CHANCING ON SCILLY:

How a brief encounter became inspirational

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ABSTRACT: This article outlines how a brief encounter with the Isles of Scilly in April 1980 became inspirational for my engagement with Island Studies in the early 2000s. My visit to Scilly and subsequent reflections on it led me to recognise a) the mutability of islands, despite their apparent solidity and fixity; b) the extent to which archipelagos can contain diverse components (despite their apparent similarity in cartographic representations); and c) the centre-periphery relationships that elements of infrastructure can impose upon them. In terms of my particularly idiosyncratic route to such realisations, the article acknowledges the influence of audio-visual media and its representations of place in my perceptions and thinking and reiterates these as cues in the narrative I present. Interwoven with these elements, the article engages with the field of Memory Studies and with the concept of recollective ecologies by exploring the processes, glitches and mismatches involved in memory construction, and by the later ascription of experiences recalled within this as inspirational. This discussion highlights how the identification of any experience as inspirational derives from two distinct elements: 1) irreproducible physical events and impressions that occur in particular places at particular times; and 2) multiple and variably integrated recollections of these that occur in various mental processes and/or representational media. Acknowledgement of this complexity does not serve to undermine the potency of inspirational encounters but rather serves to highlight the processes of their formation, maintenance and activation.

KEY WORDS: Archipelagos, inspiration, researcher memory, audio-visual media, Scilly, Tresco

I. Introduction

In terms of the schema outlined in the Introduction to this issue (Hayward & Evans, 2026), my experiences of the Isles of Scilly inspired me by "evoking" ideas that "transcended" my everyday concepts of islands and, much later, provided me with an "approach motivation" (Oleynick, Thrash, LeFlew et al., 2014) to pursue work in Island Studies. With regard to the inspiration involved, the stimulus was "unexpected," "individual," and was perceived highly "positively" by me (Gibson & Kool, 2019, p2), even though there was no obvious avenue for me to deploy this enthusiasm in the years immediately following the encounter. In writing this article I initially struggled to bridge the complex nature of memory – and memory of place, in particular (Sutton, 2020, 2024) – and the process through which threads of memory weave together to create inspiration. Mick Smith's exposition of the concept of "recollective ecologies" (2017) provided a valuable pathway between the two by emphasising humans as inhabiting:

> *a phenomenal world where certain past experiences re-appear, bidden or unbidden, to inform and change our physical and mental relations in the here and now. These rhizomatic or fluidic intrusions of temporally distinct past events that re-present themselves, comprise, but can also compromise, our current selfunderstandings. They might be thought of as the partial re-surfacing, the temporary liminality, of what Gadamer refers to as our effective historical consciousness, the way that the past always informs and delimits our interpretative (and self-interpretative) horizons* (Smith, 2017, p. 2).

This offered another way of understanding inspiration as the result of "complex" and "often unpredictable" memory processes "experienced through anastomosing inter-relations and imbrications" (Smith, 2017, p.3) – i.e. where the "anastomosing" (i.e. the joining of 'strands' or 'chains') depends on complex factors and is open to varying inflections over various durations. In this context, it is worth emphasising that the archetypal 'aha' or 'Eureka' moment, when inspiration suddenly strikes,[1] is only one form of inspiration, with others occurring in more cumulative manners.

Notwithstanding the complexities noted above, I present my recollections of Scilly and the impressions and revelations it delivered via a relatively conventional travel narrative format that involves recounting a journey and providing information about the geography, environment, history and socio-cultural nature of communities that the author-traveller encountered. I have chosen this format for several reasons. The first is that this is an appropriate framework to present encounters that resulted from exploratory, recreational travel rather than intentional research. Second, this format is one that I have grown familiar with in my research on colonial era islands (in the Western Pacific and elsewhere), where such traveller accounts (whatever their limitations and unreliablities) are often key (or, even, the *only*) sources on the environments and societies of particular areas before trained researchers began work in them. Indeed, my various articles and books on performing arts cultures in the Whitsunday archipelago, Lord Howe Island and Norfolk Island (Hayward, 1999, 2001 & 2006, respectively) would not have been possible without such sources.

While the traveller account format is not one conventionally used in academic writing, it provides a skeleton for me to question and embellish in various ways. Henes and Murray's 2016 anthology *Travel writing, visual culture, and form 1760-1900* provides nuanced insights into the significant body of work written in the centuries in question and identifies the preconceptions played out in such work, the value of impressions gained and the data presented in these sources. Referring to the more effective and insightful work produced in the genre, Murray (2016, p.6) has commented that:

> *There has always been a certain amount of unease and anxiety about how best to mould the quotidian, often repetitious, but occasionally chaotic experience of travel into digestible literary or visual narratives. The nineteenth-century travel writer cannibalised other modes of literary, geographical and scientific writing, while simultaneously forging experimental, innovative and dynamic forms in the struggle to represent the contingent realities of the road* (2016, p.6).

[1] See Ovington, Saliba, Moran et al. (2018) and Prevenost & Reber (2024) for further discussion.

These are lofty aspirations to live up to and I have endeavoured to make my texts as lively as possible within similar parameters.

I should also acknowledge the role that audiovisual forms and sensibilities played in the account I provide. Indeed, the process of recalling the events and phenomena described here very much involved a cinematic 'mind's eye' and, thereby, an imaginatively rendered (re)visualisation of the original experiences. For me, at least, the process of setting down an account in print, accompanied by photographs and maps, was akin to the editing of a film, juxtaposing different scenes and sequences in order to create a narrative that includes different elements. In what follows, I both provide reflective observations that I was not capable of grasping or articulating at the time of my travels (but have come to awareness of in the decades since) and accounts of memory mismatches and inadequacies that arose in the writing of this text that complicated my recollection of my original travel experiences as inspirational. These serve to emphasise the subsequent accretion and embellishment of memories and cross-association of impressions and data sources as the inspirational node for my subsequent intellectual trajectory (rather than the original encounter with the archipelago alone).

II. Context

In 1980 I was taking Cinema Studies courses[2] part-time while working in the production department of an advertising agency in London's Covent Garden, my first full-time job since graduating from University College Cardiff with a degree in English Literature in 1978. It was not a career path that I had anticipated commencing, and (unsurprisingly) I found the agency, and the advertising world in general, soulless and politically confounding places to work in. Cinema Studies was a blissful escape. At that time, at least, with the British Film Institute running a Diploma course in conjunction with the University of London,[3] a heady world of Marxist-semiotic-psychoanalytic-feminist discourse and debate unfurled during evenings in basements in Soho's Dean Street and in the auditoria and bars of the National Film Theatre and independent cinemas such as The Electric. At this time, I developed an enduring interest in the British documentary movement of the 1930s and 1940s[4] and the work of feature film directors influenced by it. Michael Powell's *The Edge of the World* (1937), a fictionalised account of the mass evacuation of St Kilda, west of the Outer Hebrides (which was actually shot on Foula in the Shetland Islands[5]), also fascinated me and continues to do so.[6]

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[2] These were actually identified as *Film* Studies courses, but I have referred to them here as *Cinema* Studies since the former term is sometimes understood to refer to film *production* studies rather than the critical analysis of completed texts that I undertook on the courses concerned.

[3] This Diploma was run through the University's Department of Extra-Mural Studies, which offered a range of often innovative courses in subjects such as cinema, art history, women's studies, history etc. that were delivered to adults as low-cost evening courses. The DEMS was subsequently affiliated with the University's Birkbeck College in 1988. See Brake (2024) for a historical account of the University of London's innovative adult education programs.

[4] Which actually began in 1929 with John Grierson's hour-long silent film *Drifters*, about Britain's North Sea herring fleet.

[5] After he was denied permission to film there by its owner.

[6] Indeed, the lingering impact of the film led me to visit the (actual) St Kilda in 2022 and to write a reflective theoretical account of remoteness, pandemics and Atlantic aquapelagality cued by the film and by my presence there published as Hayward (2024).

Despite its predominant two-dimensionality, cinema is innately involved with the construction and maintenance of spaces imagined as three dimensional by the viewer. The meta-space of linear narrative fiction and documentary is a conceptual one known as the diegesis. The diegesis can be defined as the coherent world of a narrative. Diegetic coherence is key to the operation of realism in cinema and remains its dominant mode (despite a century of avant-garde experimentation). This involves a number of aspects including the presentation of coherent spaces assembled from multiple shots. This assembly allows for sequences shot on studio sets (for instance) to be edited together in such a way that they credibly represent complex but non-existent spaces. Similarly, broader locations, such as islands, can be represented through a combination of external and/or aerial shots that credibly indicate an island. These shots can be of an actual, singular island (and thereby represent what they appear to represent), as in films such as Roberto Rossellini's *Stromboli* (1950), shot on the island in question. Other films create fictional islands through assembling images of seas, coastlines, wild spaces and built environments. Examples of the latter include *The Wicker Man* (Robin Hardy, 1973), set on a fictional Scottish island that was assembled from sequences shot in various locations around the west of Scotland, and *The Mermaid Chair* (Steven Schachter, 2006), ostensibly set on a South Carolina barrier island but actually shot around the coast of southern British Columbia. Cinema's ability to create credible locales on screen also led me to consider how humans create cultural landscapes in spatial locations; a line of thought that, in turn, led me to embrace the Japanese concept of *shima* (an insular cultural landscape such as an island) when I became aware of it through Jun'ichiro Suwa's championing of the concept in the mid-2000s.[7]

One island that was prominent on British TV and in cinema newsreels in 1964-70, and again in 1974-76, [8] was St Mary's, the main island in the Scilly archipelago at the far south-western corner of the United Kingdom (Figures 1 & 2). It appeared onscreen each summer in these years due to British Prime Minister Harold Wilson's habit of taking holidays there in the course of which he would hold press conferences, dragging journalists and TV crews away from London and providing colourful (and usually sunny) 'Silly Season'[9] images for the press and broadcast media. One of the earliest items to cover his visits was a 9 minute-long Pathe News[10] feature entitled *Mr Wilson in Scilly Isles*, made in 1966.[11] Its opening sequence includes picturesque vistas from around the island and images of 'colourful' locals in the street before introducing the Prime Minister as he heads down to the Quay where he meets a local fisherman bearing crabs. After some cutaways to aerial views of the islands, the Prime Minister travels by boat to a second island, St Agnes, and has a scenic picnic before returning to St Mary's. Whatever its intentions, the film functioned as an extended promotion for 'scenic Scilly' and such material at very least coincided with – and probably contributed to –

[7] Such as his eponymous paper at the Trajectories event at the University of Hong Kong in 2005. I subsequently chose the name *Shima* for the new journal of island cultural studies that I launched in 2006 in collaboration with co-editor Marea Mitchell. The opening article in the first issue was Suwa's presentation and elaboration of the concept of *shima* (Suwa, 2006).

[8] For an interesting perspective on these visits, see *Professional Security Magazine* (2025).

[9] The term 'Silly Season' applies to the mid-summer when 'hard' news stories are scarce and when more trivial items attract attention.

[10] British cinemas often ran short news features (mostly made by the Pathe News company) before feature films until 1970.

[11] Online at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n5xJXNk7nhQ

a substantial increase in tourism to the Isles in this period.[12] These colourful scenes disappeared from our screens in 1976 when Wilson resigned and Jim Callaghan took over as prime minister, leading Britain into the famous 'Winter of Discontent' of 1978-79, when many facets of the country were impacted by sustained industrial action. Discontent with Labour's management of the economy resulted in the Conservative Party, led by Margaret Thatcher, winning the 1979 national elections and shifting the political climate by introducing a range of privatisation and anti-trade union measures.

Early in 1980, as the impact of the Thatcher Government's policies was becoming increasingly apparent, and as a grindingly long British winter retained its grip on the capital, I sought to escape the cold and to get a change of scene. A friend felt similarly, and we looked at travel options together. We were both on low incomes, so jetting off to Mallorca, Morocco or the Greek Islands was out of the question.[13] Instead, we decided to head for the Isles of Scilly since meteorological data told us it was likely to be the warmest spot in the UK in early Spring. My friend David Burles, a professional cartographer and experienced camper, was also a good travel organiser and we departed for Scilly on Friday April 18th.



Figure 1 – The Isles of Scilly in relation to the south-western tip of Cornwall (distance from Land's End to Scilly, c50 kms) (David Burles, 2025).

[12] Causality is often difficult to ascertain and statistical records of tourism numbers in the Isles in the 1960s and 1970s are limited but there is a common perception that tourism peaked in the period that Wilson's visits took place and were featured in national media and began to decline after he stood down from office. Appropriately, in this regard, the majority of visitors in the peak period appear to have been British.

[13] Times have changed, nowadays budget flights to various Mediterranean destinations would be considerably cheaper options than a standard cost return rail fare London-Penzance + return ferry or helicopter fare to Scilly.

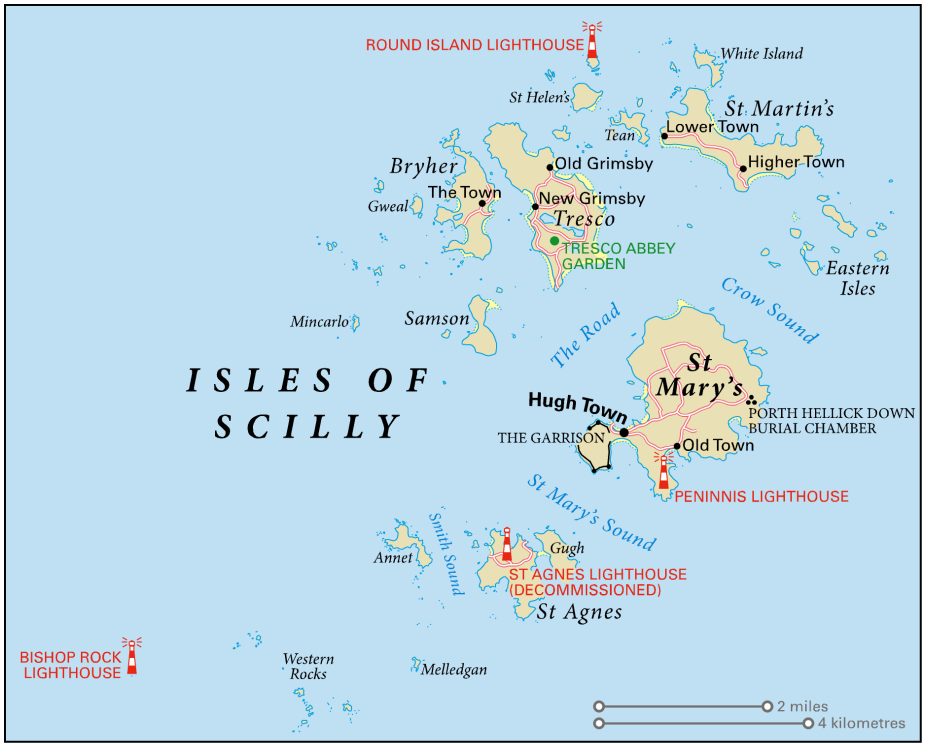


Figure 2 – Isles of Scilly (David Burles, 2025).

The account of and reflections on aspects of our trip to Scilly that follow were written in tandem with the introduction to this theme issue of *Shima*, with each informing the other. Reflecting points made in the issue's introduction, this article draws on – and, indeed, *bricolages* – a number of sources, including personal memory, my fellow traveller's memory, brief diary notes,[14] photographic records and press and media materials. Whatever their limitations, consideration of these sources led me to produce the characterisations I offer here. At their most functionally convenient, comparisons of various sources allowed for the corroboration or correction of single accounts. Less conveniently (but, arguably, as productively), they also revealed ambiguities or enigmas that required consideration. My familiarity with these factors was refreshed during initial research for this article when I located my 1980 diary deep in boxes packed decades ago and seldom opened since. Amongst other things, my diary revealed that I had completely forgotten that the final island we visited on the Scilly trip was Bryher. While my Scilly trip took place 45 years ago, and my lapse might be forgiven, this memory gap was salutary and impelled me to check my recollections as completely as possible against all other data. David Burles' generous location and digitisation of a batch of the photos he took during our visit in 1980[15] was also instructive. I didn't recall having seen these since he showed them to me in May 1980 after they returned from the

[14] I specify "diary notes," rather than "field notes," as my written record of the Scilly trip comprised single line entries made in a slim format 'pocket diary' that only allowed a maximum of 18-20 words per day. Due to restrictions of space, these entries were flatly factual – e.g., "Boat trip to Tresco, back to St Mary's, party in evening, camped out" on April.

[15] Five of which are reproduced in this article as Figures 5 and 7-9.

developers. The proved valuable as information sources and, as discussed below, also disrupted my sense of the accuracy of various memories. In line with Mannik (2011), they also served to elicit memories of particular moments and locales that had not surfaced during my preliminary musing for this article.

Notwithstanding the above, whatever problems there may be with the corpus of impressions and data available to me in writing this article, these types of corpuses *are* often the basis of such writing. In this manner, the narrative I present here is ripe for deconstruction and critique and for the identification of conceptual tics, flaws, aporia and fallacies, should any scholar think that such an enterprise would be productive.

III. The unfolding

When I began working in Island Studies in the early 2000s one of its clichés was that the experience of travelling to islands was both a key part of island research and an insightful experience in its own right. Hearing other island researchers' experiences tended to reinforce this characterisation and I'll begin by sharing my own here. In April 1980 my journey to Scilly began in London, around 11.30pm, as David and I boarded the overnight train from Paddington to Penzance. We had anticipated sleeping during the journey but, as most of our fellow passengers in the carriage also experienced, the hard and uncomfortable seats militated against that. The journey seemed endless and as the dawn became faintly apparent through the train's windows, we were achy and fatigued. Arriving in Penzance, the second stage of our travel commenced. While we could have taken the *Scillonian* ferry over to Scilly, we stretched our meagre budgets and went by helicopter instead, a form of transport neither of us had tried before. The helicopter (a Sikorsky S-61, to be precise), took about 24 passengers, and the trip was scheduled to last about 20 minutes.

The experience of being on a helicopter was novel enough to raise our spirits and energy levels, but these soon became even more elevated. After about 6 or 7 minutes in the air, the pilot came over the intercom and said (something like) "Ladies and gentlemen, we have a treat for you today, we are just about to fly over *The Golden Hinde*, in full sail, so we will drop down and give you a look." The copter then banked down to the left and we leaned in to the windows to look down on a replica of Sir Francis Drake's galleon, which he captained on a circumnavigation of the world in 1577-1580. But the announcement I just quoted wasn't quite what I recalled. Writing the first draft of this article, I had it firmly in mind that the captain had announced the galleon below us as a replica of Tudor monarch Henry VIII's flagship *The Mary Rose* (which sank in the Solent in in 1545). But, in the course of fact-checking my recollections, I discovered that no functional replica of *The Mary Rose* had ever been constructed and, therefore, could not have been sailing beneath us. Unless the captain had announced the wrong ship, my memory was at fault. Online research revealed that a replica of the *Golden Hinde* had been sailing in Cornish waters at the time of our visit and was, in all likelihood, the galleon we had seen. While the identity of the replica sailing ship concerned is of no consequence to the main focus of this article, the problematisation of a memory that I had held confidently and had related on various occasions over the years was salutary.

Returning to our airborne encounter with the replica galleon, looking out of the window we realised that we were surprisingly close to its upper masts and I, at least, experienced what

in cinematic terms might be described as a 'syntagmatic match-cut'[16] that jumped centuries (much like the transition between a falcon flying from a falconer's arm to a Spitfire fighter in the sky over Kent in 1944 in Powell and Pressburger's WW2 film *A Canterbury Tale*). It was, to say the least, an intriguing experience. We had visited a temporal 'somewhere else' triggered by a replica before even touching down at our destination.

Minutes after our out-of-time/in-time encounter, we landed on St Mary's on a tarmac pad set next to a daisy-strewn field. Declining the offer of a minibus shuttle down to the island's major settlement, Hugh Town, we instead walked down a lane bounded by verges rich with flowers in blissfully warm Spring sunshine. To maintain the rolling cinematic allusions, it was as if we had landed in Summer Isle, the fabulous – and fabulously weird – location of Robert Hardy's 1973 cult folk-horror film, *The Wicker Man*. But no white clad maidens, costumed men or corn dolls appeared and, instead, the island was characterised by a relaxed quietude. Suffering from sleep deprivation, we hadn't enough energy to do more than check into a boarding house and explore Hugh Town (then population, c900). Even at a slow pace, it didn't take long.

Determined to make the most of our nine-day stay in the archipelago, we set off the next day to circumnavigate St Mary's, mostly following the coastal path but venturing off to see places of interest at various points. Twenty-five years later, our circular route came back to me when I became embroiled in an online discussion with the emerging luminaries of Island Studies over what constituted a "small island" in the context of a group I was involved in establishing entitled the Small Island Cultures Research Initiative (SICRI). Different people offered different metrics. One that I remember defined a small island as one whose coast could be walked around by a reasonably fit adult in a single day. St Mary's and, indeed, all the other islands in the Scilly archipelago, fitted this metric. Indeed, one advantage of the smallness of the archipelago's islands was they were eminently explorable in the limited time we had on them. The path around St Mary's was 16 kilometres in length and being young and relatively fit we made it easily, returning to Hugh Town before sunset, where we ate and waited for cover of darkness so that we could go and 'wild camp'[17] somewhere nearby without being discovered. Things didn't quite pan out that way. The weather changed and became squally, combining sharp gusts of wind with short, intense showers. This made it unappealing to stumble around and set up the tent in the dark and to have to sleep in it. Over a beer at the historic Mermaid Inn[18] on the Quay, we hit on a novel solution that, again, took us 'somewhere else'. On our walk, we had encountered Porth Hellick Down's Bronze Age burial chamber, a large, low, turf-roofed structure on the eastern side of the island (Figure 3) and had looked inside. Recalling that there was ample space inside to lay out two sleeping bags, we retraced the path to it, entered it and slept, snug and dry, until dawn. As should go without saying, now, as a mature researcher with a concern to preserve archaeological

[16] A syntagmatic match cut pairs two images that show similar shapes and/or movements in manners whose juxtaposition suggests significant transitions in time or theme. The image of a bone spinning in the air after being struck by a primitive human that cuts to a spinning space station in the opening part of *2001: A Space Odyssey* (Stanley Kubrick, 1968) is probably the best-known example in cinema.

[17] The term 'wild camping' appears to have originated in the 1970s to describe unauthorised camping on privately owned land. This was an illegal practice in the United Kingdom in the 1980s (although it has since been legalised in Scotland and in Dartmoor National Park).

[18] Although I don't recall reflecting on mermaids or trying to establish whether there was any local mermaid folklore on Scilly, my attraction to the venue probably reflected an enduring interest in mermaid folklore on the Cornish mainland that led directly to my researching mermaid folklore and medialore in the late 2010s and early 2020s and producing various publications on the topic.

remains, I wouldn't contemplate or condone our actions. But the novel experience, in what we considered a remote location, so soon after circling in the air over the replica galleon in full sail, gave us a sense of being immersed in and in touch with deep history. Indeed, the landscape we were exploring seemed temporally charged. Years later, I read Katharine Sawyer's memorably titled volume *Isles of the Dead?* which discussed the Porth Hellick Down chamber and similar structures on St Mary's. Intriguingly, she characterised them as a sign of the emergence of a particular Scillonian identity at a time, around c2000-c1250 BCE, when the archipelago was a single island with a large central plain that was beginning to feel the impact of rising sea levels.



Figure 3 - Porth Hellick Down's Bronze Age burial chamber (photograph by 'Sam', Trip Advisor, June 2022).

The Isles of Scilly are particularly interesting for researchers considering the likely impacts of anthropogenic climate change and related rising sea levels as they have been subject to the latter phenomenon over a protracted period, only taking their present shape around 400-500 CE, and experiencing further encroachments since. While I was unaware of this at the time, this had produced one of the most notable features of the islands (to my eyes at least), the phenomenon of stone walls marking field boundaries continuing across beaches into the sea. The illogic of this as an intentional construction practice only suggested one solution to us, a historical inundation that had changed the borders of land and ocean. I recall David and I discussing the myth of Lyonesse[19] on our walks. The story concerns a sudden inundation of a plain that once lay between the tip of Cornwall and Scilly. Imagining such a plain affected our perception of the vistas we experienced, allowing us to see them as historical *floodscapes* (see the rear of Figure 4, for instance). It also permanently unsettled my perception of the fixity of land-sea relations, although it was decades before I recognised this and engaged with it in any critically reflective manner.

[19] See Nunn & Compatangelo-Soussignan (2024) for discussion.



Figure 4 – David Burles with background of islets and islands suggesting a flooded landscape (photograph by Philip Hayward, April 1980).

As if St Mary's hadn't offered enough stimulation or prompted enough reflections, we made the best of our short visit by taking ferries to other islands on subsequent days. Walking to the Quay on the northside of town also introduced me to another concept that I later became familiar with, that of the archipelagic hub; the centre for ferry routes that channelled passengers and goods through a single locality and, albeit unintentionally, restricted lateral (i.e. 'trans-peripheral'[20]) movement and communication, thereby creating other islands as 'outliers.' In contrast to our high-tech helicopter adventures, the boat trips were decidedly traditional, involving us sitting on benches and rocking over the waves with the boat's engines struggling in rough passages. Stepping ashore on arrival with heavy rucksacks was also interesting, a (now familiar) scramble off the boat while attempting not to fall into the water.

Our second island destination was St Agnes. While Hugh Town had appeared tiny and picturesque to us when we had first arrived there – more like a large village than a regional capital – it grew in retrospective size and status when we disembarked at St Agnes population then about 70, spread across four tiny settlements, Troy Town and the prosaically named Lower Town, Middle Town and High Town. We spent 24 hours there, wild camping overnight on the elevated moorland north-east of Middle Town (Figure 5). The island was less memorable than St Mary's in terms of signs of extended human history but was graced with ample Spring flowers and birds. We slowly walked stretches of the coast and, at one point, pondered the wisdom of trying to cross over to White Island, just to the north of St Martin's, via its tidal causeway. Uncertainty about when the crossing might be accessible, and how long we would have there, deterred us from visiting but, for me, at least, the daily 'islanding' and 'de-islanding' of the islands (to use concepts that I have subsequently become familiar with) was and remains fascinating.

[20] I render this term in inverted commas in recognition of peripherality being a constructed aspect rather than necessary attribute. Ferry routes centred on a single location actively produce centrality by rendering other locales *as* peripheral and, thereby, any contact between them as *trans*-peripheral.



Figure 5 – Our 'wild camp' site on St Agnes (photograph by David Burles, April 1980).

The following day brought a further adventure and further insight into the diversity of archipelagos. My remembering and relating of it also manifested the biggest memory glitch encountered in writing this article and one that illustrates the complexity of memory and data sources and of memory as a pivotal reference point. I reproduce this below, firstly with one (accurate) paragraph in the same font as the main body of my text and then the problematic one in a different one (Bodoni 72) to highlight it.

Setting out early to catch the ferry back to St Mary's, we then transferred to a boat heading to St Agnes (in a process that further underlined the logistical implications of centre-periphery ferry systems). One unanticipated bonus was that the ferry's first destination (on this day, at least), was Bishop Rock at the south-western extremity of the archipelago. The tiny (736 square metre) islet is chiefly remarkable for the lighthouse erected on it and is, we were informed, the smallest island with a built structure on it on the planet. This aspect is apparent in Figure 6 (a promotional image posted online by Visit isles of Scilly), but the lighthouse is even more impressive when glimpsed from the water in a boat riding on the large swells that are far more common than the flat seas its photographer evidently experienced. The sea is around 45 metres deep at the edge of the archipelago and the tower stands 49 metres above the sea floor on a rock that barely broke the surface when construction began. A lighthouse was originally erected on a base of metal piles screwed into the rock in 1847, allowing waves to flow underneath a platform where a light was installed. While this was deemed safer than a conventional lighthouse, given the regular gales and high seas in the area, it was insufficient in that regard, being swept away by storms in 1850, and a conventional granite tower was constructed, becoming operational in 1858 and being reinforced and vertically extended in 1887 (Trinity House, 2025).



Figure 6 – Bishop Rock and its Lighthouse (Visit Isles of Scilly, 2024).

The lighthouse was crewed by three keepers who welcomed both the supplies that the boat had brought and the newspapers or magazines that we were asked to donate to them by the boat's captain. After rummaging through bags, a few publications were found and, together with an assortment of chocolate bars and crisp packets, were transferred up by a basket tied to a line. When the basket reached the top, the keepers waved to us, and we departed. What we didn't know at the time was that the lighthouse was about to enter a new era, being converted to automatic operation and seeing its last crew depart in 1992. Aside from conforming to a national pattern of de-staffing of lighthouses that occurred in the late 20th century, this also ended an era of direct connection between Bishop Rock and St Mary's in that four keepers were employed, three being on shift at any one time and then each departing and being rotated with a fourth who would stay on St Mary's for on-island leisure and recreation before being returned.

Until 7 weeks before writing the current version of this article, I would have held that the core memories underlying the account in the above (Bodoni 72) paragraph – which I had cross referenced with Trinity House historical data on Bishop Rock lighthouse – were unproblematically accurate. In the initial version of the article, written before I received a batch of digitised photos from David that had not seen for 45 years, I included a photo of Bishop Rock lighthouse that I had found online (referred to above as Figure 6). When David sent me his batch of photos, there was both a similar image of the lighthouse to the stock photo I had previously used (Figure 7) and a photograph of goods being pulled up to the lighthouse from a ferry we were passengers on (Figure 8). I consequently placed them alongside each other in the draft of my article as documentary evidence of the encounter described above. After completing the draft, I sent it to David for his comments and to see if my account and the images I had presented sparked any impressions that I could usefully consider and accommodate. One did.

On August 14th 2025 David emailed me a set of comments that included the statement:

> *Also the picture of the landing steps and men is at Round Island (another lighthouse), north of St Helen's, not Bishop Rock! We must have gone to both because I took the picture of Bishop Rock as well. But the steps are definitely Round Island.*

Finding this somewhat confounding, I checked my diary and found a reference to visiting Bishop Rock lighthouse (on April 23rd), confirming the recognition effect I had from the stock photo and from David's similar one. But there was no reference in my diary to our having been to Round Island and having approached its lighthouse. I initially thought that David was mistaken until I checked his photograph against images of Round Island and Bishop Rock that I found via a Google Image search. The photo included here as Figure 7 distinctly resembled other photos of the base of Round Island lighthouse available online. Re-checking my diary there was a reference to our having taken the ferry to St Martin's on April 22nd via an unidentified group of isles that, from ferry routes, would seem to have comprised St Helen's, Teän and Round Island. This lent credence to David's attribution but also raised further issues. If neither he nor I could recall visiting St Helen's, and if my diary made no reference to it, what else may we have collectively forgotten and/or misremembered about the whole Scilly trip? This question intersected with the second paragraph reproduced in Bodoni 72 above. Re-reading it, several points emerged: 1) that the factual detail of the nature and history of Bishop Rock I gave in the first draft seemed accurate and that we *had* visited there; and 2) that my confidence that we had witnessed the hauling up of a basket at Bishop Rock had collapsed and that I now believe that that basket episode had taken place at St Helen's, a location I have no other recollection of or knowledge about. Effectively I had edited together encounters with two locations in a 'mental movie' that I had made some time previously and had retained. This flawed recollection, reminded me that I had revisited the aforementioned 'mental movie' of Bishop Rock in my head in 2015 before I flew by helicopter to South Solitary lighthouse off the coast of eastern Australia to explore and photo-document the locale, leading me to cross-associate the two experiences as abiding impressions of remote island lighthouses.

The fact that neither David nor I could recall visiting Round Island aside from the (now re-assigned) basket-raising incident, was, to say the least, disconcerting. It also illustrated the complexity of comparing your recollections of events with those of others who observed or participated in them with you. The anastomosis involved – which compounds those of one's own memory strands (Smith, 2017, p.2) – produces recollections that are as prone to variance as your own. While your and their recollections may be in accord with each other, this is (in itself) is only an *accordance*, rather than a guarantee of historical veracity. This accordance may be supported by other forms of external record (such as field notes, audio/audio-visual recordings etc.) but might also differ from them, requiring careful interrogation of sources, presumptions and interpretations. Equally, other people's recollections may also conflict with ours in manners that can be productive in creating compound reflections on past incidents and experiences.



Figures 7 and 8 – Bishop Rock lighthouse (left) and basket raising from a ferry at Round Island lighthouse (right) (both photos by David Burles, April 1980).

Returning to the linear travel narrative that provides the core of this section of the article, in comparison to the dramatic appearance of Bishop Rock, St Agnes (population 80, in 1980) appeared more sedate, with a central area comprising hedged fields used for flower bulb farming and a southern heath moor. Of more interest, to me, at least, was the island's 'twinning' with Gugh Island (population 3, in 1980) to its north-west and accessible via a causeway at low tide. Like St Martin's and White Island, the two were elements in a dyad that was broken and reconnected each day. My main memory of our visit was sleeping out in the open (Figure 9), which involved me lying on my back in a hollow on a comfortable bed of Rock Samphires (*Crithmum maritimum*) and staring into a sky dense with stars (due to the lack of light pollution on the island), several decades before dark sky tourism became a recognised activity. Here a different type of memory dissonance arose, although more ambiguous and less destablising than the lighthouse misrecognition described above. Reading my statement about my "main memory" of the island being sleeping under the stars, David commented that his "most enduring memory" of the island was that "we could see Wolf Rock lighthouse across the water winking at us all night". While notably different, these contrasting recollections do not undermine the veracity of either. Reminded by David, I can now dimly recall seeing beams of light from the lighthouse, five kilometres to the south-west of us, but the memory of the bright stars in a velvet black sky is far more vivid for me than the "winking" light that he recalls.



Figure 9 – The author (centre, right) just after having awakened from a night's slumber on soft groundcover on a ledge at St Agnes (photo by David Burles, April 1980).

The following day provided an aspect of the archipelago that does not appear to have been significantly misremembered by us. Singularly amongst the Isles, the whole of Tresco is privately owned or, rather, forms a single property leased to its current occupants, the Dorrien-Smith family, by the Duchy of Cornwall, which owns the freehold over the majority of Scilly.[21] Forewarned that wild camping wasn't tolerated on the island, which operates as an extended resort space, we travelled over for the day from St Mary's (unencumbered by rucksacks for once). I had heard of Tresco and the reputation of its gardens as a centre for exotic plant cultivation but was unprepared for how these operated within the space of the island. The gardens effectively comprised an island-within-an-island. The broader island is sparsely vegetated with granite outcrops and heathland with the garden forming an insular space within it (Figure 10) that both protects its plants and creates a variety of micro-climates. In these senses, the island was a 'place apart' within the Isles of Scilly, and the gardens were a 'place apart' within Tresco. Indeed, the former aspect continues to be promoted, with the island's website currently proclaiming, "Tresco Island: Somewhere else altogether."[22]

Tresco's gardens were created by Augustus Smith, the leasee and administrator ('Lord Proprietor') of the Isles between 1834-1872, and involved terracing, the erection of stone walls and perimeter plantings of Monterey Pines (*Pinus radiata)* and Monterey Cyprus (*Hesperocyparis macrocarpa*) to shelter the gardens from winds and salt-spray. The choice of trees that originated in California reflected Smith's and his descendants' inspiration to create favourable conditions for plants commonly associated with a Köppen category Csb – more commonly referred to as a 'Mediterranean warm-summer' – climate. As its name suggests, it is present along the northern Mediterranean, in addition to California, central Chile, the western Cape region of South Africa and southwestern Australia. This ecological engineering was strikingly effective, having resulted in lush gardens featuring around 20,000

[21] The Duchy of Cornwall owns the majority of freehold land on the islands, an arrangement that has met with frequent criticism from island residents (see, for instance, BBC 2020).
[22] https://www.tresco.co.uk

(mostly Csb zone) plants spread over a 6.9 hectare site that is now commonly referred to as Tresco Abbey Gardens.



Figure 10 - Aerial photo of Tresco (2013, Wikimedia Commons), showing its heavily cultivated gardens area.

While the original owners did not appear to have created the gardens with any commercial application in mind, the gardens now serve as a substantial attraction to tourists who can visit on day trips or stay in luxurious accommodation. Walking around the balmy, wind-sheltered gardens, the irony wasn't lost on me that we had come to the Isles of Scilly since we couldn't afford an escape to the Mediterranean only to end up in Britain's closest approximation of the latter. The outside/inside dichotomy was striking. Walking outside the garden boundaries you felt that you were back in the 'real' Scilly. Another aspect of this dichotomy came when we returned to St Mary's and found ourselves invited to a house party after the bar we were drinking in closed. In conversation with a long-term resident, I mentioned that we had just been to Tresco, only for him to respond with disdain to the effect that Tresco wasn't part of what (he regarded as) Scilly and that it was just a rich people's resort that people travelled in and out of without spending their money in St. Mary's. I took his point, and subsequent research and correspondence has confirmed this perception, giving me insight into the different ways archipelagos can be constructed: geographically (where Tresco is firmly part of the Isles) and socially, culturally, economically and botanically (where it – and specifically its cultivated central garden/resort area – substantially isn't).

After one more day trip to Bryher, which I only recall in terms of its lagoon and exposed north-western beach (colourfully named Hell's Bay),[23] our exploration of the Isles of Scilly concluded and we flew to Penzance and took the uncomfortable train back to the cold and cloudy metropolis. In the days before the (over-)sharing of experiences as they unfold via platforms such as You Tube, Facebook or Instagram and before, even, the advent of mobile phones, one of major means of processing, recounting and reflecting on travel experiences was conversation with friends and family members. Without an extensive range of photos

[23] As previously mentioned, I only recently regained memory of this after unearthing my diaries from the year in question.

and videos, verbal interpretation of sensory impressions and recalled data was the primary form of engaging with experience and I recall struggling to articulate (and/or adequately convince my friends) of the simultaneous difference (the 'somewhere-elseness') of Scilly from mainland UK and the variety of experiences available within the small archipelago. Ill-formed as my thoughts were, I recall, the very concept of the archipelago was one that I found awkward: in one (geographic) sense, self-evident, in many others, far less so. But, returning to the normal bustle of metropolitan life and my focus on Cinema Studies, these thoughts lapsed and retreated from my consciousness.

IV. Blondie and various calamities enter the mix

As an aficionado of various forms of rock, soul and reggae music in the 1980s, I regularly watched one of the few popular music shows broadcast on British TV at the time, BBC 1's *Top the Pops*. At home on the evening of May 27th, 1982, I sat watching as the show commenced and was surprised to see Blondie lead singer Debbie Harry appearing on-screen alongside one of the show's regular comperes, DJ John Peel. The purpose of her appearance was soon made clear when Peel turned to her and said, "this film we're about to see, whereabouts did you do that?" To which she replied, "we did that down in the Scilly Isles."[24] This was not a line I had anticipated hearing and, with my curiosity piqued, I watched the music video for the band's new single, *Island of Lost Souls*. It rapidly became apparent that most, if not all, of the video's scenes had been shot on and around Tresco, using various parts of the Abbey Gardens (including its ornamental steps) as a backdrop (110). The video made an immediate, although somewhat confusing impression. While I could recognise the location as Tresco, and Harry had identified the "film" as shot in Scilly, the (actual) island was transformed into an ambiguously exotic set for the band to mime their track on. The tone of this ambiguous exoticism was set by the song's calypso-rock-pop arrangement, which featured a brass section and steel pan part. Harry's flamboyant costumes vaguely complemented the music through their ruffled carnivalesque appearance. In terms of island associations, the most obvious aspect suggested by the song's title and some of the video's moodier sequences was the lurid thriller *Island of Lost Souls* (1932, directed by Erle Kenton), starring Bela Lugosi and Kathleen Burke (as a predatory "panther woman"). Complicating things further, while Kenton's 1932 film was ostensibly set in the South Pacific, its exterior scenes were shot on California's Catalina Island. But, despite this potential intertextual link, there was nothing in the lyrics to Blondie's single that echoed the earlier film, instead essentially calling for a "buccaneer" to whisk the female vocal protagonist off to a tropical island.

In terms of what might be called aesthetic or thematic coherence, the song and video are messes and – it might be argued – primarily represent the band heading into the creative nadir that saw them break up later in the year. Despite this, the video served to reconnect me to my previously described Scilly experience and to make me reflect on the nature of representations of place. I even tried to write an article on this theme but got no more than two or three hundred words before abandoning the enterprise, unsure as to whether I was trying to develop an analysis of the fabricated place represented in the music video or a reflection on the representation of the actual island.[25]

[24] While I couldn't recall these exact words, I managed to retrieve them from a copy of the show archived online: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Wfzh2JWlq

[25] I delved deep into old filing boxes trying to find it while writing this article but to no avail. I think I must have binned it in frustration.



Figure 11 - Debbie Harry leading masked musicians down steps in Tresco Abbey Gardens (frame grab from *Island of Lost Souls* music video, 1982).

I recall that *Island of Lost Souls* briefly rekindled my interest in Scilly in that Blondie's travel to and presence on Tresco seemed to legitimate my previous experience of the archipelago as culturally 'cool,' with me casually dropping this association into numerous social conversations at the time (usually arousing far less interest than I had anticipated). The next media prompt for me to re-remember the islands was more jarring. Three years after David and I flew above the *Golden Hinde* in full sail, another Sikorsky helicopter travelling the same route crashed into the ocean in July 1983, killing all onboard. Investigators concluded that the accident resulted in the helicopter hitting the sea while flying at a low altitude due to poor weather conditions. Accidents happen, but the memory of our helicopter dipping down low over the *Golden Hinde* seemed all the riskier in retrospect.

A second adverse event caught my attention in 1987, at a time when the Scilly visit had been relegated to distant memory by different, more leisurely summer encounters with Greek islands as my disposable income had increased. I don't recall consciously cross associating the Greek islands with Scilly, but I was definitely becoming more islophilic[26] as the decade progressed. The event in question occurred in January and provided very different images on TV news programmes than Harold Wilson's summer sojourns or Blondie's music video. Köppen category Csb climate areas such as Scilly rarely experience winter frosts or snow and when they occasionally do, these episodes are typically mild and short-lived. But in January 1987 an 'ocean effect' snow system occurred in the Isles. This phenomenon occurs when a cold air mass moves across an extended area of warmer water, in this case, the arm of the Gulf Stream that laps the shores of the Isles. The lower part of the cold air mass heats up due to proximity to the water and water vapour is taken up into it that freezes upon contact with

[26] From islophilia, a fascination with and/or love for islands. See Royle (2016) for discussion of the topic written by a renowned islophilic researcher.

the colder air above and falls when it rises over land masses. In January 1987 this resulted in 23 cm of snow falling on the Isles in one day. Tresco's Abbey Gardens were particularly badly hit, wiping out a substantial proportion of their plants.[27] The images of this event on TV startled me. While I knew that it was, in all likelihood, a temporary event, it served to 'box' my memories of visiting Tresco (and of Blondie making their video in the Abbey Gardens) as part of a previous and now remote era that I increasingly viewed through a nostalgic lens.

V. Island Studies

I departed the United Kingdom on January 1st 1989, and relocated to Sydney (Australia) where I commenced work at Macquarie University. The experience of encountering a new part of the planet enlivened me and inclined me to make this new location my permanent home (as it has been ever since). Somewhat surprisingly – and largely, it seems, on the strength of my publications CV and a period of working with the Arts Council's Department of Film and Video in 1986-88 – I had been appointed as a lecturer in Media and Drama without a PhD but with the promise to commence and quickly complete one. The subject I chose was deliberately regional one, an intercultural collaboration between an Australian avant garde rock band named Not Drowning, Waving and a number of Papua New Guinean (PNG) musicians that had produced the acclaimed *Tabaran* album in 1990, various music videos and a short documentary. The project proved fascinating, and I adapted the thesis into a book that was published in 1996. I don't recall the fact that the PNG musicians hailed from New Britain *island* and that the majority of PNG comprises the eastern half of the large *island* of New Guinea had any impact on my choice of topic. Rather, the production and reception of the album appealed since it provided the opportunity to compare-and-contrast it with US singer-songwriter Paul Simon's controversial collaboration with South African musicians on his 1986 album *Graceland* and on subsequent tours. [28] Memory and inspiration no doubt work in mysterious ways but I can't see my experiences in Scilly as motivating factors here. My work on the doctoral project did however stoke my islophilia – or, rather, a sub-tropical Pacific strand of it – and I went on to undertake research projects on the performing arts cultures of various Western Pacific Islands in the late 1990s and early 2000s.

While I remained unaware of the existence of Island Studies as a nascent interdisciplinary field until the early 2000s,[29] I began to develop collaborative work with other researchers on the nature of cultural developments and styles on islands in 1999. My fruitful association with linguist Danny Long and ethnomusicologist Junko Konishi on projects in Wakayama and Ogasawara led us to plan an island cultures study group that eventually took the form of SICRI (the Small Island Cultures Research Initiative) in 2005, a venture that indirectly led to the establishment of *Shima* and my contributions to various Island Studies journals over the following two decades. As these projects came into focus and fruition, my memories of Scilly resurfaced and various aspects of them reminded me of an archipelagic encounter that increasingly appeared as formative (despite its long period of dormancy). One result of this renewed engagement with the south-western Cornish archipelago was that in 2014, thirty-

[27] For footage of Tresco under snow and the head gardener Mike Nelhams' immediate characterisation of the damage caused to the gardens, see: https://x.com/ScillyMemories/status/1731761282594853051

[28] Simon pursued the project despite the African National Congress advocating a cultural boycott of South Africa given the country's Apartheid regime that was supported by the US based project Artists against Apartheid who produced the protest song 'Sun City' in 1985. See Meintjes (1990) and Seigfried (2017) for discussion.

[29] A field pioneered by ISISA, the International Small Island Studies Association, founded in 1992.

four years after my initial encounter with the Isles, I collaborated with (then) Danish-based researcher Adam Grydehøj on an article on the social and economic effects of spatial distribution in island communities that used the Isles of Scilly and Isle of Wight[30] as comparators. The article was moderately well received, being cited each year since 2014 and racking up 58 citations to date.[31] We introduced the article as an attempt to "fill a particular gap" in Island Studies literature "by shedding empirical light on the distinction between different kinds of islands (specifically between solitary islands and archipelagos), a distinction that sometimes risks being overlooked in debates concerning 'the island' in abstract" (Grydehøj & Hayward, 2014, p. 10) and, in conclusion, we asserted that:

> *Just as islandness can affect communities in different ways, different types of islands encourage different types of communities. Though small in spatial extent, Scilly is exceptionally conditioned by its archipelago status, which has helped produce socially and economically strong local communities relative to those on IOW. Local economic development is influenced not only by population distribution and a generalisable rurality but also by the spatial characteristics that have historically affected settlement and industry patterns and continue to do so. IOW is differently – but no less – spatially conditioned. There is, however, no direct determinism involved, for though spatial distribution may be implicated in development patterns, its precise effects are themselves dependent on issues such as the human and economic resources that a community has at its disposal.* (Grydehøj & Hayward, 2014, p. 18)

While this conclusion was substantially informed by Adam's statistical research for the article, it also represents a (more sophisticated) characterisation of many of the impressions I gained during my earlier visit to Scilly and in subsequent reflections on it. In this manner, at least, I can sketch a pattern of continuity and growth between my first encounter with Scilly and how a colleague and I came to characterise the archipelago thirty-four years later. More broadly, I increasingly have the feeling that my early experience of Scilly led me to be preoccupied with a number of themes in following decades. These included island inundation[32] and the role that waters play in archipelagic settings.[33] I deliberately write *feeling* (rather than something more solid, such as *knowledge* or *conviction*) since I am aware that memory, perception of memory and of its effects are fluid phenomena reliant on various cues and entities. As Smith emphasises:

> *We inhabit a recollective ecology inhabited by numerous other beings constitutive of the situations in which we (try to) find ourselves. Our life amidst other lives is always (whether this is recognised at the time or not) ecologically and emotionally entangled in ways that affect us both consciously and subliminally*. (2017, p.20)

[30] The Isle of Wight is located 290 kilometres north-east of Scilly, due south of Southampton.

[31] Google Scholar data:
https://scholar.google.com.au/citations?view_op=view_citation&hl=en&user=K5w5bOoAAAAJ&citation_for_view=K5w5bOoAAAAJ:R3hNpaxXUhUC

[32] See, for example, *Shima 10*(2), October 2016 – 'Submergence: a special issue on Atlantis and related mythologies and Hayward (2025) on Venice as a model for an inundated Miami.

[33] Explored in depth in Hayward and Joseph (Eds.) (2024) with regard to the concept of the aquapelago.

This brings me to a final consideration. One of the frustrating aspects about researching this article was that I couldn't find the batch of photos I had taken on the island.[34] I can recall some of them, dimly at least. I recall taking photos of the stone walls running down into the sea (which I mentioned in Section III above) that could have illustrated that section of this text. I also recall taking shots of various buildings in Hugh Town that would have given some sense of its history and current status as the archipelago's hub. In addition to providing modest enhancements to my narrative, there was one particular photo that I was keen to include here at the end of this essay. Walking a short way up Trench Lane, at the north-eastern corner of Old Town Bay on St Mary's, late one afternoon in April 1980, I recall encountering a small marsh (which I later learned was called Lower Moor Wetland) and a short drainage canal. It had surprised me to see such a miniature, engineered aquatic environment inside a small island and I recalled it recently – for the first time in decades – when I started to think about developing a new project on the social hydrology of islands. Intrigued by the recollection, I researched the Lower Moor online, enhancing my slender recollection of it and it became emblematic of the small-scale nature of (small) island hydrology for me. This publication project has now commenced and a colour print of Bob Embleton's more recent image of the Lower Moor (211) is pinned at the side of my desk, providing me with a surrogate access to the scene that initially piqued my interest and that now serves to inspire me. The 'gifts' of my encounter with Scilly are, thereby, still very much active elements within my scholarly practice and still 'in play' in my reflective engagements with place even when documentary traces have been mislaid.



Figure 12 – The Lower Moore wetland on St Mary's in August 2008 – another inspirational place (for the author, at least) (photo by Bob Embleton – Wikimedia Commons).

[34] NB my photograph of David Burles that appears in this article as Figure 4 was taken on his camera.

Conclusion

As with many of the essays in this theme issue of *Shima* on researchers' perceptions of islands that were inspirational for their research, there is no clear conclusion to be reached about how you can find your inspirational place, become inspired by it and/or channel that inspiration into your subsequent research career. This is particularly the case in situations such as mine, when I wasn't involved in a relevant area of study when the encounter took place. But although it took a while, the encounter was transformative in terms of my own intellectual and professional career trajectory. Fortuity is significant here. A visit to a different archipelago would have produced highly different impressions and/or inspirations or, perhaps more likely, would have delivered a more typical leisure break than the experience I have recounted. If there are key takeaways for emerging researchers reading this account, the first is the relatively uncomplicated one of how direct encounters with places (rather than reliance on secondary sources) can deliver vivid experiences and sensory data that can be highly informative and motivational. The second is more complex and concerns the need to acknowledge the highly constructed nature of recollections of experiences of and in the 'field', not only when they are as historically distanced as mine (dating back 45 years) – and written without formal field notes and/or audio-visual recordings – but also when these recollections are consciously packaged as inspirational experiences for a context such as this theme issue. Production is, by definition, a process, and impressions are products *processed* in production, rather than unproblematic renditions of either actuality (whatever that is) or of supposedly detached academic accounts of places, people and/or species encountered.

My characterisation of these processes accords with two of Sutton's characterisations quoted in the Introduction to this issue. First that:

> *Traces of many past events are often layered or superposed, in brain, body, and world alike… More generally, there can appear to be a tension between what we know about the highly constructive nature of remembering, whether it is drawing on neural or worldly resources or both, and the ways that we need and use memory to make claims on the past, and to maintain some appropriate causal connections to past events.* (Sutton, 2024, p. 593)

And, following on, that humans in general:

> *are not merely influenced by past events, but also sometimes take them as objects of thought, feeling, and social negotiation… these are constructive processes – selection, abstraction, condensation, interference, consolidation, pattern-transformation, reconsolidation, generalization, and more. We do not store replicas or canonical versions of past events, and so must deploy resources in the present to create more or less stable, more or less adequate memories, often on the fly and iteratively in the ongoing whirl of bodily action and social interaction.* (2024, p. 593-594)

The complexities that Sutton identifies are as pertinent to the discussion of inspirational encounters as they are to the construction of memories in general. Indeed, drawing on the discussions advanced in this article, I would contend that the ascription of any experience as inspirational conjoins two distinct elements: irreproducible physical events and impressions that occurred in particular places at particular times and multiple iterations of the recollection of these that occur in in various mental and/or representational media. It is also

salient to note that close fidelity to actual events is not an essential aspect of the perception of experiences as inspirational for the researcher. This may be an uncomfortable factor for researchers to acknowledge but it is one that serves to highlight the complex and subjective nature of inspiration. This also establishes that inquiry into the processes that create (what are perceived as) inspirational experiences is a valid and illuminating activity, given that these can inform researchers' subsequent inclinations and proclivities and, in aggregate, can play a significant role in determining the characters and trajectories of academic fields.

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