of heritage in the politics of national identity as illustrated in the case of Tarr Steps, challenges the idea that HLC could proceed as a value-free, neutral characterisation process (Clark *et al.*, 2004: 11; Fairclough and Wigley, 2005: 96; Herring, 2006: 67). While HLC claims to use the metaphor of landscape as a way of seeing, the political implications of conceptualisation are not necessarily fully acknowledged in this heuristic.

The future of the past

Tarr Steps seems to be all about the past, yet management is clearly about the future. This consideration positions issues of ethics and politics at the heart of our understanding of authenticity and preservation. Silverman (2015: 69-70) paints authenticity as a *contingent* entity that is often deployed in a strategic manner. HLC can struggle to come to terms with such contingency, but on-going critical conversation between disciplines can point the way forward for our understanding, such that landscape management and conservation practice can increasingly accommodate contestation and conflict. Following Silverman (2015: 70) such a task to clarify and make plain the processes of heritage categorisation and management – what the deployment of authenticity *does* – might act to underline and even celebrate the ‘unfinished-ness’ of the world. Silverman (2015: 84) argues that ‘old debates about whether tourists were being duped need to be replaced with incisive analyses of authenticity as this is expressed through discourse, debate, economic and political policy, performance, resistance, negotiation and assertions about heritage’. This paper has attempted to do this with respect to Tarr Steps, and in a manner that we feel can build on the important progress that such tools as HLC have begun, through providing space for fluidity and openness.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the anonymous referees and editorial advice generously given. Material from this paper was presented at seminars in Amsterdam (European HERCULES project) and Exeter. Thank you to attendees for constructive comments and questions. We would also like to thank Devon County Council for their generous support via the ‘Sustainable Rural Futures’ Programme 2009-2014.

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