

"Little by little, the Londoner comes to forget
that his London is built upon real earth:
he forgets that under the pavements there are hills,
forgotten watercourses, springs and
marshlands"

Ford Madox Ford, *The Souls of London*, 1905



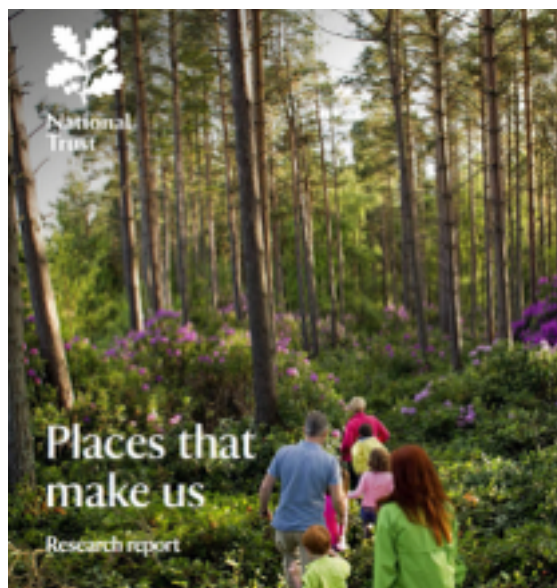
pic 1

I've been a maker for a large part of my life, the last 15 years making bronzes, mine and many others, tabletop to two tonnes. Over time, I've become less interested in self-referential work, and more interested in that which responds to, and enriches both Purpose and Place.

I was invited by Nancy to think about the role of your hidden rivers in the Local Plan. My response is to flag up some possibilities to foster questions, for a community conversation.

Why is it important for rivers to be in the Local Plan? What potential do they possess?

The Local Plan has a vision to protect and improve the green space and habitat corridors for bio-diversity, and these hidden rivers could play a key role in this. They also have potential that could influence your daily lives. It is possible, with creative interventions in the urban landscape, that these hidden rivers could be re-incorporated into your lives to have a positive effect on your sense of place, and community. pic 2



Last year the National Trust commissioned Surry University to research our relationship to meaningful places.

They said, “We have demonstrated that there is a strong physical and emotional connection between places and people, and that these places can have a positive effect on our well-being. Meaningful Places, more than objects, gave both an emotional and visceral response, and fostered a belonging and self identity, along with a desire to protect them for the benefit of others”.

A Place, is a space that has meaning. Be it social, historic, recreational or simply nourishing just to be in, walk through, or by. Often we tend put that role on spaces that we set apart from the ordinary. I feel that we overlook what the *commonplace* can offer us, when given good design and care. This commonplace is the Public Realm, which starts right outside our doors.

We all inhabit this realm for a great part of our lives, and time spent there should enrich, rather than deplete us.

To achieve that, I don't believe that we have to start with a major operation, but by small, cumulative interventions.

In this particular instance, we could begin by renewing our relationship with our rivers, brooks and streams. And create it in a way that fosters both enjoyment, stewardship, and meaning. pic 3



We can start, by getting to know them. Where do they rise, flow and join greater ways? How did the previous generations engage with them within their industrial and social lives? Did they use their banks to define boundaries of ownership and civic authority, which may even impact upon us today?

I was really surprised by the hydrographic map commissioned from Arup, which not only showed the so many hidden rivers and streams, but the amazing amount of springs, wells and ponds that exist due to the particularity of Hampstead Heath. **Pic 4**



Using that map, I took a typical walk that would be made every day. A short walk from Branch Hill apartments to the Finchley Road bus stop.

Pic 5



1. I leave my Branch Hill apartment and pass the boggy hollow in the trees where a small stream coalesces into life.

Pic 6



2. Leaving the trees, I step into the top of Redington Gardens, and I step over an iron grating from which I can hear the faint trickling of the stream that drains the land around the apartments, I would imagine, alleviating the potential of flooding.

pic 7



3.¾ down the road, where this is another grating, the Cannon Stream joins us from it's source nestled in the little green vale 'twixt West Heath Road and Judges Walk. Branch Hill Pond? Is this Turner's Pond?

pic 8



4. I cross Redington Road and into Heath Drive, where further down, opposite Ferncroft Avenue, yet another brook, gifts her waters, whilst a further hundred yard step, the Boundary Stream, en-route from a spring on Telegraph Hill, asks to join the travellers. **pic 9**



5. So walking on, only feet above these souls, I reach the Finchley Road, **pic 10**



where yet another stream joins the throng, this time from a pond in Greenway Gardens, and as one, we cross the Finchley Road to travel onwards down Cannon Hill, seeking many others, and a Greater Way. Bus stop view!

A short walk, but something similar happens, everyday, throughout your community and London as a whole.

These silent companions were here long before we. In fact, it was their intrinsic qualities that drew people here, to build communities and forge meaningful lives. As did the generations that followed.

pic11
Culverting
the Fleet.



However, with the centuries of expansion and development, we degraded, devalued, and discarded them, to be interred, out of sight, out of mind.

pic12



Even so, they still served. Draining the rain from the streets and disposing of people's fetid wastes, leading to "The Great Stink of 1858"

They still thanklessly serve us today. Saving our houses from flooding, as we add even more buildings and turn our front lawns into car parks.

Most of our population now live in these urban landscapes, under which these rivers run and serve, and more will create homes within it. This Public Realm, Our Realm, starts right outside our doors.

I believe that we need to re-create, and enrich these mundane spaces where we live, work and shop, into places with which we can enjoy, engage and connect more deeply on a daily basis.

We are sensate beings and experience our environment by seeing, hearing and feeling. Hearing, seeing and touching our streams can be a nourishing experience, even with a mere casual glance.

This is where Daylighting enters the picture. “Daylighting”, is where a hidden water is restored to a more natural state above ground, along with the environmental virtues of greening and bio-diversity. However, with our dense urban environment, it is not easy to find suitable locations. But even so, with imagination, there are opportunities, like Branch Hill Pond.

Pic13 Describe
Dartington's wetland
project, ponds &
scrapes.



Top of Redington Gardens. Over the line of the stream above the grating. **Pic14** Explain!



Here the Cannon passes through green space, and near a playground NW of Branch Hill apartments. **Pic15**



That's in the public realm, but much of these waters flow through the private domain too. It's possible that if residents and developers were made aware of what lay below their gardens, with guidance and encouragement, we may foster a desire to take part themselves. Here runs the Boundary Stream from Telegraph Hill to the Cannon in Heath Drive. **Pic16**



In Totnes, where I live, modest initiatives have been made on recent developments. Water that came from, the Leechwells, three ancient healing springs, Toad, Snake and Long crawler, was day-lighted through a new community garden and the new housing development, which created new ponds en route. [pics 17, 18, 19, 20, 21](#)



And in Baltic Wharf, yet another new development, instead of culverting a stream under it, they've been persuaded to make it feature and a central public space will be created around it.

But however valuable these Daylighting interventions are, at present, the opportunities may be few.

And even with them, how can we become aware of the rivers presence between those “Day-lighted” portals, and so gain a sense of their passage through the neighbourhood.

This is where Cultural Daylighting may serve. “Cultural Daylighting”, brings their *identity* into our consciousness.

Daylighting, and Cultural Daylighting are symbiotic siblings.

One, brings into our awareness their identities via physical presence, and sensate means, the other, by mark making upon the urban canvas. But how do we do that when it is already cluttered with over-sized, overstated signage? With symbolic language. A symbol can be small and discreet, yet have distinct clarity.



Pic 22 This bronze glyph evokes the movement of water, is easily sited to any urban surface. (Road tested+no maintenace, easy remove+replace.)

And when laid at significant points, following the line of the watercourse, one can make connections between those Daylighted oases, and be able to *feel* its passage though the neighbourhood.

By so doing, we can gain a sense, of not only our local stream, but the larger riverine community that has shaped the Place, in which we choose to be.

Your streams, springs and brooks are part of a larger family of rivers, who come from many sources, but all connect us to that central icon of London, the Thames.

As Hal Borland wrote in:

“This Hill, This Valley”

“Any river, is really the summation of the whole valley.

To think of it as nothing but water, is to ignore the greater part.”

This need not be a one-off project, but a tangible foundation of a long term vision to reveal and recognise the local natural environment, that even now, supports and sustains, your neighbourhood, your Place. By creating this foundation, one can, over time, enrich it to celebrate the history and geography, and even improve the legibility of your parish, and realise the connections with your neighbours and the community of rivers of which yours is a part.

Pic 23- London's hidden Rivers



There are many initiatives in this and other countries that are recognising their hidden rivers.....

Here are of some artworks created to acknowledge and celebrate urban waters.

pics 24—40



Artworks

p.24 Water's Murmur, Julian Stocks, Kinnerton St. Kensington

p.25 River God Tyne, David Pringle.

p.26 River route, iron over cobbles, England?

p.27 River of Light, Vanessa Dell, Milton Keynes.

p.28 River Cast on Wall.

p.29 Blessings, Jane Tsong.

p.30 Blue Arroyo, McCarren.

p.31 San Antonio, Mosaic.

p.32 River of Life, Iowa Uni. Iowa River, Gary Drosie.

p.33 Hull Fish Trail, Gordon Young.

p.34 Water incised into paving.

p.35 Manchester pavement poetry.

p.36 Tree base, text.

p.37 River and Time, light work. Ellen Sollod.

p.38 Big Fish on the River Lagan, Belfast, William Murphy.

p.39 The Rill, More London, Southbank.

p.40 More London, Touch!

Summary

Aims, Objectives and some Benefits

To embed the neighbourhood with markers that follow the courses of the hidden streams.

To uncover and interpret in contemporary form, the history of the neighbourhood as reflected in the stories of the rivers hidden below.

To improve the urban legibility using the disclosed rivers to unveil a sense of landscape highlighting the role of topography, landform and natural features that have shaped the parish and still has influence.

To re-establish the connection between us and those from whom we receive the gift of these rivers, and those whom we gift them to.

To promote connections and inclusivity at every stage and point. This inclusivity invites civic, community and corporate involvement, both in the primary creation and its future life.

It has the advantage that costs can be spread both over time and sectors.

Its has a framework to which local initiatives or regeneration projects of any scale can be connected whilst in process or in the future.

It could offer, the commissioning of modest artworks to reflect the relationship of river and place along these routes.

It has a foundation to include, educate and entertain both those in the stalls and the galleries.

It offers to incorporate and celebrate existing projects and to foster new ones.

It is a project that could inspire other communities to follow in the your wake.

Pic 42
Land/Water

LAND- When seen as a *Space*, a territory, is often considered as a means for economic or political gain, and thus, has to be possessed. However, when seen as a *Place*, that is, a space with an inherent emotional meaning, it's possible that *it itself*, becomes the possessor. This *sense of place* can undoubtedly create emotional bonds that fosters demands of stewardship and protection.

WATER~ But what of Water? Are rivers too, part of the land we possess? Do we own a river's water if it passes through our land, to use as we wish? Or is it a gift from those communities from which it comes, for us to willingly offer to those downstream? If so, then not only a duty of stewardship is upon us as it passes through, but it has the potential to connect us to a greater whole, by the fact that it flows from the community at source, to the one at its union, via all those in-between. Thus gifting them a common thread through which they can identify with each other.

Land/Water Symposium, Plymouth University, 2017



Then tabletop show and tell and questions, Maps, 3D sketches, Pdf docs with request form, comments and ideas.

My work and other stuff, show only if asked!

