

Poetry, painting and change on the edge of England

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Keywords

Practice-led research, Poetry, Painting, Plotland, Ecocritical,

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21 **Poetry, Painting and Change on the Edge of England**

22

23 In this article we discuss our creative research on and with a contested coastal
24 community on one of the U.K.'s last existing plotlands¹, the Humberston Fitties in
25 North East Lincolnshire. This fifty-six acre strip of land with three hundred and
26 nineteen chalets.ⁱ is on the Humber estuary and lies close to Cleethorpes: a seaside
27 resort and Grimsby: a seaport now facing post-industrial decline. Our cross-
28 disciplinary collaborative practice between poetry and visual art explores open,
29 environmentally-aware engagements and methodologies with landscape and rural
30 place. We investigate the relation of social, environmental and energy politics,
31 looking out to land and sea and back to the community. Our results include original
32 art and poetry presented innovatively together in exhibitions and books, in addition
33 to local people's responses to our methodologies and the work itself.

34

35 The intention of this article is to demonstrate how working through and with
36 transdisciplinary arts in a community such as the Fitties can contribute to
37 understanding and learning about place-identity and place-value through aesthetic
38 endeavour. The learning is site-specific and symbiotic between artists and local
39 people and relates, in this article in particular, to small and large-scale socio-political
40 and environmental change. Here we aim to show how these processes and
41 interactions occur over time and to demonstrate that no place or any conclusion
42 about place, is simple or easily gained. Equally no future decision or speculation
43 about environmental sustainability, politics and class, or taste and aesthetics (all

44 themes we consider here) can be taken in isolation and without consultation with
45 the inhabitants of a place and consideration of their histories and memories. Thus
46 this article aims to demonstrate that there is a special value in creative practice-led,
47 place-based, people-responsive longitudinal research between the disciplines of art,
48 literature and rural sociology.

49

50

51 **Threadings, bendings, tanglings: creativity and place**

52

53 Since 2011 we, Harriet Tarlo (poet) and Judith Tucker (artist), have collaborated in
54 place-based, slow-walking processes drawing on concepts of fieldwork, deep
55 mapping (Biggs 2010) psychogeography (Richardson 2015), and contemporary
56 walking practices (Heddon and Turner 2012; see also Gkartzios and Crawshaw in this
57 special section). What is key for this article in terms of principle of deep mapping is
58 Biggs' notion of this as a hybrid activity in which artistic, geographical and
59 ethnographic practices interweave, based on place-based investigation and poetic
60 ambiguity in dialogue with academic discourse. Through this he seeks to challenge the
61 frameworks within which both arts practices and academic research are currently
62 framed. (Biggs 2010). Richardson's work on contemporary British psychogeographic
63 practices also challenges this binary as she works with literary forms of
64 psychogeography within an academic context (Richardson 2015) thus providing
65 another context for our inclusive walking fieldwork. However most of the examples
66 that Richardson cites are urban whilst we work in a rural context, Heddon and Turner
67 trouble certain assumptions in some psychogeographic practices and literatures, not
68 least in relation to urban and rural walking practices and with particular relation to

69 gender. They draw attention to the fact that women have not featured in
70 psychogeography until very recently (Heddon and Turner 2012). As walking women
71 artists ourselves their consideration of the importance of the local and of
72 complicating notions of the domestic and the wilderness have particular significance
73 for our work on the Fitties.

74
75 We have also attempted to evolve a practice between poetry and visual art that
76 explores open, environmentally-aware engagements with landscape, place and
77 change. We eschew polemical responses to place, preferring to make work that
78 attempts more subtle adjustments to established assumptions and sensibilities by
79 focused engagement with sites, their human inhabitants and more-than-human
80 elements in line with ecocritical approaches (Soper 1995, Bennett 2010, Barad 2003,
81 Garrard 2004, Haraway 2008, Morton 2007). Early in our respective careers, both of
82 us were influenced by Kate Soper's book, *What Is Nature?* (1995), in which Soper
83 argues for maintaining the awareness of the difference between human and
84 nonhuman effects and constantly assessing and reassessing the positions of nature
85 and culture, rather than indulging in simplistic defence or denial of this familiar
86 Western dualism (Soper 1995 p. 11). Later critical works by the authors cited above
87 develop these ideas further into notions of human and nonhuman environment as
88 "enmeshed in a dense network of relationships," (Bennett 2010 p 13) including
89 Haraway's "natureculture," Morton's 'the mesh' and Tim Ingold's 'meshwork'.

90
91 Although marginally attempted in rural studies (Crawshaw and Gkartzios, 2016;
92 Crawshaw, 2019) our work seeks to demonstrate the way in which creative practice

93 not only informs critical analysis but is also a critical tool in itself. Our practice is
94 trans-disciplinary in nature and involves extensive creative fieldwork through
95 walking, drawing, writing, photography, historical and archival research.¹ We work
96 collaboratively with local people to generate materials via interviews and simple
97 postcards on which participants write a short memory associated with a particular
98 chalet address or place on the Fitties. We delivered these to individual chalets and
99 also set up a stall where we exchanged postcards of our work for a memory. We
100 incorporated these into exhibitions in relation to a map of the chalet park and on our
101 social media pages alongside photographs.

102

103 This project is ongoing. Since 2012, we have been working in this place, making short
104 repeated site visits and returning to our study and studio to work up the material
105 gleaned from fieldwork in place and with people. We produce poetic texts, drawings
106 and paintings which are shown in exhibition locally, nationally and internationally.
107 We experiment with a variety of forms of presentation juxtaposing image and text:
108 open form poems and paintings on canvas and watercolour paper; vinyl wall text,
109 artists' books, digital print and projection alongside the community-produced
110 elements mentioned above. This is undertaken in the conviction that "practice-led
111 research is a new species of research, generative enquiry that draws on subjective,
112 interdisciplinary and emergent methodologies that have the potential to extend the
113 frontiers of research" (Barrett and Bolt, 2010, p1). This paper introduces research as
114 articulated by artists *as practitioners* to the field of rural studies.

115

116 The Humberston Fitties is one of the U.K.'s last existing plotlands, a place that is "on
 117 the edge" in multiple ways (coastal, political, environmental, rural), and a place that
 118 is facing change. We are committed to showing the art we produce locally but also to
 119 taking it further afield.² As the environmental and ecocritical movements have
 120 taught us, it is through the micro that we understand the macro. The conversations
 121 we have had about this work in local places and further afield have demonstrated
 122 this.

123

124 We have been working in North East Lincolnshire since 2012, looking in particular at
 125 water, marsh, flood and energy. Our earlier landscape work explored not only the
 126 beach, but also the raised banks of the reclaimed marshland and referenced
 127 Darwin's renowned "tangled bank in its explorations of "threadings", "bendings" and
 128 tanglings." (Darwin, 1872, p. 429). As the editorial to the 2009 issue of *Nature*
 129 celebrating Darwin argued, that bank is now unravelling due to the threat to
 130 biodiversity (Nature, 2009). What is left are complex but impoverished remnants of
 131 plant-life, an ecology of a post-industrial, semi-agrarian, semi-wild landscape
 132 dominated by certain resilient species:

133

134 under
 135 swallows' wings
 136
 137
 138 grassland verges grown into many
 139 bendings, singings each over other vetch purples clover whites
 140 threadings, tanglings through
 141 up from
 142 salt-sand
 143 ground
 144
 145

146 As can be seen above, Tarlo's landscape poetry is written in the Anglo-American
147 open form style of poetry in which sparse use of language draws attention to
148 particulars - words are arranged across the page organically rather than in traditional
149 versification and lineation. Her poems explore the connections between poetic form
150 and landscape but they also attempt to embody human movement through place
151 and space.

152

153 In 2016 we moved beyond considering our own movement through landscape to
154 work more closely with people in the area, particularly those who holiday on and live
155 on the Fitties. We were interested in exploring an alternative, restorative form of
156 simple seaside living through found poems and small, quirky paintings, and setting
157 these beside larger works that return us to the surroundings: a salt marsh with its
158 suppressed but resurgent life.³ We interacted with the community through
159 interviews and memory and creative workshops. We expanded our work to explore
160 social and cultural connections between people and energy and to look at further
161 ways in which the Fitties lifestyle has a bearing on environmental concerns such as
162 waste, sustainability and recycling.⁴

163

164 A consideration of the relation of people and place, of human and landscape is not
165 new in our work. Tucker's densely-worked representational paintings and drawings
166 build on a contemporary re-working of the neo-romantics. Her painting practice
167 explores both how we might be inhabited, not only by our own histories, memories,
168 and experiences but also by those of others, and the ways in which places too bear
169 traces of others, both visible and invisible. Her paintings and drawings become

170 places between these psychic traces and the actual traces in the landscape just as
171 Tarlo's poems incorporate research into past inhabitants of the places she works.

172

173 *Place Figure 1 here. There's always something you need to do that you've never done*
174 *before Oil on Canvas 91 cm x 122 cm*

175

176 Here however we worked firmly in the here and now using techniques that are
177 similar to oral history methods used by sociologists, historians and activists. In our
178 case, however, this material is used to compile documentary poems, a form which
179 Tarlo traces back to the 1930s American objectivists but which has been practiced by
180 many poets all over the world since then. Longer interviews are condensed into
181 short documentary poems in diverse voices, some of which are included here. These
182 poems contain only "found" text from interviews. They are an attempt to keep
183 memory alive, to dramatise it in a way that will engage people (perhaps more than
184 pages of transcribed interviews) and to contribute to the marginalization of the lyric
185 "I", to avoid a usurpation of other people's places into a singular poetic voice.

186

187 The paintings of the holiday chalets rarely have images of people depicted within
188 them, yet we know that these are places that are far from abandoned and are
189 buzzing with human activities. They explore how these idiosyncratic chalets are
190 simultaneously objects of identification and desire for those who own or stay in
191 them as well as exploring how they might reflect the owners' personalities. What
192 happens when the paintings of the chalets themselves are placed next to or are

193 surrounded by the “found-text” poems? One effect is that they become animated by
194 those voices and it is almost as if the place itself starts to have a voice.

195

196 This process of engagement, along with events at the Fitties, in the U.K. and across
197 the globe, caused us to think about change. Change is of course paradoxically a
198 constant in the human and more-than-human world and these days the word
199 “change” can hardly be used without conjuring up ever-present fears of Climate
200 Change. Like all localities, this is a changing, unstable place where human
201 interventions and priorities intersect with the short and long-term, large and small-
202 scale non-human developments. But, as we shall see, change has been happening
203 particularly fast at the Fitties in recent years. How does small and large scale,
204 environmental and political change, affect people and artists in their relationship to
205 locale, and how is it intertwined in the complex threadings, bendings and tanglings
206 that make up place identity?

207

208 **plotland, behind land, edgeland**

209

210 What is the rural sociology of Humberston Fitties and why is it significant? The Fitties
211 is one of many plotland settlements which cropped up along the UK coastline, largely
212 during the interwar years, when due to agricultural depression, land was sold off
213 very cheaply, usually to ordinary city or townsfolk. Over a hundred years, it has
214 evolved into a quirky individualistic chalet park drawing residents, second home
215 owners, renters and summertime visitors. These come mainly from Northern British
216 towns and cities such as Sheffield, Doncaster and Barnsley, some as close as

246
 247 The Fitties land lies low then on a flat coast behind eroded dunes and marshy beach -
 248 in this literal sense it is “behind land”, but it is also “behind” land in the sense of
 249 being “behind the times”, being a remnant of a wider vernacular, counter-cultural
 250 movement.

251

252 As our title suggests, plotlands can also been seen as classic “edgeland” sites, and
 253 not just because they are often coastal. According to Trevor Rowley, plotlands
 254 received a disproportionate amount of criticism for their size, as epitomised here by
 255 C.E.M. Joad’s book, *The Horrors of the Countryside* (1931):

256

257 To my horror I found not an empty valley but a muddy road
 258 running through an avenue of shacks, caravans, villas, bungalows,
 259 mock castles, pigsties, disused railway carriages and derelict buses
 260 scattered higgledy piggedly over the largest possible area.

261 (Joad in Rowley, 2006 p 211).

262

263 Such prejudices linger and Fitties dwellers are aware of them, although they are in
 264 reality a pretty diverse group of people. This poem is created from the words of a
 265 long-term chalet-owner in her fifties reflecting on her neighbour’s life post-
 266 retirement:

267

268 When she retired, she didn’t
 269 have a lot of dosh, I said to her
 270 *Why don’t you go on the Fitties?*
 271 Her brother was agin it, thought
 272 his daft sister was being even
 273 more daft than usual. People
 274 either get it or they don’t get it.

275 In the end, he got it. My mother,
276 where she came from, she
277 wouldn't tell people I lived here.
278 The words wouldn't come out
279 of her mouth. But I think it's
280 within us, what makes us want
281 to come to the sea. It's primal,
282 really primal.
283

284 Staying with politics for now, Colin Ward, writing from an anarchist perspective,
285 notes that environmental arguments are often used to support socio-political
286 mechanisms such as the planning system:

287
288 ...unofficial settlements are seen as a threat to wildlife, which is
289 sacrosanct. The planning system is the vehicle that supports four-
290 wheel-drive Range Rovers, but not the local economy, and certainly
291 not those travellers and settlers seeking their own modest place in
292 the sun. (Ward, 2004)

293
294 In *Arcadia for All: The Legacy of a Makeshift Landscape* (1984), Hardy and Ward
295 (1984) recount the sorry tale of how, in post-war Britain, planning regulations and
296 compulsory purchase orders meant the demise of most plotlands. The “behind land”
297 of the Fitties then is a remnant of an almost lost way of life and we shall consider
298 here whether such lifestyles are indeed anathema to environment, as planning laws
299 suggest, or whether they might in fact hold both the histories and the future seeds
300 of less heavy-handed ways of living in place.

301

302 It is a vulnerable place then, this Eastern English edgeland, land always at risk from
303 socio-political actions. Until recently, perhaps this plotland has been protected in
304 part because of its unfashionable position on the margins on the Eastern edge of

305 England in a place where land is not as valuable as in those areas closer to London. In
306 those places it is much harder to find recognisable still- functioning plotlands, for the
307 reasons Hardy and Ward (1984) describe. Only traces remain: some such as Laindon
308 in Essex, considered in detail later in this article, are nature reserves, others are
309 subsumed in subsequent more suburban developments as we discovered on a visit
310 to Peacehaven on the Sussex coast, where the grid road pattern and some green
311 lanes are all the immediate evidence of what was one of the largest plotlands in the
312 U.K.

313

314 In painting and writing about human presences within landscape, such as the Fitties,
315 we aim to contribute to the acknowledgement and importance of such sites, and to
316 acknowledge their complexity. Using painting to critique simplistic pastoral or
317 bucolic views of British landscape is of course, nothing new. A key, mid-century
318 example is Eric Ravilious, an artist whose landscape work also rarely included people,
319 yet was far from nostalgic. He dealt with a pragmatic version of the rural imbued
320 with the evidence of modern agriculture and the energy networks. Far from
321 presenting a preservationist or melancholic view Ravilious' work engaged whole-
322 heartedly with modernity. His vision of the "countryside" has trains, roads, railway
323 tracks and cuttings, fences, defences, telegraph poles, pylons, cement and brick
324 works – resisting so much work that aimed to romanticize the rural usually discussed
325 in the discourse of the 'rural idyll' (Woods, 2011; Murdoch et al.,2003).

326

327 Ravilious even depicted makeshift dwellings in his painting *Caravans* from 1936.

328 Although not a plotlands dweller, he repurposed "Fever Wagons," as studios and

329 living spaces. These were originally used in the Boer War and/or the Crimean War,
330 and then shipped back to Newhaven, Sussex to be used by cement workers. There
331 have been plenty of artists (George Shaw, Juliette Losq, Laura Oldfield Ford), writers
332 (Michael Symons Roberts, Paul Farley, Iain Sinclair) and academics (Shoard, 2002;
333 Edensor, 2005) engaging with often urban “edgelands”. Plotlands however have not
334 historically attracted much artistic attention, perhaps as a consequence of issues of
335 class and taste. More recently, there has been a certain amount of creative
336 responses to plotlands in the south of the U.K. including Clio Barnard’s performance
337 work *Plotlands*, 2008 Karen Guthrie and Nina Pope's documentary, *Jaywick Escapes*,
338 2012 and Julia Winckler’s community engagement exhibition *Lureland: Peacehaven*
339 *Project*. Our longitudinal project on the Fitties begun in 2012 and still ongoing at the
340 time of writing, is a perhaps a unique mix of aesthetic exploration, in depth
341 community engagement and consideration of the relation of people and place.

342

343

344 **From groynes to gabions: change by the seaside**

345

346 The Fitties is also environmentally vulnerable, as the “behind land” poem cited
347 above suggests with its use of the term “defence.” This can refer both to the old
348 Second World War pillboxes along the coast, but also to the generations of defences
349 against flood from groynes to gabions. The area is always at risk from flooding,
350 erosion and climate change effects. In 2013, we saw the radically accelerated re-
351 shaping of land by water of a tidal surge on the Humber estuary. A report by the
352 Environment Agency (2013) refers to the breach at Tetney Marsh nearby, and the
353 consequent flooding of agricultural land and makes reference to the flood plain close

354 by to the chalet park. The North East Lincolnshire Council also commissioned the
355 Humberston Fitties Flood Risk Assessment in the same year, which was not seen as a
356 neutral action by many chalet owners, as, at the same time, the council was
357 threatening to increase the so-called winter “Closed Season,” citing the risk of flood
358 as a factor (Black & Veatch, 2014).

359

360 Although we had been painting and writing there for some years, it was only once
361 we engaged fully with the community that we became aware of factions and highly
362 charged differences of opinions on the chalet park relating to these issues. When we
363 advertised our presence on the Fitties for story and memory workshops, we got into
364 trouble with some voluble chalet owners for describing the area, as “always liable to
365 flood, to a return to its former state”. People were concerned that our words would
366 give the council ammunition in what they saw as its prejudices against the Fitties, in
367 particular its lack of support for some residents’ desire to stay there all year. This
368 highlighted the sensitivities that artists need to be aware of when working with
369 people in relation to their places and how environmental and social questions
370 cannot be separated. As the documentary poems demonstrate, place is devalued
371 and valued by different actants in the community, as well as how deep and
372 emotional the engagement with place is, how tied up with intimate, familial
373 relations.

374

375 The 2013 surge and these subsequent reports brought back and focused people’s
376 minds on the danger of flooding. While some described and understood it as close
377 call, others point out that the Fitties has not actually flooded since the North Sea

378 Flood of 1953 which struck Belgium and the Netherlands also, and caused over 300
 379 fatalities on the U.K. east coast. As a result of this flood most of the chalets are
 380 raised off the ground on bricks or wooden struts, as can be seen from the paintings.
 381 It is not just the chalets that could be affected by the surges, but the surrounding
 382 dunes and beaches have radically changed over the years. In early photographs of
 383 the “camp” the dunes are far more extensive. Local people, including this man in his
 384 fifties, speak about the changing shapes on the beach at Humberston:

385

386 My mother’s in Cleethorpes
 387 Cemetery - 70 years between
 388 when I first lived here and
 389 when I returned. I didn’t want
 390 my mother to be alone. Nothing
 391 had changed. Used to be folk
 392 from Sheffield, all they wanted
 393 was slot machines and such.
 394 They never walked up here.
 395 Down on the beach, you notice it
 396 daily, tides eroding constantly -
 397 we’ve lost a lot of sand, the creek’s
 398 come in a lot. Years ago it was
 399 way out, the dunes were 8 or 10
 400 foot deep. Yep, we’ve lost a lot.

401

402 The dunes referred to here have long lost their glory, being replaced by sand banks
 403 and gabions, the stones in these probably imported from Norway. The creek, saline
 404 lagoons and “pioneer saltmarsh” is spreading beyond Tetney marshes and onto
 405 Humberston Beach. The spaces humans value most highly and invented groynes to
 406 protect, sandy beaches, are being “colonised” by muddy marshland and an
 407 increasingly dangerous creek. Is the saltmarsh returning, re-establishing itself and
 408 how far will it go? Perhaps over time, regardless of the decisions human beings make
 409 about the Fitties plotland, the original saltmarsh fitties will indeed return, or will

410 there be a way of balancing encroaching vegetation, rising sea level and human
411 habitation?

412

413 2016 was another year of radical change. In the October of that year, just as we were
414 taking down our Cleethorpes exhibition celebrating plotland life, the news came that
415 the Fitties were to be put up for sale by the local council. In the context of austerity
416 Britain, they needed to offload assets. From the point of view of the Fitties people,
417 this was the last in a long series of betrayals. What would happen to this place?
418 Would the Fitties people take over the site themselves? Would it become
419 homogenised, modernised and managed by a large company such as the one that
420 ran the adjacent caravan park and become just another “blandscape”? Like many of
421 our towns and cities, Cleethorpes is struggling to maintain its identity in this regard -
422 the individualistic seafront, pier, boating lake and independent businesses of the
423 town exist in tension with the strip of Macdonalds, KFC, Premier Inn and Brewer’s
424 Fayre that run along Kings Road between the town and the site of the Fitties.

425

426 This raised important environmental questions too. Would a charitable organization
427 attempt to work on and with the people who live there to enhance its conservation
428 status (granted in 1996 at the request of the residents) and indeed the SSI (Site of
429 Special Scientific Interest) status of the Humber Estuary on which it is located? After
430 a brief utopian period when the residents formed a Community Interest Company to
431 purchase and manage the site for themselves, their bid was turned down in favour of
432 a larger bid from a large private company called Tingdene, part of whose business is

433 the manufacture of “park homes” and “holiday lodges.” Tingdene have officially
434 owned the Fitties since October 2017.

435

436 This radical period of change for the Fitties was mirrored in wider changes happening
437 throughout the world. In the same year, in June when we were talking to local and
438 visiting holidaymakers in the summer sunshine at the Fitties, the British electorate
439 voted to leave the European Union. Lincolnshire was one of the highest pro-leave
440 areas, voting 70% in favour of “Brexit”. The U.K., like the Fitties community, is in a
441 state of uneasy limbo after the “Brexit” vote , without clear answers, but definitely
442 heading for change. The views of the Fitties inhabitants who largely supported the
443 “Leave” campaign, seem far from anachronistic now, but rather seem to represent a
444 large percentage of the population who felt disillusioned with bureaucracy, unheard
445 and disenfranchised by both Westminster and Brussels. The Fitties is located in the
446 sort of coastal communities which the government, via the National Lottery, has
447 been targeting, with its fund of the same name since 2012, and with renewed vigour
448 since June 2016. The inherent mistrust of the establishment, the legacy of battles
449 with the council, the tendency toward anarchic, defiant individualism, the long
450 reverberations of the miners’ strike, all demonstrate that class divisions and strain in
451 Britain are alive and well.

452

453 Class, taste, place and visual environment are all inextricably linked. This has been
454 explored by Grayson Perry both through his works such as the *Vanity of Small*
455 *Differences* and his accompanying 2012 Channel 4 television series, *All in the Best*
456 *Possible Taste*:

457 People seem to be curating their possessions to communicate
458 consciously, or more often unconsciously, where they want to fit
459 into society.

460

461 The British care about taste because it is inextricably woven into
462 our system of social class. I think that – more than any other factor,
463 more than age, race, religion or sexuality – one’s social class
464 determines one’s taste (Perry 2013).

465

466 Perry is making explicit the links between power, class and what we can see; he
467 perceives that in the U.K. what we own reveals who we are and where we come
468 from. Objects and houses can stand in for us. In his television programme *Divided*
469 *Britain*, which featured the making of his two *Matching Pair* of “Leave” and
470 “Remain” pots, he explicitly worked with collapsing assumed binaries post-Brexit.
471 These invite the viewer to consider that, after Perry solicited source material from
472 people on both sides, it was revealed that they actually had very similar likes and
473 dislikes and understanding of what constitutes Britain. Perry knowingly draws on
474 aspects of working class taste, of which there are so many examples of unfettered,
475 playful curation of objects on the Fitties where plastic animals and birds abound.

476

477 Indeed, the whole aesthetic of plotland might be considered to be a unleashing of
478 taste that flies in the face of the establishment. Trevor Rowley notes that

479

480 In all respects plotlands stood out as the very antithesis of the
481 normal, old fashioned, village England and the values that it
482 represented. Plotland complexes were ephemeral, unsightly
483 anarchistic and an affront to good taste. In complete contrast the
484 long-established English village, was seen by middle-class observers
485 as the acceptable unit of countryside living” (Rowley, 2006, p 211).

486

487 Like Perry's ceramics but in a different idiom, Tucker's painting in combination with
 488 Tarlo's poetry complicate the binary outlined above. After all, what might it mean to
 489 use oil paint to depict the makeshift chalets and open-form poetry to reflect the
 490 voices of their owners? The close observation, engagement and time that is involved
 491 in the making of these is one way of deep listening as well as deep mapping.

492

493 Since this period, influenced by the darker shadows outlined above, we became
 494 interested in the Fitties at dusk and in the night and began work on a new series of
 495 large-scale dramatic paintings and short fragmentary poems called "Night Fitties".
 496 These explore the play of light and dark and the uncanny transformations of the
 497 chalets that take place after hours as well as notions of vulnerability, occupation and
 498 emptiness. The work considers, in the shadow of recent dramatic political changes,
 499 how notions of place and identity are constructed on domestic and larger scales, as
 500 reflected by the play on flags and other indications of Englishness.

501

502

november week-night
 dark chalets under dim
 lamps glow variegated
 plants: silhouettes of
 lone lilies illuminate

woman in red top
 feeds fox at lit door
 frame intimate until
 us: lifts bowl, turns
 light off, door shuts

503

504

505

506

hearts hang inside
 cold closed summer
 houses: few vent
 smoke, few gleams
 car corners statuary

t.v. flashes window in
 window's wide sight:
 big guy in vest jumps
 up behind blown rose
 flicker white in colour

507 Please place figure 2 here Judith Tucker *We're all very close round here,*
508 2018. Oil on Canvas. 76cm x 101cm

509

510 ***Yep, we've lost a lot: local, national and international energy politics***

511

512 All this fear and uncertainty, as expressed here by the residents of the Fitties,
513 is exacerbated by our knowledge of climate change, a threat surpassing and
514 encompassing all - one that reminds us of the importance of global cooperation and
515 the dangers of division. In discussing social and environmental politics past and
516 present with Fitties people we focused on the importance of energy politics to the
517 area. From the beginning, our Fitties work had a strong sense of the Humber Estuary
518 just beyond. Here we are immediately confronted by evidence of energy. From the
519 path on the bank built to preserve reclaimed agricultural land and prevent flooding,
520 we look out over the saltmarsh to see tankers off the coast in the estuary offloading
521 crude oil at the Tetney monobuoy, run by Phillips 66, an American multinational
522 energy company, constantly pumping crude oil under and over the land. Oil is
523 pumped by a largely underground and undersea pipeline, to tastefully painted green
524 tanks at the Tetney oil terminal, before being piped over to South Killingham refinery
525 for processing. In turn these products might be exported from Immingham dock or
526 transported inland by road, rail and pipeline.

527

528 Close by we see windmills, which have increased in number over our time working
529 here, turning and producing power both on land and out to sea in the massive
530 "Humber Gateway Offshore Wind Farm. Again, we find global links - the wind farm
531 was built in part using a loan from the European Investment Bank, owned directly by

532 the 28 European Union member states. Repayments of this loan will continue many
533 years after Brexit (Willis 2016). Beyond the windmills and the monobuoy, well over
534 the horizon, over forty miles into the North Sea, are gas platforms but only just down
535 the coast, next to the ancient dunes at Saltfleetby Theddlethorpe, there is a direct
536 connection to the gas fields bringing in 10% of the UK's gas requirement every single
537 day.

538

539 Many local people work in the energy industry in one capacity or another and have
540 views about our energy sources. Here are some notes from an interview with a
541 retired male oil rig worker living in a nearby town:

542

543 *I worked off the coast twenty miles and more, that's why I know*
544 *they should build all those windmills offshore, not bother about*
545 *inland. There's wind offshore 365 days a year. They're finally*
546 *realising. We could have told 'em, like we could have told 'em how*
547 *bad diesel is for you. We used to joke we didn't have time for*
548 *safety, but safety was what it all was - running all the systems,*
549 *opening the wells, closing the wells, checking the pumps all the*
550 *time, separating out the gas, the oil, the water - regulating 24*
551 *hours a day. One summer we had a couple of osprey nesting up on*
552 *the platform all summer. We used to stand on the handrails looking*
553 *at the moon - the middle of the night stuff - you could get*
554 *philosophical.*

555

556 This interviewee was feeling that we might do well to listen to the opinions of people
557 we trust to work in such dangerous places. The osprey story was just one of several
558 stories he told of hardened rig workers observing and admiring wildlife even as they
559 continue their work as tiny cogs in the massive oil industry. It is also possible to see a
560 symbiotic metaphor here: either the unofficially nesting osprey might stand in for
561 plotlanders (particularly closed season ones) or vice versa.

562

563 Going back a few decades, this area is also intimately connected to the mining
564 industry. The construct of the British holiday is inextricably tied into the industrial
565 revolution, improved transportation, the rise of capitalism and the energy industries
566 themselves. The Northeast Lincolnshire seaside has long links with South Yorkshire
567 towns and cities to its West, especially around Sheffield. This began with mill
568 workers and other industrial workers, who, in the late nineteenth-century,
569 celebrated wakes (or feast) weeks, when the mills, factories and collieries were
570 closed for an annual overhaul, by trips to the seaside. In these early days of working
571 class tourism, this was all the holiday (unpaid at that) that they received.⁷

572

573 As the mines began to close through the 'fifties and 'sixties, culminating in the
574 'eighties during Margaret Thatcher's leadership, some of these miners, the human
575 waste products of our old now uneconomic and increasingly unpopular energy
576 sources, took their redundancy payments, left their accommodation in Yorkshire and
577 moved permanently to the Fitties, joining the closed season community or relying on
578 friends and family for accommodation. There is a poignancy to these small chalets,
579 remnants of working class tourism, on this small piece of land sandwiched between
580 the remnants of the landbased coal industry and the current sea-based oil, gas and
581 wind industries.

582

583

584 One older female interviewee and long-term chalet-owner told us how she got to
 585 know the Fitties and became determined to make enough money to buy herself a
 586 chalet one day, eventually achieving this through shop-keeping:

587

588 As a little girl, my Dad
 589 down the mines, we came
 590 for Barnsley Feast Week
 591 fetching water from
 592 standpipes, lighting gas
 593 mantles, so careful, trying
 594 not to break them. They
 595 went up from 1 & 9 to
 596 half crown, up in flames
 597 if you touched them. It was
 598 just mud paths, dreadful
 599 when it rained but
 600 brilliant at the same time.
 601

602 This piece also demonstrates how the Fitties offered and still offers now
 603 comparatively simple living in terms of energy. The site is not on mains gas - calor
 604 gas bottles stand next to the chalets and are delivered and exchanged by lorries and
 605 many would run electricity from small windmills. Some of the older chalets still have
 606 these. The poem is often shown next to a painting of a chalet in a state of semi-
 607 repair emphasizing the mutability and flux of both structures and places and also the
 608 do-it-yourself involvement of the chalet owners, a theme developed further in the
 609 next section.

610

611 *Insert Figure 3 here Judith Tucker Renovating, 2015 Oil on Canvas 41 x 41 cm*

612

613 The council acted in line with the history of local authorities in relation to plotlands,
 614 which was, for many years to ignore them. On the Fitties it was 1938 before sewers

615 were introduced, replacing the cart collecting the soil, electricity installed and they
 616 begun to construct a road system based on the informal mud paths already
 617 established. Even then, many people didn't risk their cars on their Fitties - it was a
 618 slower place and pace of life for holiday-makers and local visitors alike, as this poem
 619 condensed from a conversation with a retired local woman:

620

621 We lived on the estate
 622 then, no one had cars then.
 623 We used to come up here
 624 with the pram. It was all dunes
 625 around here, all the way to the
 626 old bathing pool. My dad 'ld
 627 come home from work, get
 628 changed, bring sandwiches
 629 up on his bicycle and we'd
 630 have our tea in the dunes.
 631 Them were the days.

632

633 The last line of this documentary poem is full of nostalgia and cliché, easily
 634 dismissed, yet what is being valued here is what so many strung-out individuals and
 635 families are trying now to recover in our world of so-called "frictionless capitalism," a
 636 world in which effort is regarded as a problem for those who can afford it. Today's
 637 infantilising culture and commercial advertising encourages us to dial up a pizza and
 638 have a low-paid, zero hours worker deliver it on a motorbike, rather make our own
 639 sandwiches and cycle them down to the beach to meet our loved ones after a hard
 640 day's work. The line "it was all dunes around here" was used as a title for one of the
 641 larger paintings which incorporates chalet and shed roofs, foliage and some
 642 eccentric life size models of birds, and serves as a reminder that the chalet site we
 643 now see is much altered after the 1953 flood.

644

645 Several older people we talked to who have stayed on the Fitties since they were
 646 children clearly remember the oil lamps for lighting mentioned above, as well as the
 647 fetching of water from standpipes:

648
 649 We came for the whole
 650 Summer from Immingham.
 651 Everyone had a bridge
 652 across the dyke. We'd 8 tin
 653 buckets, we'd to traipse
 654 up and down 3 times a day
 655 to fill em up at the pump.
 656 We'd go cockling, picking
 657 samphire from the beds,
 658 watercress from the dyke,
 659 free-flowing then. Uncle Tom
 660 auctioned fish at Grimsby
 661 Docks; he had about 4
 662 languages. There he is, doing
 663 the roof repairs as usual.
 664

665 Immingham is a local commercial port town largely created in the early Twentieth
 666 Century with the building of its dock, railway and industrial factories. To summarise,
 667 Fitties people came largely from Northern cities and towns, predominantly South
 668 Yorkshire often working for the carbon energy industries. They were not well off in
 669 the main, but they were practical, on holiday as in the rest of their lives, foraging for
 670 cockles, picked samphire and watercress and collecting coal from the beaches. This
 671 kind of subsistence living extended into the ways in which the chalets were
 672 constructed, and maintained. Although for some this way of life was a temporary
 673 contrast to a working existence, for others it became a more permanent way of life.

674

675

676 **There's always something you need to do that you've never done before: recycling,**
 677 **adhocism and self-build**

678

679 In the spirit of plotlanders everywhere, Fitties people were traditionally and
680 frequently still are self-builders. As Walton notes of early plotlands, they were
681 originally composed of:

682

683 ... unplanned, self built, knots and straggles of seasonably occupied dwellings
684 featuring creative adaptations of old tram cars, railway carriages, old army
685 huts and later bus bodies which sprang up on the shoreline ... offering a
686 foothold to bohemian seekers after the simple seaside life or, increasingly
687 working class families whose only hope of affording a seaside holiday ... was via
688 this makeshift and independent route (Walton, 2000 p36).

689

690 While there are a few very old chalets left on the Fitties (such as the appropriately
691 named *LingaLonga* and *Era*), there are certainly no railway carriages left. Godfrey
692 Holmes in a 2017 *Independent* article, "A last hurrah for plotlanders, Britain's
693 interwar guerrilla housebuilders," gives a lively account of the kinds of materials
694 used:

695

696 ...timber and felt are essential ingredients of plotland, which other
697 materials are favoured? Panels of asbestos. Corrugated iron. Iron
698 sheets now rusting as wall or covering. Hardboard: later
699 supplemented with chipboard. Clapboard. Lots of it. Chicken-wire
700 also. Car doors. Flint. Pebbles. Second-hand bricks. Discarded glass.
701 Recycled anything. (Holmes 2017).

702

703 All of these, and more, can be seen on the Fitties, especially in the older chalets and
704 in the piles of possible, potential materials stored under tarpaulins in the more
705 ramshackle of the plots. At the Fitties, inhabitants used and re-used and swapped
706 and bartered building materials, cobbling together chalets, huts and sheds from old
707 materials, often left over from the war. One writer of a memory postcard recalls:

708

709

Our bungalow is made up of two WWII huts from USAAF Goxhill.

710

Brought to the Fitties in the Fifties. Legend has it that the actor

711

Clarke Gable slept in one when he was based as Goxhill.

712

713 We stayed in this chalet several times with its sign saying: “Did Clark Gable Sleep

714 Here?”

715 This poem, created from words spoken by a long term male resident of the Fitties,

716 now in his seventies, recalls in how he came to live there:

717

718

I’m a cabinet maker, bit

719

of all sorts really. A mate

720

bought a place on 8th Avenue.

721

I came to help him, never

722

went home. People kept saying

723

when you’ve done that can you

724

do me this or can you do me

725

that? In two years I’d enough

726

to buy my own. You bought ‘em

727

from the owners then, you bought

728

‘em as seen, everything in. We knew

729

it were used in the War, billeted

730

to soldiers, nothing more.

731

There’s always something

732

you need to do that you’ve

733

never done before.

734

735 This use of readily available materials *ad hoc*, as Joanne Lee notes, “is about doing736 something with what you’ve got, and doing something *now* – not waiting for the

737 perfect time in a perfect future where perfect materials and perfect tools are

738 available” (Lee, 2010, p 6). Lee’s essay draws on Jencks and Silver’s (1972) book on

739 *adhocism* and argues that British allotment sheds and the Humberston Fitties,740 themselves, were precursors of the idea of “*retrieval adhocism*” a term coined by

741 Jencks and applied to the 1960s and 1970s counterculture and hippy communes

742 (Lee, 2010). She notes that “for Jencks it is a particularly democratic kind of

743 creativity, in which one fashions one's personal environment from impersonal
744 subsystems that already exist." (Lee, 2010, p.1)

745

746 This adhocist approach became so highly valued that the council attempted to
747 institutionalise it in the "Chalet Design Guide" (1997) published just after the
748 declaration of conservation status. This document specified how homes are to be
749 repaired or altered, declaring that "[d]esigns will be expected to show individuality,
750 diversity of appearance, a mixture of dimensions and volumes," that "recycled
751 materials and those from sustainable sourced resources will be encouraged" and
752 that "it is the uniformity of mass produced material which should be avoided" (North
753 East Lincolnshire, 1997). At first it seems a trifle ironic that such a document should
754 exist, but the language reveals that it is not just for their quaint aesthetic appeal that
755 we value these settlements, but for their attitude to materials, for their emphasis on
756 sustainability and recycling in place long before these terms were so commonly
757 employed.

758

759 Building work on the Fitties is collaborative, individualistic and creative, often
760 merging the practical with the decorative or artistic, and frequently involving found
761 objects, objects other people dump, leave to collect, or which wash up on the beach.
762 Talking with one ex-coalminer about his spectacular display of flowers and surreal
763 objects in front of his house, he assured us that every single object was salvaged.
764 Gesticulating at the lions; pillars; squirrels; wishing wells; mushrooms; canons;
765 footballers; balls; pots; flowers and stones, he said, "Everything's thrown away, even
766 the flowers. All this stuff here's what people are throwing away." The flowers were

767 discarded by council gardeners as they replaced one display with another along local
768 promenades and roundabouts. His own display brought all materials together in an
769 equality that could be read one and the same time as a satirical take on taste, but
770 also a radical respect for these objects as on an equal level regardless of origin, not
771 just their pasts as human objects, but their own individual entities as beings, be they
772 plastic or stone, wood or plant, officially living or dead.

773

774 Recycling principles extend to all elements of life, including history. As is implied
775 here, there's much we can learn for the future from looking into the history of
776 places, from layering into our artistic fieldwork a sense of individual and collective
777 pasts, as well as archival local researches. This process, which runs parallel to the
778 painting, drawing, writing and listening that takes place in the field itself, is akin to
779 deep-mapping processes as advocated by Pearson and Shanks (2001). They call upon
780 us "to record and represent the grain and patina of place and landscape "through
781 juxtapositions and interpretations of the historical and the contemporary, the
782 political and the poetic, the factual and the fictional, the discursive and the sensual'
783 (p9).

784

785 We attempt to do this in our local exhibitions by showing textual and visual texts
786 from diverse sources. Before it was a plotland, the Fitties was a place where people
787 camped and indeed some older residents still refer to it as a/the camp. This poem is
788 made entirely from phrases used in newspaper reports on early camping at the
789 Fitties before the First World War, as cited by Alan Dowling in *Humberston Fitties:
790 the story of a Lincolnshire plotland*, pp21-3, 29:

791		
792	unwonted animation	attractive incident
793	mass of driftwood	sandhill fires
794	truly Bohemian	alfresco meals
795	water from the spring	summer by summer
796	free and easy	the fun of the thing
797	reading and walking	croquet or tennis
798	wading and gathering	the benefits of outdoor life
799		

800 This poem has been shown next to a painting of a decaying chalet which was soon to
801 be demolished and a new one built on the same site. It demonstrates what
802 characterised life on the pre-war Fitties and reminds us of something of the original
803 essence of the place. In many ways these values (beyond the financial) still survive
804 and we recognise the need for them, hence the revival of the concept and indeed
805 the phrase, "well-being". This word is used in one of our memory cards by a couple
806 who built their place from "demolition timber" after the floods in 1953: "the fitties is
807 part of your soul and well being." Many of the people we talked to had moved to or
808 visited the Fitties in an attempt to restore this sense. Here are the words of one
809 retired owner of a holiday house on the Fitties:

810

811 I only come here
812 when the weather's
813 good. I've been more
814 this year than ever
815 before. My wife's been
816 poorly, throat cancer
817 you know. After all
818 the treatment, the
819 chemo, we came. My
820 travelling days are
821 long gone and the
822 fresh air helps her
823 to breathe easier.
824

825 We can see here the enduring sense of “the benefits of outdoor life.” Is it an
826 anachronism that the Fitties is still here or is the fact that it is, and that it was
827 designated a conservation area in 1996, reveal what we value? Will these values be
828 undermined or upheld by the current ownership? For how long will the Fitties
829 survive?

830

831 **“restored my faith in nature & mankind”**: Fitties futures and the value of “nature”
832

833 The pre-war phrases in the poem cited above emphasise how intertwined the
834 “natural/cultural” past and present of this landscape is, thus eroding away at binary
835 ways of thinking about place as predominantly “natural” or “cultural”, “rural” or
836 “non-rural” (Casey 1993, Haraway 2003). Robert Macfarlane refers to this,
837 acknowledging when you are in a landscape that might be termed ‘wild,’ “the human
838 and the wild cannot be partitioned.” (MacFarlane, 2007, p 127) He situates this
839 discussion, in part, in the story of plotlands now deceased:

840

841 North of me here in Essex, I knew, were the so-called ‘plotland’ woods
842 of Laindon and Thundersley: young woods that had sprung up on land
843 that had been built on in the late nineteenth century, and then again
844 during the great slump in land prices of the inter-war years. Street after
845 street of bungalows, many of them self-built, had rotted back into the
846 ground, and the trees had returned – native oak, ash and hornbeam –
847 and with them had come the creatures. (MacFarlane, 2007, p 282)

848

849 Laindon is now a nature reserve, its one remaining chalet preserved as a museum.⁸

850 Unlike plotlands like Peacehaven which have been largely built up or developed,

851 Laindon has been “re-wilded.” Re-wilding is of course a controversial subject in

852 today's environmental politics (see for example Monbiot 2013). For MacFarlane the
853 possible futures evoked by places such as Laindon may be sad on one level, but on
854 another they contain hope for our over-stretched and crowded island:

855

856 Abandoned places such as these provide us not only with images of the
857 past but also with visions of the future. As the climate warms, and as
858 human populations begin to fall, increasing numbers of settlements will
859 be abandoned. Inland drought and rising sea-levels on the coasts will
860 force exoduses. And wildness will return to these forsaken places.

861 Vegetable and faunal life will reclaim them. (MacFarlane, 2007 p. 282)

862

863 As we argued above, this is a one possible, perhaps ultimately probable, future for
864 the Fitties, situated as it is in an area where all land has been "reclaimed," or
865 perhaps borrowed is a better word, from the sea. For the present however, the
866 Fitties will not be re-wilded. It is hard to believe that Tingdene, whose company
867 manufacture and sell off-the-peg homes, will resist the temptation to populate the
868 Fitties site, whether slowly by stealth or more wholeheartedly, with their own
869 products. These will not of course be the classic self-built homes created from local
870 resources with local and individualistic identity. Already this tendency towards
871 "blandscape" creeps into the replacement chalets we see on some of the empty
872 plots that arise on the Fitties when chalets decay and collapse or are taken down.
873 We memorialised these in paintings and poems of some chalets on the brink of
874 demolition.

875

876 Place figure 4 here Judith Tucker *Truly Bohemian*, 2016 Oil on Canvas 36" x 48"

877

878

879 The names of Tingedene products reveal the inspirations and aspirations appealed
880 to: Kudos; Hunting Lodge; Country Lodge; Dolben Lodge and Regency Classic.

881 Interestingly the places that make up the names of some of these products also

882 reveal associations far from Northern British seaside towns and very far indeed from

883 the Northern cities where most of the Fitties dwellers hail from: Kensington; Alpine

884 Lodge; Tresco; Savannah; Havana; Valetta and Arcadia. Tarlo has worked with the

885 names of Fitties chalets and some of them are not so far from these in their fanciful

886 nature but there is a vital difference between making and naming your own fantasy

887 retreat and having one manufactured and named for you. We are reminded of the

888 quaint booklet on Fitties style cited above: "it is the uniformity of mass produced

889 material which should be avoided."

890

891 Tarlo collected and played "name games" with these names, grouping them into

892 little four-line poems based around principles of sound and sense. Yes, we saw

893 aspirations, though these could often be read with a pinch of salt in context:

894

895 Tudor Cottage
896 The White House
897 Cherry-Wood Chalet
898 Le Chateau

899

900 Other names were somewhat humbler in association; references to cabins, dens,

901 shacks and cottages are common:

902

903 Doric
904 The Hut
905 The Little Haven

906 Hideaway

907

908 Many names are deeply personal and declarative of ownership:

909 Ann's Den

910 Ellie's Place

911 Eth's Den

912 Grandad's

913

914 Others, such as "Davlins," "Janeric" and "GerryMyra" are testimonies to love, the

915 chalet representing a fused entity, a shared dream place.

916

917 In one way, it seems a shame to unpick the associations of these name groupings

918 here especially when this causes us to neglect the sonic games also being played in

919 their composition. When exhibited interspersed amongst Tucker's smaller, unevenly

920 sized paintings of chalets and surrounding combination of "wild" foliage and planted

921 shrubs, these poems tell their own story draw forth a sense of what people value.

922 They emphasise the individualism of people who live on and visit the Fitties, an

923 individualism balanced with a strong sense of community that still exists and is

924 referenced by many Fitties' people, though some speak of it being eroded in more

925 recent times.

926

927 Returning to our environmental theme, many Fitties names simply evoke the

928 peaceful associations of being near nature. In particular, the sea just over the dunes

929 is often referenced:

930

931 Sea Breeze

932 Sea Way

933 Seachelles

934 Samphire

935

936 The importance of the seaside location cannot be denied as the resident who refers
937 to its “primal” qualities above suggests. One or two also reference the more-than-
938 human creatures that inhabit our world

939

The Foxhole

940

The Willow

941

Mole Hill Bank

942

Swallows Nest

943

944 Timothy Morton may have argued in his 2007 book *Ecology Without Nature:*
945 *Rethinking Environmental Aesthetics* that the word “nature” with all its Romantic
946 baggage must “wither away.” (Morton, 2007, p 1) As artists and writers engaged in
947 the “environmental arts and humanities” we may agree, but we must not forget the
948 discourse of the world we are living in where the word flourishes and is mobilised
949 daily for ever-more-complex eco-ethical debates and purposes. “The State of
950 Nature” reports brought out by leading wildlife organisations in the U.K. firmly
951 employ it from the title onwards and provide invaluable information for activists and
952 academics.

953

954 The word “nature” is used by many Fitties dwellers, including the woman (who
955 describes herself as “a girl from Brum”) whose words are cited in our sub-title here:
956 “restored my faith in nature & mankind”.. There are conservationists on the Fitties,
957 declared and undeclared and certainly unacknowledged, the planters of trees, the
958 installers of handwritten notices about slowing for hedgehogs, the secret feeders of
959 foxes. There is often a poignant contrast between the animal-shaped ornaments in
960 the gardens and the creatures living there. On one visit we glimpsed a fox darting in

961 front of a stone crocodile dressed in England football regalia. The cement squirrel in
962 the painting *We were all close around here* looks up quizzically at the large England
963 flag.

964

965 We were struck by the affection and support of the wildlife on the Fitties and
966 adjacent coast. One older man told us of the triple roof on his building - as each one
967 failed, the next owner placed another one over the top. Now the spaces between
968 are full of nesting birds - "We don't disturb them" he said, "they were here before
969 us". Others are members of The Woodland Trust and the RSPB (Royal Society for the
970 Protection of Birds) and attempt to interest them in the land on and around the
971 Fitties. One of these women was active in planting on empty plots to prevent them
972 becoming dumps, and in forming "community gardens." Since Tingdene took over, a
973 tree that she planted in an empty plot next to hers, was threatened by the company
974 but was saved by a community protest. Will it one day be replaced by a Tingdene
975 "park home" or "holiday lodge"?

976

977 It is early days to judge the new owners, but it is hard to believe that this private
978 ownership will be a completely positive step either for the Fitties people, the
979 conservation status or the broader SSI status of the coastline. Perhaps there has
980 been an opportunity missed. What other different possible futures might this
981 creative, practice-led, community engaged work allow us to imagine? After all, Colin
982 Ward is well known as a pre-cursor of the transition movement with his concerns
983 about the unequal distribution of land and the need for sustainable housing. What
984 might have happened if we extended the notion of adhocism, "the doing something

985 with what you've got now" to the way we think and make communities as well as
986 how we make paintings and write about these areas? Might it be that there is more
987 at stake here than nostalgia for mid-century utopianism? Might there be more at
988 stake than a sanctuary for ex-miners, a way that a few oddbods might eek out an
989 existence? Like Climate camps, like the allotment movement, might we see in this
990 humble patch of land surrounded by the global infrastructure of various kinds of
991 energies, of trade, of tourism the possibility of recognising and understanding the
992 need for vast, organisational changes, in wider politics, in everyday life, and in
993 environmental attitudes and actions.

994

995 Alongside, and perhaps more important than our attempts to engage people in some
996 aesthetic appreciation of our work and pleasure in their own creativity and
997 memories, lie a series of place-based and eco-ethical concerns. Through exhibition
998 and workshop, we attempt to increase, or more commonly unearth, affective and
999 effective understanding and value of place. This includes the desire to consider the
1000 conservation of local environments and stimulate debate about wider global issues,
1001 in this case, heritage and tourism, flood risk, climate change and energy politics. It's
1002 on the small and local scale though that there is also impact. In an informal
1003 conversation with a resident who was setting up the community interest company,
1004 we asked if we could assist in any way. She replied: "You've done your bit with the
1005 exhibition and talking to everyone. People have come together and stopped arguing
1006 as much". The responses to our evaluative questionnaire from local people at our
1007 most local exhibition at the Cleethorpes Discovery Centre, about a mile from the
1008 Fitties corroborates this: "Visiting and listening to the stories. It has been a stunning

1009 piece of work and benefited so many with pride and enjoyment” and “Deeply
1010 satisfying depiction of a special area. I am not a Fitties resident but a frequent visitor
1011 that recognises its special atmosphere and status. Long may it be as it is. This
1012 exhibition in its various forms is a major contribution to making this possible.”
1013 Perhaps, the following more modest response, is all the more poignant for its
1014 understated commentary on an enhancement of an everyday experience, and a
1015 fitting way to conclude: “Really interesting combination of images and words, a lot to
1016 reflect on. I will think a little differently of the Fitties now when I walk the dog each
1017 Sunday morning through there.”

1018

1019 **Acknowledgements**

1020

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1023 east coast; the Discovery Centre Cleethorpes; Grimsby Fishing Heritage Centre and
1024 to Daniel Eltingham (Research Assistant) for collating data on the project.

1025

1026

1027 **Endnotes**

1028 ^{1 1} Plotlands can be briefly defined as places where individuals have historically self-
1029 built holiday houses. There is a more detailed account of their history in the second
1030 section of this paper, “plotland, behind land, edgeland.” In addition see our journal
1031 article Tarlo, H. and J. Tucker, J *'Off path, counter path': contemporary walking*
1032 *collaborations in landscape, art and poetry*. *Critical Survey*, 29 (1). pp. 105-132 for a
1033 more detailed account of our working processes.

1034 ² The work from this project has been shown locally in Cleethorpes, Grimsby and
 1035 Brigg, nationally in Sheffield, Cambridge, London and the Isle of Wight and
 1036 internationally in Yantai, Nanjing and Tianjin in China, as well as being discussed in
 1037 Brussels and Krakow.

1038 ³ For a more detailed discussion of this aspect of our collaboration see our book
 1039 chapter Tarlo, H and J. Tucker, J “Drawing closer”: an ecocritical consideration of
 1040 collaborative, cross-disciplinary practices of walking, writing, drawing and exhibiting
 1041 in In: Barry P. and W. Welstead, (eds.) *Extending ecocriticism : crisis, collaboration*
 1042 *and challenges in the environmental humanities*. (Manchester, Manchester
 1043 University Press) pp 47-69.

1044 ⁴The photographer Annabel McCourt joined us in this aspect of the enterprise and
 1045 contributed photographic portraits of interiors of chalets and people to the project
 1046 and these were exhibited alongside the other work.

1047 ⁵There are exceptions, as this memory postcard demonstrates: “Made the ‘girl’ from
 1048 B’rum welcome & restored my faith in nature & mankind” (B’rum is slang for
 1049 Birmingham).

1050 ⁷John Walton, 1983, and 2000 has written extensively on the social history of the
 1051 British seaside and Colin Ward’s *Arcadia for All* explores the plotland movement in

1052 ⁸Footnote <http://www.essexrecordofficeblog.co.uk/tag/plotlands/>

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