

= The Making of the English Landscape =

The Making of the English Landscape is a 1955 book by the English local historian William George Hoskins . It is illustrated with 82 monochrome plates , mostly photographs by Hoskins himself , and 17 maps or plans . It has appeared in at least 35 editions and reprints in English and other languages .

The book is a landscape history of England and a seminal text in that discipline and in local history . The brief history of some one thousand years is widely used in local and environmental history courses .

Hoskins defines the theme of the book in the first chapter , arguing that a landscape historian needs to use botany , physical geography and natural history as well as historical knowledge to interpret any given scene fully . The remaining chapters describe how the English landscape was formed from the Anglo - Saxon period onwards , starting c . 450 AD , and looking in detail at the mediaeval landscape , the depopulation following the Black Death , the Tudor period through to the splendour of the Georgian period , the parliamentary enclosures that affected much of the English midlands , the industrial revolution , the development of road , canal , and railway transport networks , and finally the growth of towns from Norman times onwards . There is little mention of cities . The concluding chapter however laments the damage done to the English countryside by " the villainous requirements of the new age " such as military airfields and arterial roads , describes the new England as barbaric , and invites the reader to contemplate the past .

The work has been widely admired , but also described as grandly emotive , populist , and openly anti - modernist . Writers have praised the book for helping them understand and interpret the landscape in which they lived .

= = Book = =

= = = Overview = = =

The introduction sets out Hoskins ' stall with " No book exists to describe the manner in which the various landscapes of this country came to assume the shape and appearance they now have " , mentioning geology (" only one aspect of the subject ") , the clearing of woodlands , the reclaiming of moor and marsh , the creation of fields , roads , towns , country houses , mines , canals and railways : " in short , with everything that has altered the natural landscape . "

= = = Editions = = =

The first edition was published by Hodder and Stoughton in 1955 . They reprinted the book in 1956 , 1957 , 1960 , 1963 , 1965 , 1967 , 1969 , 1970 , 1971 , 1974 , 1977 . They issued a new edition in 1988 , a revised edition in 1992 , and a new edition in 2005 , reissued in 2006 . They published Korean and Japanese editions in 2008 .

In 1970 , Penguin Books published a paperback Pelican edition in England and a Penguin edition in the United States . Penguin reprinted in 1973 , 1974 , 1975 , 1977 , 1978 , 1979 , 1981 , 1983 , 1985 , 1986 , 1988 , 1991 , 2005 .

In 1977 , Book Club Associates published an edition in England .

In 1988 , Coronet Books and Guild Publishers published editions in England .

In 1992 , Teach Yourself Books published a paperback edition in England .

In 2005 , the Folio Society published an edition in England .

In 2013 , Little Toller books published a paperback edition in England .

= = = Illustrations = = =

The book is illustrated with 82 monochrome plates and 17 maps or plans , all uncredited except for

some use of Ordnance Survey maps , and so apparently the work of Hoskins himself . These are closely integrated into the text ; for example , the text in chapter 1 is accompanied by a pair of diagrams showing how a holloway (' hollow way ') could be formed by the digging of a ' double ditch ' , i.e. a pair of raised earth banks either side of a ditch to mark the boundary of two estates , and supported by a photograph (Plate 13) of a sunken lane in Devon , explained by Hoskins as a boundary , from probably the seventh century , between the Saxon estates of (royal) Silverton and Exeter Abbey . The photograph shows high hedgebanks in bright sunshine , dwarfing the figure of a woman in the middle distance .

= = Contents = =

The book covers its subject in 10 chapters :

= = = 1 . The Landscape before the English Settlement = = =

Hoskins uses the first few pages of this chapter as an introduction , beginning with praise for William Wordsworth 's *A Guide through the District of the Lakes* (1810) , and from which he quotes a passage in which the reader is asked to envisage " an image of the tides visiting and revisiting the friths , the main sea dashing against the bolder shore " . Hoskins writes that on a desolate moor one can feel oneself imaginatively back in time to the Bronze Age , but that there are now few such unaltered places left . He argues that the landscape historian " needs to be a botanist , a physical geographer , and a naturalist , as well as an historian " to understand a scene in full :

For what a many @-@ sided pleasure there is in looking at a wide view anywhere in England , not simply as a sun @-@ drenched whole , fading into unknown blue distances , like the view of the West Midland plain from the top of the Malvern Hills , or at a pleasant rural miniature like the crumpled Woburn ridge in homely Bedfordshire ; but in recognizing every one of its details name by name , in knowing how and when each came to be there , why it is just that colour , shape , or size , and not otherwise , and in seeing how the various patterns and parts fit together to make the whole scene .

The rest of the chapter covers Pre @-@ Roman , Western (i.e. Celtic) and Roman Britain . He estimates very roughly that 750 @,@ 000 acres at most were in use as arable or grassland in Roman times , compared to 27 million acres in 1914 .

= = = 2 . The English Settlement = = =

Hoskins describes how England was settled with Anglo @-@ Saxon people between c . 450 and 1066 AD , making the country a land of villages . Estate boundaries from this period survive in features such as sunken lanes and banks . The Scandinavian conquest of much of England from the late 9th century added more villages , though many with Scandinavian placename elements such as -by (' village ') may simply have been renamed Saxon settlements .

Many English villages were given their shape in this period , and almost all are described in some detail in the eleventh century Domesday Book . Hoskins identifies three major types of village : those around a green or central square , as at Finchingfield in Essex ; those along a single street , like Henley in Arden in Warwickshire ; and those consisting of apparently haphazardly scattered dwellings , like Middle Barton near Hoskins 's home in Oxfordshire .

= = = 3 . The Colonization of Mediaeval England = = =

This chapter looks at the mediaeval landscape from the Domesday Book onwards , with the section ' The Landscape in 1086 ' . The country had almost every village that exists today ; a typical one , Hoskins writes , had a small watermill and a church without a spire .

In ' The Clearing of the Woodlands ' , Hoskins argues that before the 15th century England must have looked like one great forest , but most of the woods were cleared for arable or pasture in the

12th and 13th centuries . Under Henry II perhaps a third of the country was royal forest .

Hoskins begins the section on ' Marsh , Fen , and Moor ' with the words " There are certain sheets of the one @-@ inch Ordnance Survey maps which one can sit down and read like a book for an hour on end , with growing pleasure and imaginative excitement " . One such section is of The Wash , rich in mediaeval detail . Marshes such as those in Lincolnshire , Norfolk and the Pevensy Levels were reclaimed at this time , whole communities working together , often under the Danelaw .

'Buildings in the landscape ' briefly describes abbeys , churches , mills , bridges and castles built to serve the growing population , which just before the Black Death had tripled since Domesday .

= = = 4 . The Black Death and after = = =

Hoskins describes the abandonment of villages from the bubonic plague of 1348 , the Black Death , which killed a third to a half of the population (he states) , and the subsequent new colonisation and building as the population eventually recovered . Marginal land such as the Breckland of Norfolk and Suffolk , never thickly populated , was abandoned . Many villages in counties such as Leicestershire were deserted . Villages such as Lower Ditchford in Gloucestershire can be seen today only as a ground @-@ plan from the air .

Between 1350 and 1500 , many new buildings appeared , especially churches with towers like Fotheringhay in Northamptonshire . Some fine bridges as at Wadebridge in Cornwall are from this period .

= = = 5 . Tudor to Georgian England = = =

Hoskins starts this chapter by observing that in 1500 in Tudor times there were roughly three sheep for every human being in England , perhaps 8 million sheep to two and a half million people . There were four million acres of hardwood forest , remembered now as Epping Forest , the Forest of Arden , Sherwood Forest , the Forest of Dean , Wychwood and many others . A village might be surrounded by a single enormous thousand acre field , shared amongst all the village 's farmers . There were extensive heaths and wild places , largely uninhabited , with " no industrial smoke , nothing faster on the roads than a horse , no incessant noises from the sky " . The first enclosures and the flowering of rural England , country houses and parks such as the magnificent Burghley House and Knole date from this period up to Georgian times .

= = = 6 . Parliamentary Enclosure and the Landscape = = =

In this chapter Hoskins describes the effects of enclosure on the landscape and on fields , hedgerows and trees , roads and farmhouses . He begins by quoting the rural poet John Clare : " Inclosure , thou 'rt a curse upon the land , and tasteless was the wretch who thy existence plann 'd " .

Parliamentary enclosures accounted for about 4 @.@ 5 million acres of what had been open fields , not counting the enclosure of common land and wild ' waste ' . In 1700 roughly half England 's arable land was already enclosed ; by the end of the enclosure process , almost all of it was . The revolution in the landscape began in about 1750 , affecting about 3 @,@ 000 parishes , especially in the English midlands . Between 1760 and 1800 there were 1 @,@ 479 enclosure acts , covering 2 @.@ 5 million acres ; another 1 @.@ 5 million acres were enclosed by 1844 , by more than a thousand further acts . Some counties such as Kent , Essex and Devon were little affected , having largely been enclosed much earlier , often directly from forest or moorland . Many miles of new straight hedgerows were laid to mark out the newly enclosed fields of the midlands ; in some areas such as Derbyshire , straight limestone walls were used instead . Many straight new roads were created at the same time . Farmhouses remained in the old villages at first , but new red @-@ brick Victorian ones were often built in the middle of their now enclosed land in due course .

= = = 7 . The Industrial Revolution and the Landscape = = =

Hoskins begins his chapter on industrialisation with the remark " England was still a peaceful agricultural country at the beginning of the seventeenth century . " He describes the early industrial landscape , water power and early mills , steam power and slums . He names transformative inventions such as Kay 's flying shuttle of 1733 and Hargreaves 's spinning jenny of 1767 , and comments that Matthew Boulton opened his steam engine factory " in the still unravished country " outside Birmingham in 1765 . He quotes a poem by Anna Seward lamenting the ravishing of Coalbrookdale , c . 1785 , and one by Wordsworth from *The Excursion* . He is critical of the industrial slums and the smoke and dirt of the Staffordshire Potteries . He emphasises the rapid growth of industrial towns like Preston , and of new towns like Middlesbrough , which went from a single farm in 1830 to over 50 ,000 inhabitants in 1880 . However he appreciates the mining landscapes of Cornwall , including the gleaming white china clay pits of St Austell and the abandoned tin mines of St Cleer , commenting that " there is a point , as Arthur Young saw , when industrial ugliness becomes sublime " .

== 8 . Roads , Canals , and Railways ==

Hoskins describes roads and trackways from the Iron Age (like the Jurassic Way across the midlands , near his Oxfordshire home) and Roman times (like Akeman Street in the same area) . He notes that the Fosse Way runs for miles in Gloucestershire away from any village , as the Anglo -Saxons built villages away from large roads for safety . Still in his home area , he records that " the wide green track now called Dornford Lane " was built in the 10th century for supplies to be carted from the Anglo -Saxon kings ' own estate at Barton . He goes on to describe the building of the canal network between roughly 1760 and 1825 , noting that just one town was created by the canals , Stourport . Soon afterwards , a much more widespread transport network transformed the English landscape : the railways . Hoskins devotes over a page to each of two quotations from Charles Dickens 's *Dombey and Son* , describing the construction in 1836 of a railway in Camden Town . He mentions , too , that Wordsworth campaigned against the railway from Kendal to Windermere , bringing trains into the heart of the Lake District , and that conservatives like Wordsworth " lost all along the line " .

== 9 . The Landscape of Towns ==

The last chapter of the body of the book ? if Chapter 10 is considered more or less an epilogue ? covers towns seen as part of the English landscape . Hoskins justifies this on the grounds that understanding towns brings pleasure . He describes in turn planned towns , the open -field town , and the market town . Towns were planned as early as Norman times , Abbot Baldwin planning Bury St Edmunds between 1066 and 1086 ; Stratford -on -Avon was laid out in 1196 . Another burst of town planning came with the spa towns in the late 18th century , and of new industrial towns like Middlesbrough and Barrow in Furness in the mid 19th century . Open -field towns like Nottingham , Leicester , and Stamford grew naturally in their own open fields , but were trapped by pasture rights from growing in the 19th century , giving Nottingham slums , and Leicester a problem that it just managed to solve , growing across its fields : while Stamford stopped growing entirely , becoming fossilised as what Hoskins calls a museum piece of a beautiful 17th and 18th century town . Finally , the market towns like Marlborough grew up around their often large and handsome market places , which are however of any number of shapes .

== 10 . The Landscape Today ==

Hoskins concludes with a brief chapter , with one image , Plate 82 , " The completed English landscape " showing a tall tree in a wide open field , a strip of hedges and villages just visible in the distance . The chapter laments the damage caused to parts of the English landscape , mentioning bulldozers and tractors , nuclear bombers and by -passes , and ends by celebrating again the

wealth of detail within a few hundred yards of Hoskins ' study window at Steeple Barton .

= = Reception = =

= = = Contemporary = = =

The geographer E. G. R. Taylor , reviewing the book for the Royal Geographical Society in 1955 , wrote that Hoskins made the case for getting a strong pair of boots to learn landscape history clearly enough . Taylor compared the book to Dudley Stamp 's *Man and the Land* , published a few months earlier in 1955 , saying that Hoskins seemed to have missed it , but that given the differences in their approaches , they could be read side by side . She noted also that Hoskins did not talk about London though he covered town landscapes , and appeared unaware of urban geography . Her review ended by remarking that Hoskins " views the industrial revolution with mounting horror , and the industrialists themselves are bitterly chastised as ' completely and grotesquely insensitive . No scruples weakened their lust for money ; they made their money and left their muck . ' " She noted however that Hoskins had happily moved to " a quiet spot in Oxfordshire where he can forget the ' barbaric England of the scientists , the military men and the politicians ' and look out of his study window on to the past " , where , she wrote , he " draws for us a last tender and evocative picture of the ' gentle unravished English landscape . ' " Dr. Hoskins , she wrote , forgetting all the horrors , " reaches back through the centuries one by one and rediscovers Eden " .

= = = Modern = = =

Penelope Lively , writing in *The Guardian* , describes the book as a marvellous , robust , opinionated account of the landscape as narrative , whether rural or urban , the visible record of what has gone before , once you know how to read it ? or once he has told you how . You were to put on your walking boots and understand the country in which you lived . Plenty did , or tried to ; I did .

William Boyd , also in *The Guardian* , described the book as " an absolute trailblazer , a revolution . " He notes that W. H. Auden " revered " the book , and that reading Hoskins had enabled him to ' read ' a landscape as a " historical palimpsest " :

The familiar English countryside , in whatever regional variation , became a form of historical palimpsest ? its evolving history there to be decoded and discerned for those who could look at it through the innovative lens that Hoskins provided . It was as if the landscape was all of a sudden an archaeological dig ? hills and dales , woods and copses , fields and rivers , villages and roads ceased to be simple features of a view . Instead the whole history of English humankind and husbandry was on display , from the Holocene age to the latest horrors of agribusiness . And the book in which that history was written was the very land itself .

Local historian Graeme White , in *The Medieval English Landscape , 1400 ? 1540* , calls Hoskins ' book " brilliantly @-@ crafted " and observes that " Although this famously railed against the ' England of the arterial by @-@ pass , treeless and stinking of diesel oil ' ? alone with much else belonging to the mid @-@ twentieth century ? the fact that national car ownership more than doubled during the 1950s made this a subject whose time had come . "

Paul Johnson , writing in *The Spectator* , said that the book " was for me an eye @-@ opener , as it was for many people . It told us of the extent to which our landscape had been made by man , not God , and taught us to look much more observantly at it . "

= = = An assessment = = =

Matthew H. Johnson , writing a chapter on English culture and landscape in the edited book *The Public Value of the Humanities* , identifies " six key points " established by Hoskins :

1 . The landscape is of great antiquity (" everything is much older than we think ")

2 . Landscapes often changed suddenly , as in the 18th century enclosures .

3 . Hoskins , following O. G. S. Crawford 's 1953 *Archaeology in the Field* , stressed we had to read the landscape using research to reveal its cultural value .

4 . Hoskins thus told a " grand and emotive story about that landscape . " Johnson compares this to J.R.R. Tolkien 's account in *The Lord of the Rings* when the hobbits return to a " despoiled and industrialized landscape of the Shire " .

5 . The narrative is populist , to be disseminated " to anyone who would listen . " The result was that it became part of English post @-@ war culture .

6 . It was " openly anti @-@ modernist " . In evidence , Johnson cites Hoskins 's " most famous passage " from the concluding chapter :

What else has happened in the immemorial landscape of the English countryside ? Airfields have flayed it bare ? Poor devastated Lincolnshire and Suffolk ! And those long gentle lines of the dip @-@ slope of the Cotswolds , those misty uplands of the sheep @-@ grey oolite , how they have lent themselves to the villainous requirements of the new age ! Over them drones , day after day , the obscene shape of the atom @-@ bomber , laying a trail like a filthy slug upon Constable 's and Gainsborough 's sky . England of the Nissen @-@ hut , the " pre @-@ fab " , and the electric fence , of the high barbed wire around some unmentionable devilment ; England of the arterial by @-@ pass , treeless and stinking of diesel oil , murderous with lorries ; England of the bombing @-@ range wherever there was once silence ? Barbaric England of the scientists , the military men , and the politicians ; let us turn away and contemplate the past before all is lost to the vandals .

= = Television = =

In 1972 the BBC broadcast an episode of the television programme *Horizon* on *The Making of the English Landscape* produced by Peter Jones , and featuring Hoskins as presenter . Although the programme was inspired by the original book , Hoskins wrote an 84 @-@ page illustrated BBC book , *English Landscapes* , to accompany the programme . Later in the 1970s , Jones went on to produce a series of 12 TV programmes for BBC2 , *Landscapes of England* , in which additional areas of the country were studied , leading to a further title , *One Man 's England* to accompany the series .