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“Inspire, Move and Illuminate”

Investigating Spirit of Place at
the National Trust’s Holnicote Estate



A collaboration between
Bristol University and the
National Trust
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Summary

'Inspire, Move and Illuminate' partnered the University of Bristol with the National Trust in a pilot project to investigate 'spirit of place' at the Holnicote Estate in west Somerset. 'Spirit of place' refers to the distinctive value of a particular place and our emotional connections to it. The research aimed to discover the special, unique and cherished qualities of Holnicote as well as to understand the pressures that the estate is under moving forward and how the people who live and work there manage to 'live well with uncertainty'. Through archival research, interviews with National Trust staff and visitors, field walks and surveys, we worked to uncover the spirit of place at Holnicote. The wider objective was to bring the partners together to open the door for future collaborations and to enhance the formal 'spirit of place' programme underway at the estate.

Holnicote covers an area of 20 square miles, constituting 5,026 hectares (12,420 acres), on the northernmost edge of Exmoor National Park. The landscape ranges from moorland to woodland and coast and supports vibrant human and non-human communities. The built environment includes 170 houses and cottages, and the majority of land is rented to tenant farmers. The estate was bequeathed to the National Trust by Sir Richard Acland in 1944. Qualitative research revealed that various features of the estate were important for local people, National Trust staff, volunteers and visitors. Diversity of landscape and 'unspoilt' nature featured strongly in survey results, as did the appreciation of community, sense of history and the panoramic views across the estate.

Holnicote faces numerous external pressures, including economic and policy challenges for farmers, climate change and the local economy's reliance on tourism. It is likely that these aspects will drive the agenda moving into the future.

Holnicote could be described as a microcosm of Exmoor, with the added element of being bordered by the sea. But much more is involved. Our investigation has shown that Holnicote is not just unique because of its diversity. It stands out because of how that diversity is brought together and given a shared identity by the estate that contains it all. There is a spirit and a sense of unity at Holnicote that enables change to take place slowly and for 'progress' to be accepted whilst the estate's core elements, tangible and intangible, are conserved into the future.

'Spirit of Place' is a process of engagement and does not end with the publication of the final Spirit of Place Statement. It should be monitored and updated to account for subtle changes. Spirit of Place at Holnicote should be responsive to changes in landscape, aware of shifting baseline syndrome (perception of ecological change varies from generation to generation) and sensitive to how even small changes can influence the spirit in the longer term. Holnicote is not an outdoor museum. It is a dynamic entity. For landscapes and ecologies are constantly shifting and conservation does not necessarily mean freezing a place in time.

Table of Contents

Summary	i
1. Introduction	1
2. Research Questions	3
3. Method of Investigation	4
4. A Portrait of the Holnicote Estate	6
5. Spirit of Place	11
6. Interview and Survey Results and Discussion	13
7. Historic Case Studies	19
8. Changes over Time – Landscape, Land use and Species Diversity	28
9. Changes over Time – Human Communities and Lived Experiences	33
10. Living in an Uncertain World – Past, Present and Future Challenges	36
11. Conclusions – Is Holnicote Prepared for the Future?	38
12. Acknowledgements	41
13. Bibliography	42
14. Appendices	45

1. Introduction

The poet Alexander Pope, tackled 'spirit of place' in his *Epistles to Several Persons: Epistle IV to Richard Boyle, Earl of Burlington* (1731) – advising that it is only by recognising and respecting the 'spirit of place' (also known as *genius loci*) that we can design and plan properly and dwell there harmoniously:

Consult the genius of the place in all;
That tells the waters or to rise, or fall;
Or helps th' ambitious hill the heav'ns to scale,
Or scoops in circling theatres the vale;
Calls in the country, catches opening glades,
Joins willing woods, and varies shades from shades,
Now breaks, or now directs, th' intending lines;
Paints as you plant, and, as you work, designs.

Those who seek out the 'spirit of place' hope to capture the intrinsic value of a place and explain why we feel strongly connected emotionally and cherish it. It is generated by and rooted in a variety of tangible qualities, such as land use practices, the built environment and biophysical organisms, but is equally invested by less tangible elements such as cultural and spiritual identity, historic events and stories, aesthetic qualities and, perhaps most strongly, emotions (including the sense of wellbeing that comes from being part of a community of family, friends and kindred spirits). The National Trust has fully embraced the pursuit of spirit of place, which now forms a central plank in its policy framework, guiding property and landscape management and planning. Whereas a property's 'Statement of Significance' is primarily an expression of 'expert' views, focusing on existing facts, a 'Spirit of Place' statement is effectively co-produced, incorporating grassroots insights from locals and visitors as well as staff and external stakeholders. Spirit of place lies at the heart of how people feel about places and experience them, and so the National Trust seeks to understand it, to make the experience of place relevant and rewarding.

'Inspire, Move and Illuminate' brought researchers from the University of Bristol together with the National Trust to investigate 'spirit of place' at the Holnicote (pronounced *Hunnicut*) Estate in west Somerset, which is currently conducting its spirit of place exercise. We wanted to explore the perspectives of both 'past' and 'present' people as well as to assess the challenges the estate faces moving

forward, which both can potentially threaten and shape the spirit of place. By investigating these perspectives, we can gain an insight into the relative confidence levels of different people regarding how to deal with impending pressures and how they feel about and experience environmental and socio-economic changes within their community and local landscape.

The project's two principal aims were:

1. To discover the special and unique qualities of the place.
2. To understand the challenges that the estate will face in the future, how the people who live and work there can 'live well with uncertainty' (a key research objective of the project funder, the Brigstow Institute) and how this may challenge the spirit of place.

The project was as much an investigation 'in' the estate as it was an investigation 'of' the estate. As such, emphasis was placed on consulting those who live and work at Holnicote. A wide range of methods were used to gather thoughts and opinions including interviews with Trust staff and visitors and written surveys among locals and visitors. Field walks were an important component of the project, enabling those who were 'asking the questions' to more effectively translate the responses from those who 'know' the estate. The project also had the historian's methods at its core, with significant archival research undertaken to 'illuminate' past perspectives regarding spirit of place. The Acland family owned the estate for over two hundred years before the 15th Baronet, Sir Richard Acland, gifted it in 1944. This tradition of custodianship of the land has been continued by the National Trust.

Although the spirit of place exercise is geared towards the production of a document (which, ideally, fits on one page), the process of investigation is equally, perhaps even more important. It encourages a large number of people who connect with the estate day to day to think on a deeper level about what it is that they value about the place and why they care so much about it. 'Inspire, Move and Illuminate' did not intend to produce our own spirit of place document. What we wanted was to be part of the investigative process, to contribute imaginatively to the National Trust's own formal spirit of place process and form the basis for a partnership between the National Trust and Bristol University which can be built on. This report serves as a supporting document to inform the final stages of Holnicote's spirit of place exercise and to suggest how the Trust and Bristol University might work together again.

2. Research Questions

Given our interest in uncertain futures, in lived experiences as well as changing landscapes over time, and how, if at all, this affects our perspectives relating to spirit of place, we established the following research questions:

1. How have land use and landscape and ecological and human communities changed over time and how have those changes been evaluated?
2. Faced with an uncertain future (precarity), how resilient is Holnicote, ecologically and socially?
3. What are the lived experiences of people at Holnicote, past and present, and how well do they prepare them (and us) for the future?

The ways that we perceive resilience and the challenges that places face form a critical part of how we perceive the places themselves. Issues such as climate change and socio-economic pressures add to a feeling of vulnerability in the world, sometimes encouraging us to look inward at a time when it is important to consider outside opportunities as well as challenges. By engaging with issues surrounding precarity the project could attain a sharper appreciation of how spirit of place is perceived and valued. The project encouraged the local community, especially the National Trust staff community, to consider how they can negotiate impending pressures when planning for the future and how spirit of place can help ensure continuity and effective conservation at a time of uncertainty.

3. Method of Investigation

Our methods involved a mix of practices from historical studies and social science: archival research; surveys and informal discussions with visitors, locals and Trust volunteers; semi-structured interviews with Trust staff; and, not least, innovative community-based methods of engagement such as a themed pub quiz run in partnership with a local business.



Holnicote Estate Archive. Credit: Ben Eagle

To decipher changes over time in terms of landscape and lived experience we undertook a qualitative assessment of source material located in a number of different archives, namely the on-site Holnicote estate archive, the Exmoor Society archive in Dulverton and the Somerset Heritage Centre near Taunton. From this search we assembled various case studies and forensically examined their content, searching for the author's point of view relating to Holnicote's spirit of place. A number of existing oral histories were also combed for clues regarding perspectives on spirit of place, including Birdie Johnson's for the Exmoor Oral History Project (2000-01).

Document and archival analysis was complemented by examination of responses from interviews and surveys. Our work was informed by our discussions with locals, visitors and Trust staff, as well as walks across the estate. We wanted to experiment with different approaches to investigating spirit of place and the process was perhaps more important than the outcomes.



Left to right: Peter Coates (UoB), Nigel Hester (NT) and Mike MacCormack (NT) discussing Spirit of Place at Holnicote. 9th August 2016. Credit: Ben Eagle



Local people and visitors taking part in the themed project pub quiz at The Castle, Porlock. 31st August 2016. Credit: Ben Eagle

4. A Portrait of the Holnicote Estate



The view from Selworthy Church. Credit: Ben Eagle

Wherever you stand on the Holnicote estate, you can experience the spirit of diversity that the place exudes. Although it is one estate, with historic boundaries, within its bounds are many habitats. There is, to quote the county of Rutland's motto, *Multum in Parvo*. It is partly defined by the awe inspiring views that stretch across the entire estate (on a clear day) and partly by a 'layered' identity based on the interaction between different elements. Holnicote sits across four ancient manors: Bossington, Holnicote, East Luccombe and Selworthy, within an area of 20 square miles, constituting 5,026 hectares (12,420 acres), on the northernmost edge of Exmoor National Park. The landscape ranges from moorland to coast and supports vibrant human and non-human communities. The built estate includes 170 houses and cottages, which ranges from medieval buildings to 20th century cottages and farmhouses. Sixty of these buildings retain their combed wheat thatch, the traditional material used for roofing in Exmoor. The land is mostly rented to tenant farmers, many of whom come from families who have worked the same land for generations.

The estate is a patchwork of small fields and copses, picturesque hamlets and villages, sizable woodland in the form of Horner Wood (part of Dunkery and Horner Wood National Nature Reserve and windswept moorland, including the highest point on Exmoor, Dunkery Beacon [520 metres], overlooking the Bristol Channel to the north and, to the south, the remainder of Exmoor. There are over a hundred miles of footpaths on the estate and an active volunteer team who help the rangers to maintain these - as well as to assist with a wide variety of conservation tasks across the estate. Holnicote also possesses a wealth of prehistoric features, with Bronze Age cairns, barrows and hut circles and Iron Age hillforts dotting the landscape.



Bossington beach: Credit Ben Eagle.

A prominent characteristic of the estate is the 4.5 miles of coastline. At Bossington, the high cliffs drop suddenly and dramatically, replaced by a sweeping shingle beach. When standing on the ridge at the top of the beach one can look out towards the coast of south Wales or across Porlock and the Holnicote estate towards Dunkery Beacon. The ridge was breached in October 1996 after a high tide and strong north westerly winds, the tail end of Hurricane Lili. A new saltmarsh habitat formed on the landward side of the ridge and a tidal lagoon, notified as a

geomorphological SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest) in 2002 (part of the site had already been declared a SSSI for biological reasons). This incident completely changed the approach that the National Trust takes towards coastal management, which had national implications given the status of the charity as the nation's most significant coastal landowner. Little Egrets, Spoonbill, Hen and Marsh Harrier, Osprey and Snow Bunting have all been seen from Porlock Ridge. On the ridge itself Everlasting Pea (*Lathyrus latifolius*) and Yellow Horned Poppy (*Glaucium flavum*) thrive.

The farmland varies enormously in quality. Most land in the valley is covered by alluvial clays and gravels – the result of freeze-thaw action in the later stages of the last ice age and riverine deposits. Much land is unsuitable for arable cultivation and is given over to sheep farming. However, in the 'bowl' of the vale, fields are cultivated. Historically, the area is famed for its barley and in the early twentieth century Bossington was home to the winner of the Brewers' Exhibition World Championship for the highest quality barley.

The estate was bequeathed by Sir Richard Acland in 1944, doubling, at a stroke, the Trust's landholdings (Sir Richard simultaneously gifted the Killerton Estate in Devon), although it should be noted that the 12th Baronet, Sir Thomas Acland, had previously granted a lease of 8,000 acres of the estate to the Trust, in February 1917. Coupled with the other gifts in the area by Colonel Walter Wiggin and Mrs Allan Hughes in 1935, and later acquisitions, the total landholding of the estate today is 5,026 hectares. The association with the Aclands is vital when it comes to 'spirit of place' as their ownership and subsequent gift to the Trust ensured the estate remained a unified entity, critical in terms of the way the landscape has been managed over time. The Aclands owned Holnicote from 1745 to Sir Richard's gifting (1944). They were shapers of the landscape themselves. The work of Sir Thomas Dyke Acland, 10th Baronet, is of particular note as he planted Selworthy and Allerford Woods on the southern side of Bossington Hill, as well as transforming the village of Selworthy into the 'cottage orné' style to house retired Estate staff.

There are four villages and hamlets within the estate's three parishes. Whilst the estate cottages are run as a commercial unit, the National Trust is keen to encourage a close community spirit. The estate's housing policy drives the agenda, influenced by the Parish Councils and the Tenants' Association. There is also an

annual dinner for the farmers organised by National Trust staff which helps maintain the bond between those who work on the estate. A wide range of local events, such as flower shows, fetes, barn dances and talks, illustrate (and foster) the close nature of the community. Tourism and farming are the two pillars of the local economy, and the estate itself is a magnet for attracting visitors.



Packhorse bridge in Allerford. Credit: Ben Eagle

Horner Wood and much of the moorland on Dunkery was designated a National Nature Reserve in 1995. Horner Wood is England's best example of a grazed upland oakwood. Of special interest for its lichen community, of which there are upwards of 330 known species, it is also well known for its bat population, supporting 14 of the 16 UK breeding species, including Barbastelle and Bechstein's. On the woodland edge, Heath Fritillary butterflies thrive and this is their national stronghold. The estate supports numerous "Red Data Book" invertebrates as well as plants and fungi, such as High Brown fritillaries, Dartford warbler, Black poplar and otters. Red deer, the emblem of Exmoor, and Exmoor Ponies (another signature species), roam the upland.



Exmoor Ponies. Credit: Ben Eagle.

A key challenge for the project was to identify a single, unified spirit of place amidst all of this glorious diversity.

5. Spirit of Place

Spirit of place, or *genius loci*, is usually described in reference to the Quebec City Declaration on the Preservation of Spirit of Place (adopted at the 16th General Assembly and International Scientific Symposium of the International Council on Monuments and Sites [ICOMOS], in Quebec, on 4 October 2008):

Spirit of Place or (*genius loci*) refers to the unique, distinctive and cherished aspects of a place. It is thus as much in the invisible weave of culture (stories, art, memories, beliefs, histories, etc.) as it is the tangible physical aspects of a place (monuments, rivers, woods, architectural style, pathways, views, and so on) or its interpersonal aspects (the presence of family, friends and kindred spirits).

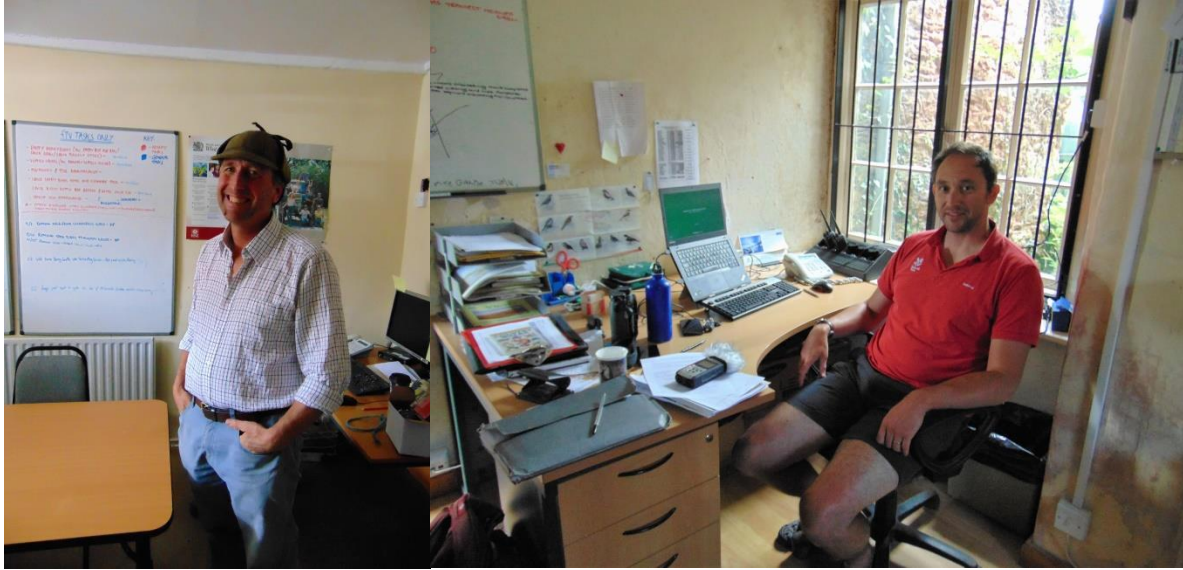
Its conceptual history stretches back to antiquity. The Romans referred to *genius loci* as the special attributes relating to a place or something that exerts spiritual guardianship over a place. Figures were often used to depict the *genius loci*, frequently with items such as cornucopia or snakes to represent attributes of protection. In the eighteenth century, its applicable importance shifted towards the fields of garden and landscape design, suggesting that gardens and estate landscapes should be designed in the context of their situation.

The National Trust, with reference to the Quebec Declaration, is currently undertaking a programme of 'spirit of place' investigations across its property portfolio, with the view to generating a statement for each property to represent why and how each place is unique or special. The statement will guide future management decisions for each property. The procedure for spirit of place investigations differs between properties but each usually involves analysis of qualitative data, based on subjective responses which give an idea of individuals' perceptions of place. When these responses are analysed together they give an impression of the shared values of the people who live, work or visit the place.

As explained in the report's introduction, the investigation of spirit of place as a process is as important as the final statement, because it encourages everybody connected with the estate to consider their own relationship with it and why they value it and care about it. As detailed above, the 'Move, Inspire and Illuminate'

project experimented with a range of methods for engaging people with spirit of place, such as a pub quiz where participants were asked about the local area and to complete a questionnaire. There is, of course, more to be done. The formal spirit of place investigation is continuing and plans include local parish discussions and an 'in depth' spirit of place workshop involving staff, volunteers and others, scheduled in November 2016. Nonetheless, the material gathered for this project augments the community and audience insight which is an integral part of the process of data gathering and informs the final statement.

6. Interview and Survey results and discussion



Left: Charles Harding (Deer Ranger). Right: Nigel Garnsworthy (Countryside Manager for West Somerset). Credit: Ben Eagle.

Formal interviews were conducted with six Trust staff – Nigel Hester, Amy Winzer, Ann Lund, Nigel Garnsworthy, Nigel Towells and Charles Harding. The intention was to encourage interviewees to reflect on the estate, their relationship with it and their views on future challenges and management.

Of particular note in these in-depth discussions was the widespread reference to diversity of habitats. According to Nigel Hester, 'it is the juxtaposition of woodland, moorland, coast, farmland and villages together that make the Holnicote estate so special.' Deer ranger, Charles Harding, remarked that 'there is something of all of Exmoor within the estate: there is the moorland, the woodland, down into the vale into the farmland and then out on the cliffs there's a maritime environment. So, it's completely diverse and you don't have to drive very far to be in a different habitat.' That sense of concurrent diversity and singularity was a key characteristic of responses. Nigel Garnsworthy, countryside manager for west Somerset, who is based at Holnicote, described an instance when he was completing an application form for some academy ranger positions for the estate, in which he had to describe the different habitats he could provide experience of. He realised that the only habitats they didn't have at Holnicote were sand dunes and mountains.

The built environment was clearly just as important for most staff as the natural environment when it comes to identifying the spirit of the place. Nigel Hester pointed

out that ‘without the villages and hamlets the landscape would be poorer’. Ann Lund said, ‘if you are stood on Selworthy Hill or even Hurlstone Point and look down I think it would make a huge difference if those houses weren’t there as they nestle into the landscape. They are part of it.’

Views were an important element of the responses. Assistant Rural Surveyor, Amy Winzer, highlighted the views from the top of Dunkery as being particularly special for her: ‘I love Dunkery – it’s one of my favourite places in the whole world – the views are amazing.’ Ann Lund mentioned the views from Selworthy Lane and Nigel Hester spoke of the views stretching across the estate: ‘whether you are looking up to the hills or down to the vale, down the hills outside across the sea: wherever you look there are amazing views. That’s quite unusual to have that on one estate.’

The National Trust staff members at Holnicote are clearly passionate about the place where they work and keen to conserve the landscape, as well as planning for the future. For Ann Lund, the sense of history is core reason for her passion for place. When discussing her early memories of first working at the estate offices she said, ‘you can touch a wall and think: that wall has been touched by so many people. That spirit of continuity I think is wonderful’.

We asked all interviewees to tell us what they think ‘makes the Holnicote estate unique’. The responses included (with size correlating with frequency mentioned):



When asked about challenges, a variety of topics were raised. However, the ‘big’ challenges can be categorised as follows:

1. Climate change
2. Tourism
3. Community

Climate Change

Climate change was brought up by several interviewees. There is awareness that it is already effecting the estate. Charles Harding drew a correlation between climate change and changing landscape, particularly the relatively new dominance of bracken on the moor, a consequence of recent mild and wet winters. Nigel Garnsworthy wondered what might change: ‘How are some of our species and habitats going to adapt to climate change? We might get other species moving in – are they going to impact on what we have currently?’

Tourism

Exmoor and the Porlock Vale rely on tourism to boost the local economy, particularly in the summer season. However, tourism needs to be managed to ensure that it doesn’t get out of control, detrimentally impacting on the landscape itself. Nigel Hester described how ‘now there are lots of people cycling or walking (all year round). I suspect that people come here because they like those quiet, reflective, spiritual aspects of the estate that they can’t get in their everyday lives. If we try to encourage more people to come here, that side of things might go and that’s a worry.’

Ann Lund also mentioned ‘peace and tranquillity’ as an attraction for tourists and needing to balance preservation of the spirit of place with attracting more people to maintain the local economy. She emphasised that:

People have always come to Holnicote for that peace and tranquillity and that is changing because we are encouraging people to do a lot more activities: coastering, cycling, kayaking etc. I think that (tourism) is going to be one of our biggest challenges because we might lose something.

Nigel Garnsworthy suggested that tourism needn’t be a major headache if it is managed properly. He suggested, however, that the Holnicote team should improve

their understanding of how many people are coming to the estate, and of when and why they do, so that a coherent and objective plan can be formulated.

Community

Nigel Towells made clear his belief that the Trust must be 'approachable' and 'make people feel that they can come to us'.

Others

Income was raised as a challenge, particularly how to ensure the estate remains financially sustainable. Maintaining the spirit of place alongside this consideration will be a key challenge in itself.

The unknown impact of Brexit hangs over the estate and there was some concern over how the EU withdrawal would affect future funding and policy.

The Holnicote team feel fairly well prepared to face future challenges, although there were some concerns that as experienced staff retire or move on it will be difficult to negotiate the transition period and maintain management continuity. Identifying, understanding and articulating spirit of place will help ensure continuity during any transition period. There was also a concern that whilst the challenges are often discussed, solutions are not necessarily always outlined and acted upon.

Surveys

In addition to interviews, surveys of local residents and visitors were conducted, which posed a range of questions, including:

- Can you describe the Holnicote estate in three words?
- What one thing do you think makes the Holnicote estate unique?
- What makes the Holnicote estate special for you?
- Where is your favourite place on the Holnicote estate and why?
- How does the Holnicote estate make you feel?
- What do you think are the big challenges that the estate/local area will face in the future?

Although a relatively small number of surveys were completed (18), we were more concerned about process than results. We suggest that, for future Spirit of Place investigations, a greater effort is made to engage local people and visitors through

In 1993 a student, Jill Summers, carried out a survey of visitors to the estate, aiming to assess visitor numbers. She spent three days at four car parks across the estate: Selworthy Beacon, Dunkery Beacon, Webbers Post and Horner. Included in the survey was a question about how visitors to the estate 'felt' about the landscape, giving three options (comfortable; safe; unsettling). The overwhelming response was 'comfortable', favoured by all age categories, followed by 'safe' and then 'unsettling'. She also asked, 'what is your impression of the landscape?', again giving three options (boring; attractive; inspiring). This received a mixed response. Dunkery Beacon and Webbers Post were thought 'inspiring' by age category 40-55s. Horner car park was classed as 'attractive' by 40-55s and over 65s. Selworthy Beacon car park was thought inspiring by 40-55s, 56-65s and over 65s. Our own survey, which did not restrict people to certain categories, received diverse feedback relating to the question of 'how does the Holnicote estate make you feel'? Responses included 'relaxed', 'homely' and 'restful'. The correlation seems to suggest that people feel 'comfortable' at Holnicote. Here, they can both experience 'wild nature' and enjoy the benefits of a domesticated environment with modern conveniences.

Holnicote is intrinsically related and relatable to Exmoor. Its landscape character, and spirit of place, is therefore shaped by its wider setting. In the preface to the 1977 Exmoor National Park Plan, S.H. Burton asserted that:

It was undoubtedly the balance between wild moorland – in its varied manifestations and cultivation that gave to Exmoor its distinctive personality.

This layering of different habitats is directly related to the perceived beauty of landscape. Porlock Vale has a distinctive character shaped by its combination of different habitats – woodland, heathland, arable land, coast, meadows and grazing pasture. Holnicote is also a place of 'tranquillity', a place that people visit to 'get away from it all' and for those who live on the estate or in the surrounding area, a place that they can be proud to live in. Indeed, in the estate's 'Statement of Significance', a vital supporting document for each National Trust property, it is indicated that there is a clear 'feeling of tranquillity' – Holnicote is 'a place where time runs slowly.'

7. Historic Case Studies

These case studies were identified as in-depth, mostly personal, accounts of the estate, covering a period from 1850 to the 1990s. The sources were analysed for insights into spirit of place.

Frederick Hancock, *The Parish of Selworthy in the County of Somerset* (1897)

Hancock was Rector of Selworthy parish at the time and his history of place includes etymology, Selworthy Church, the Rectors, parish registers, folklore and the flora of the valley. Of particular interest, however, is his chapter on the Holnicote herd of Exmoor ponies. As a key charismatic species of the estate, they influence the spirit of place. Hancock places them alongside the red deer in this regard:

From time immemorial the forest has been the home of a breed of tiny ponies almost as wild as, and second only in interest to, the lordly red deer themselves. (p.260)

He suggests that in 1818 there were about 500 ponies on Exmoor. The government of the day decided to sell the crown estate land on Exmoor, and the ponies were auctioned off with it. Only twenty of the original herd were kept at the Holnicote estate by the Aclands and they were sent to a farm at Ashway, near Dulverton. Hancock wrote that, in 1897, it remained the only 'pure' herd on Exmoor. Every year about twenty ponies were drafted for sale at Bampton, where they achieved good prices of £5-£10 each.

Hancock linked the Holnicote ponies directly with the community by writing of their 'keepers', the Rawle family, specifically John Rawle, who took charge of the herd in 1818. Sense of social place was central to identity at the time, both in individual terms but also to the identity of the entire estate:

Rawle entertained for the head of the Acland family of the day the sentiment of a feudal retainer for his chief. It is said that when he accompanied Sir Thomas [Acland] on any expedition, and his master entertained a house for refreshment, Rawle stood at the door like a sentry, watchful and immovable, however long the delay, until 'his honour' reappeared. Sir Thomas's wish was law to him. (p.264)

Marian J. Archer Thompson, *Selworthy '1850-1857' (1907)*

Thompson was the daughter of a rector of All Saints at Selworthy, and lived in the Holnicote Estate area for a significant part of her childhood. She was 4 years old when she first came to Selworthy in the autumn of 1850, and she eventually left in 1857 when the Archbishop of York decided to relocate her father. She describes the landscape in Edenic terms, and refers to the views across the estate as being particularly special:

As a child, I always thought looking towards Dunkery from the Cross was like a peep into Heaven. I think growing up in such a lovely country was a great blessing to me. I learnt at Selworthy to take care of all things beautiful. (p.8)

Much of her account relates to day to day activities in Selworthy and the surrounding area, or accounts of reactions to world events, such as the end of the Crimean War (pp.23-27). In one such account, she describes how Mr Birmingham, Sir Thomas Acland's estate steward, came to her house one evening to collect money for the soldiers involved in the war and their families:

This community effort was far from unique to Holnicote. However, the estate connected those who lived on it, such as Marian Thompson and so their shared experiences were unique to the place. These ties are reflected in the estate tenants' dinner organised today by the National Trust. Shared experience provides unity of community.

In terms of spirit of place, the working nature of the estate seems to be central to Thompson's account, as does community and the view across the variety of landscapes which she cherishes. However, she also suggests that the estate could also be somewhat lonely, acting as a reminder that social place was central to one's sense of place within the community:

Selworthy is indeed a lovely spot to have lived in, though then it was a very lonely one. After Holnicote was burnt down, in August 1851, which of course stopped the Acland's frequent visits, there was hardly anyone in the neighbourhood to visit. (p.8)

Francis Eeles, *The Church of All Saints Selworthy and its chapels of Lynch and Tivington* (1934)

Francis Eeles founded the Central Council for the Care of Churches and had a particular fondness for the estate's churches, particularly at Selworthy and Tivington Chapel. For Eeles, the spirit of place was dominated by a joint importance of spirituality and sense of place. In this short account he refers to the relationship between the built environment and the natural environment, which complement each other and are both inherent parts of the landscape. He drew a distinction between Selworthy and places of worship in more urban areas, suggesting that:

The best architecture in ugly surroundings loses much of its attractiveness, as we quickly realise if we recall St Mary Redcliffe, Bristol or Glasgow Cathedral. The whole idea of beauty involves the situation of the building to the houses and country immediately around it, as well as the actual structure. If anyone were to consider Selworthy in this wider light, and to conclude that we have nothing more beautiful than this church with the view from it and the thatched village with its general situation, it would be difficult to say that such a conclusion was unjustified. (p.5)

Later in his account Eeles refers to Selworthy as an 'unspoiled village' with a 'magnificent view', and in 'exquisite surroundings' (p.6). He refers to a sense of achievement of the sublime through experiencing the sense and spirit of place. For Eeles, the experience of place at Holnicote is a spiritual one. The sense of spiritual fertility is endemic and aesthetic beauty drives the agenda of continuity.

W.J. Turner, *Exmoor Village* (1947)

Turner's book was the first of a series looking at 'people and their various ways of life'. It is based on an anthropological study (1944) of the village of Luccombe, which lies within the estate, and employs the method of 'mass observation'. The book describes in detail the living conditions, occupations, pleasures and amenities of various villagers. The book is illustrated with colour and black and white photographs by John Hinde.

Part of Turner's agenda is to portray a sense of continuity and an unchanging way of life that was disappearing elsewhere. However, he also wanted to explore the more subtle changes taking place and to capture an image of life at that time before it

changed forever. Turner claimed that 'certain basic activities have not radically changed and the life of an agricultural village in England still resembles – very closely in some respects – what it was like in the twelfth century.' (p.13). Nonetheless, certain changes were highlighted. Turner suggested that the community has been transformed in substantial ways in the past generation and communal life 'has dwindled from what it was'. Communal life, he argued, had become less important by the 1940s and life more personal. He painted a picture of a village in silent crisis:

The village has lost its aristocracy and become more of a proletariat, so the distinction between urban and countrymen is rapidly diminishing. It has been left without direction. Its ancient leaders, the lord of the manor and the rector of the church, have faded or are fading out of the picture, their natural functions gone. But they have left nothing in their place except the ravings or wisdom of the daily newspapers competing for the villagers' pennies.' (p.14)

We could assume that Turner was describing a process of the erosion of spirit of place, at least in terms of community. In the 1940s, Luccombe remained isolated. Buses ran from Porlock but to get there you had to walk three miles. There were, however, regular deliveries of 'bread, meat, groceries, fish and coal' (p.37) and villagers were also served by a village shop, owned by Mrs Baker, so they were far from completely disconnected.

Turner describes the estate thus:

This country rivals the Lake District and the moors of Northumberland and Yorkshire for romantic beauty, but is warmer and more sylvan. (pp.100-101)

The trees and the moors are important elements of the estate in Turner's account. Holnicote is presented as a 'warm' microcosm of the rest of Exmoor where tradition is only eroding slowly and poor infrastructure has enabled the place to keep its individual character. Inaccessibility is highlighted by Turner as the 'saviour' of the preservation of Holnicote's unique character:

We were motoring there (in Luccombe) in the trafficless years of 1944, and early 1945, yet even then, going at a walking speed, it seemed decidedly risky when you could only see a few yards ahead; and to meet a single car in any one of these lanes was a perilous adventure and might mean backing for a

mile or more before it was possible to pass. When traffic is restored to normal, motoring in and about Luccombe will be highly dangerous. We cannot regret this because it will help to preserve the character and freshness and beauty of this countryside. And the great overhanging highlands of Exmoor, which at Horner and Porlock come down close to the sea, will remain in their formidable grandeur, and their inaccessibility will prevent any too easy assembling of trippers. (p.102)

J.K. Ridler, *A Selworthy Notebook* (1983)

Ridler was an antiquarian who established a chronological account of Selworthy's past in this pamphlet. The majority of the work is objective and accounts for the actions of others. However, the final pages give an insight into Ridler's feelings of place. This comes in the form of a poem, spanning the full geography of the estate and highlighting some key revelations relating to spirit of place.

The Return to Selworthy

Fair Porlock Vale, again I see
Thee in thy sweet repose;
Beneath the hills that shelter thee
From every wind that blows.
Thy broad and stately trees I hail
And fancy almost sees
Thy chimney smoke's fantastic trail
Ascending on the breeze.

If there be one would nature see
In her most gorgeous show,
Then let him come and look with me
Upon the scene below.
The fairest flowers spring sweet and wild
To scent the vernal breeze;
And hamlets like some timid child
Are peeping through the trees.

Here pastures in their verdant bloom

Lie stretching to the sea,
Where lazy cattle slowly roam
And graze luxuriantly;
With fields that most abundantly
The choicest grain afford,
And bounteous orchards offering ye
A rich and sumptuous hoard.

Sweet vale – how blest might be each one
Who breathes upon thy soil –
To pass in this their Canaan,
Their days in pleasing toil;
And brush away the dewy gem,
Industrious and wise,
With Porlock steeple pointing them
Forever to the skies.

The weary stranger passing by
To goodly fare is prest,
While welcome fills the farmer's eye
And warms his manly breast.
He envies not the coronet
But owns the kind control
Of that right good old baronet
Of noble heart and soul.

And now Selworthy church appears
Beside the rising hill;
Where it has stood some hundred years
I see it standing still.
That good old fabric. I have knelt
From earliest childhood there,
And oft with happy solace felt
The holiness of prayer.

And yonder rugged noble hill

Where beauty never fades
How I have loved to wander still
Beneath thy lovely shades.
Thy brow can brave the strongest gale
Thy breath is balmy sweet
And wafteth o'er the sunny vale
Reclining at thy feet

My home, my home. I come to thee
Across the purple moor;
And our old dog will welcome me
So faithful at the door.
I come again to those I love,
As happy as the lark,
And fond as once the turtle-dove
Returned to the ark.

The diversity of habitats is clearly presented and Ridler derives great pleasure from the view across the vale, with cottages, hamlets and other buildings 'peeping through the trees'. The landscape is complex, yet it is brought together through its status as a geographically complete entity, sitting as a semi-circular bowl, with the hills at its bounds. Selworthy Church appears as a beacon in the landscape, providing a sense of historic continuity within the landscape, complementing the natural and cultivated environment described in the rest of the poem.

Charles Wright, *Porlock Jottings* (1990)

Charles Wright lived in Porlock most his life and wrote *Porlock Jottings* as an ode to the area as he saw it, 'under threat' from ruination as a result of looming development. He saw the period of the 1990s as one of significant potential for change as development infringed upon the area. In fact, he feared the erosion of the spirit of place:

In the nineties so many changes are likely to take place, such as the proposed new school, the new road and perhaps the new rectory. All these

'improvements', as the Exmoor National Park Committee euphemistically wish to call them, will radically alter the whole character of this one time fairy tale village with its blissful unspoilt beauty, fast disappearing under the developer's bulldozer. All these 'improvements' will forever change the village. (pp.1-2)

Of particular concern for Wright was a proposed relief road, planned to prevent traffic from entering Porlock. In one article, he states that 'the sword of Damocles is being held over our heads until 1991' (p.101), in direct reference to the road. He repeatedly refers to a number of elements that, for him, make the Porlock vale special: 'quiet', 'peaceful', 'characterful', 'a lovely relic of the past', 'historic' and 'beautiful'. Critically, he regarded tourism as a potential threat:

Who has been responsible for the desecration of this once beautiful resort? The answer is tourism. Not the tourist, for he has always been welcome, but Tourism with a capital 'T'. All is sacrificed to this golden idol, for does it not fill the pockets of the exploiters? Not the inhabitants or the retired settlers, whose home it is, but the exploiters, who trade on the guileless seasonal visitor for whom they wisely raise their prices, to the detriment of the inhabitants and old people, who are their daily customers. Tourism helps them to feather their nests and to build or buy their own homes on the outskirts or in nearby hamlets, away from the village they have destroyed. (p.100)

According to Wright, the spirit of place was in danger of being lost, a sign that potential challenges need to be acknowledged when considering spirit of place. Tourism was frequently raised as a challenge in our interviews and surveys. However, some local businesses emphasised that tourism should be more vigorously encouraged and that the National Trust and National Park Authority should be doing more to encourage visitors.

Dorothy Sherman, *Memoirs of Allerford and the Slade Family* (2001)

Dorothy Sherman's maiden name was Slade and she was born in the village of Allerford in 1912. In this pamphlet she described her memories of Holnicote. She brought the place alive through her detailed descriptions of how she sensed it:

When I grew into my teens, I really did enjoy walking in Selworthy Woods. Agnes Fountain, where one could sit and enjoy the sound of the gentle fall of water over the rocks as it came down the hillside, the anvil clanging, the clip

clap of the cart horse to and fro from the forge, a dog barking in the distance, pigeons cooing, a cockerel crowing, a hen cackling pleased she had disposed of her eggs and sometimes, if it was playtime at school, children's voices. It was so quiet all these sounds rose from the village, faint smell of wood smoke drifting up and through the leaves of the trees lovely shades of green, sometimes golden or dark and sombre as the sun seemed to dance through them. (p.7)

Though the description of these sounds is 'timeless', today, perhaps, traffic noises would be added to the medley. Sherman reminds us that the way that we sense a place is central to how we experience it and therefore to spirit of place itself.

8. Changes over time – landscape, land use and species diversity

Several survey respondents described Holnicote as ‘unspoilt’, assuming that the landscape has not been significantly altered over time. However, there have been various recent transformations, some significant and some more subtle. It is important to outline these changes to illustrate how landscapes change and how spirit of place incorporates them.

Change in tree cover is particularly significant and visually apparent. The 10th Baronet, Sir Thomas Acland, known as ‘the great Sir Thomas’, planted thousands of trees on the southern side of North Hill, principally between 1810 and 1826. 23,000 were planted at Selworthy Plantation, 26,000 at Tivington and 25,000 at Holnicote (Ridler, 1983). Venn Plantation was added as an outlier to the existing Great Wood. This visionary act significantly impacted upon the landscape but, we argue, did not negatively impact upon the spirit of place of the estate as a whole for it kept the essence of place in mind. These changes are highlighted when comparing a mid-eighteenth century print (artist unknown) with Roger Miles’s photograph of the same view in 1961.



Eighteenth-century oil painting of the view from Luccombe to North Hill. Artist unknown. Courtesy of the Exmoor Society.



View towards Selworthy. Credit: Roger Miles, 1961

Marian Thompson, in her recollections from the 1850s, noted how individual trees remained lodged in her memory, even 50 years after leaving the estate:

Fancy my delight, when driving to Cloutsham with Kate in 1900, recognizing the very trees where we used to eat our luncheon by the Sweetworthy water.
(p.28)

Physical changes in terms of field boundaries are more subtle and tend to be forgotten in the longer term, but have also altered the landscape. We compared field maps from 1876 of Selworthy and Bossington with work carried out by Cheryl and Chuck Carson, who worked in 2000 with Isabel Richardson and tenant farmers to assign modern-day field names to the farms. At Selworthy, although the original field boundaries remain evident on the map, there has been significant field consolidation, denoted by the field names that sometimes span three or four former small fields. At Bossington Farm, the field names have changed almost comprehensively and there has been significant consolidation of fields as production practices have changed. There has also been a move away from grassland (which we can denote from the frequent allocation to 'meadow' in the field names) towards cultivated arable land,

which not only affects the appearance of the landscape but also its floral and faunal content.

Memory often fails to record subtle changes in landscape or culture. Nevertheless, though often unrecorded, these small changes can still erode the spirit of place. When Dorothy Sherman returned to the estate in 1994 after several years away she remarked on certain small changes:

On my visit to Selworthy in 1994 I had hoped to walk to Katherine's Well, but for an 82 year old with two artificial hips, even though I walk very well, I found the way barred by a stile. It was an ugly looking thing and looked quite out of place. I did walk to Mitcham's Seat via the lane. I did not see any wood ants. I used to watch them for hours moving wood and leaves to very large anthills...I remember periwinkle, St John's Wort and primroses growing in profusion around the little summer house*. Does it now? I think not! (Sherman, 2001)

*n.b. periwinkle and primroses continue to grow in this location.

This last emphatic statement, although perhaps misinformed, reminds us that our experience is placed in context within shifting baseline syndrome. A major reason for recording spirit of place is to safeguard against changes of character that are undesirable. For many, the construction of a stile may not appear 'out of place'. But somebody who has known the place for a long period may feel differently. Over time, these changes, though small individually, can, cumulatively, shift the identity of place.

For some, but not all, the diversity of species present, especially the existence of rare species such as Heath Fritillary butterflies, belongs to the spirit of place. Certain species, such as red deer and Exmoor ponies, cropped up in surveys and interviews as being central to experiencing Holnicote. Alterations in species abundance has the potential to influence spirit of place on the estate and so it is important to raise awareness of the shifting fortunes of certain species over time. One particularly prominent species, in this regard, is the Black grouse.

Black grouse were plentiful on Exmoor in the nineteenth century. N.V. Allen has suggested that 'up to 200 birds were shot annually in the 1860s and 1870s on the Holnicote estate' (Allen, 1985). Decline set in around 1900, however, and in 1972

there were fewer than 40 black grouse on the whole of Exmoor. In 1869, Smith reported in *The Birds of Somersetshire* that:

The grand old black grouse or Black Cock is still, and I hope will long continue, tolerably plentiful in such parts of the county as are suited to its habits...It likes the open heather and woods bordered by and interspersed with open spots of heather and whortleberry plants, the tender shoots and fruit of which the plant form a very favourite portion of the food of this bird' (Smith, 1869).

Some changes have been 'imposed' on the landscape through built development. When electricity came to Selworthy in the 1930s the cables carrying the wires were greeted with some anger, as some people (it is not known whether the outcry came principally from locals or visitors) protested that it spoiled the beauty of the landscape. An article in *The Times* on 7th February 1938 reported that:

The beauty of the village of Selworthy, so well-known to visitors to the Minehead district of Somerset, has been marred by the erection of a line of poles for the carrying of electricity cables...an appeal by the Rector of Selworthy for subscriptions towards a sum of £209, the cost of removing the poles and laying the cables underground, was published in *The Times* on Saturday.

Perceived visual beauty has been a key part of the estate for centuries and the electricity poles appeared to represent an attack on the very spirit of place of Holnicote, hence the anger and desire to have the cables laid underground. Today, the poles remain, although their presence is softened by the height of the trees along the steep road up the hill to the village.

Some environmental changes are linked to new approaches to land management. Today, a key management project is the Defra-funded Multi-Objective Flood Management Demonstration Project which is looking at how changes in land use could help to slow down the speed and volume of water, ultimately preventing flash flooding in the low lying estate villages of Allerford and Bossington. Flooding has been a problem on the estate for decades and climate change predictions suggest that, if no action is taken, flooding could become normality in future. In his oral history interview, Stan Hooper remembered the big flood in Allerford in 1962:

I was in the paddocks, the other side of the stream, the Aller, just below Holnicote House and all of a sudden, flood water came running torrents. I nearly drowned as I came up to Holnicote House. I went across the field fast. The water went right over the Packhorse bridge at Allerford, right across the road, about 4ft up one house in the corner, nearly to the window and over all of the gardens – a dreadful mess. I went to Bossington to try and cross at about 5pm but I couldn't. I went back to Brandish Street. It was before they put the new road there and Tom Crook from Culbone Church thankfully came over with his landrover.

Hooper's account exemplifies environmental impact that is dramatic in the short term, but leaves little or no permanent imprint. Historic experiences, in this case relating to floodwaters, are usually transient but they can nonetheless spur major rethinking in terms of policy, especially when the experiences are repeated and coupled with concern for an uncertain future, in the form of climate change.

9. Changes over time – human communities and lived experiences

It was clear from surveys and interviews that a strong community is regarded as a central feature of the estate and its spirit of place. By understanding how 'lived experience' has changed over time, it becomes easier to understand how history and shared experience and narrative have influenced spirit of place. Whilst the estate is more heavily influenced by external affairs today than ever before, with tourism and agricultural and environmental policy shaping the landscape, there are many continuities of experience. This is shaped by the fact that the estate's income continues to be dominated by rents from the farms and cottages. Agriculture or conservation activities dominate the landscape and the lives of people who work on the estate. However, many of the tenants no longer work on the estate. They either commute elsewhere or are retired.

Tom Rook, a lifelong livestock auctioneer, was asked to describe how farming has changed over the years for the Exmoor Oral History Project of 2000-01. He described how:

Tractors are more modern, the trailers are much larger. The lorries now have trailers and the whole thing has increased in size. Crops grown are principally the same although a lot more barley is grown now than in those early days. Far more oats back then. In recent years, oil seed rape and flax have come on the scene. There also used to be a considerable number of field beans grown. There is more paperwork today.

All of these changes have affected not only the landscape, the size of the fields and the animals or stock kept, but also the lived experiences of people on the estate. Modern agricultural practices and economics mean that much less human labour is required. This has effected long term employment opportunities on the estate.

Turner noted how most people worked with their hands in the 1940s. He distinguished between those who did and those who did not in terms of their identity within the community:

In a village like Luccombe, those who work, work with their hands. There are, of course, exceptions, but they are outside the real village community. The parson, for instance, the schoolmistress, and the two old ladies who used to be summer visitors and finally built a house here and settled down; they have never become part of the village for the very reason that their lives are not concerned with it. (p.17)

Today, while the farming community itself remains distinct and close-knit, no formal distinction is maintained between those who work on the land and those who do not. The surveys for this project revealed a feeling of close community. When asked to describe the local community responses included, 'busy', 'varied', 'interesting', 'inclusive', 'friendly', 'vibrant', 'unique' and 'good community spirit'.

A significant change in lived experience is the proportion of people living on the estate who also work on it. In the inter-war period it was common for local people to work their entire lives in Porlock Vale. This is no longer the case. In an interview conducted by Birdie Johnson in 2001, Hooper described his experiences in the 1920s when he worked on a smallholding in Bossington for a man called Jimmy Floyd:

I would work two horses and go down to Bossington beach where I would land sand or shingle for Cooksley builders at Porlock. There was not always sand there. I had to follow the tides. I've been on that beach at four in the morning with two horses. I couldn't take a lot because heave and beach would keep giving away, only pebbles. It was hard work for the horses. I'd haul it up and tip it on the grass verge the other side, when high tide I would load it up and take it round to where they were building houses.

Stan's working life was entirely based at Holnicote and the surrounding area. He became a keeper on the estate in 1938, where he remained for much of his life. Catching rabbits was a regular activity. He recalled that he would often catch upwards of 600 in one night and send them up to Derbyshire on the train, earning about 6d per rabbit.

Picking whortleberries is a seemingly timeless activity for residents of Porlock Vale. It continues today, although perhaps on a smaller scale compared to when many

people would pick them to supplement their limited income. Speaking as part of the Exmoor Oral History project, Dennis Corner exclaimed how:

We used to walk up through the woods to Horner and go up towards Webbers Post behind Horner Mill and pick all day up there. 4d a quart they would sell them for then...I'd put them in baskets – the same as those used for strawberries. In those days they were made of very thin wood. Some people would take them to Porlock to sell or to Horner. They would have a cloth on the ground and they would tip them out and as they were dropping down on to the cloth another person would be waving a tray up and down to fan all the leaves out. If you were a good picker you didn't get many leaves. Some people were what were called 'dirty pickers'. The whortleberries were sent away. I was told by Ken Westcott – whose father had a business in Porlock (fishmonger and greengrocer) – that they used to take in whortleberries and the most he ever sent away in a day is almost unbelievable. They would take them to Minehead to go by train to the Midlands and the North for human consumption and the most he ever sent was a ton. Can you imagine a ton of worts?! Gypsies and all used to pick. Mr Westcott used to go out with his van and buy them off these people and bring them back again. I also used to go down to Combe Martin for the strawberries and bring them back. Whortleberry picking was a great thing. A friend of mine, in his summer holidays, went whortleberry picking every day and earned himself enough to buy a bicycle.

Whilst agriculture continues to dominate the landscape and is a significant component of the local economy, a smaller proportion of the local population are now directly connected to it. The farm tenant community remains strong but there are now other means whereby local people make their living. Tourism is the principal means, resulting in a transient community of visitors with the local community changing between seasons. We spoke to several guests at the Porlock Caravan Camp, which is situated outside the estate but attracts visitors who enjoy walking on the estate, and learnt that many of them self-identify as 'semi-residents' and live in Porlock Vale for much of the summer, leaving in the autumn and returning in late spring. Many of the tenants of estate cottages do not work on the estate.

10. Living in an uncertain world – Past, Present and Future Challenges

Some of the challenges the estate faces have remained similar for a number of decades. In the 1977 Exmoor National Park Plan, the National Park Committee pointed to three key challenges (relevant to Exmoor as a whole as well as Holnicote):

- i) Potential clash of policies between agriculture and amenity on the moor.
- ii) The wellbeing of the community and the need of farming to prosper.
- iii) Mounting visitor pressure.

Our survey built upon these existing challenges but also identified a new one. Pressure of tourism featured strongly. However, by far the most significant, in terms of the number of people who considered it, is climate change and the probably yet unknown effects it will have on the estate itself. Sustainable funding for the future of the estate was yet another issue. Some local people also believe that the National Trust should be there to support local people first in terms of housing and therefore limit increases in rental rates.



Above: Challenges that were suggested from our surveys and interviews.

Many of these challenges appeared in the SWOT analysis undertaken by the National Trust at Holnicote in 2002, suggesting that they are fundamental and will need addressing through strategic and comprehensive planning. Past evidence has shown, though, that when faced with a challenge the estate remains resilient and adaptable. For example, the surge tide over Porlock ridge in 1996 was turned into an opportunity, generating a new plan for coastal management and creating new habitat. The estate was also able to ride out the storm during the 2001 foot and mouth outbreak and has amalgamated farms as necessary over time as agricultural economics have altered. Nonetheless, the spirit of place process suggests that, whilst adaptability in the face of adversity and uncertainty is useful, the estate must hold the 'essence' of spirit of place at the heart of its planning process.

The estate has already undertaken projects to deal with some of the challenges that climate change and connected issues, such as sea level rise and increased storminess, pose for the estate. However, climate change will have numerous consequences and staff must prepare for these various outcomes. Increased summer drought, greater diversity and abundance of invasive species, increased risk of flooding, coastal storminess and species population pressure are all possible outcomes in an uncertain future.

Economically, the estate and the wider area depend on tourism. However, the potential for excessive footfall of people can lead to environmental problems such as path erosion and the introduction of invasive plant species. It also has the potential to affect the very reason that many people visit the estate in the first place, to enjoy the peace and tranquillity that it can offer. There is a need to ensure the balance is not tipped. This challenge was raised several times during the interviews and surveys. However, without a strong local tourist economy several local businesses will struggle to survive and thrive moving forward.

11. Conclusions – Is Holnicote prepared for the future?

Holnicote is a place where people and the natural world are hard to separate. The built environment and the natural environment are similarly integrated. They are all vital aspects of its spirit of place. Our investigation has shown that Holnicote is highly distinctive in terms of the diversity within its unity. The estate's community lies at the heart of what makes the place unique and their shared experience contributes to its special flavour. If the estate's community degrades, then so does its spirit of place.

The core element of Holnicote's spirit of place, as identified by this project, is the assemblage of a diversity of landscapes, habitats and community through the connective tissue of a single estate – *Multum in Parvo*. The Holnicote estate is a 'workscape' but also a landscape of recreation (as well as a dwelling space for its other-than-human community of faunal life: an animalscape). Whereas, in the 1940s, most people worked with their hands and had a peculiarly intimate and economic connection with their local nature, today (discounting those who work directly in agriculture), fewer people know nature through work. With tourism a key component of the local economy, those who live, work and visit the estate increasingly know nature through leisure. It was clear from speaking to businesses, that attracting people to the area is vital for a sustainable future. It is believed that the estate receives upward of half a million annual visitors. But the estate's appeal to tourists can also put pressure on the local environment. After all, Holnicote is appreciated because of its comparative remoteness, its unity, diversity, well managed and beautiful landscapes and 'unspoilt views'. By being 'in the view' you become part of Holnicote, part of something much bigger than yourself. You access the spirit of place within that moment.

Holnicote faces numerous external pressures, including economic and policy pressures on farmers, climate change and the reliance of the local economy on tourism. They were certainly top of the list of concerns in the project surveys. This project has been limited in terms of the time and resources available and more work is clearly needed to confirm the contours of the spirit of place that we have identified. However, the research process has shown how the National Trust and University of Bristol can work together for mutual benefit, building up a portrait of place through a variety of techniques, ranging from traditional archival research to a pub quiz. The

project has created a set of relationships between Holnicote and University of Bristol historians. It has opened opportunities for future projects with other National Trust properties within reasonable travelling distance of Bristol.

How to preserve the spirit of place?

Spirit of place is a process of engagement and does not end with the publication of the final statement. It should be monitored and updated over time. Holnicote is not an outdoor museum. It is a dynamic entity. So, conservation does not necessarily mean literal preservation.

1. How have land use and landscape and ecological and human communities changed over time and how have those changes been evaluated?

This project has suggested that the changes in landscape have been relatively subtle over the timeframe of the Holnicote estate's recent history. Despite some major changes, such as tree planting on North Hill, the spirit of place, defined in this instance in relation to the '*Multum in Parvo*' vision, has not been adversely affected. Due to a variety of reasons, including its position, ownership structure and largely unimproved road network, the estate has escaped large scale development and much of its heritage has been effectively conserved. Species populations have shifted over time and climate change may continue this mutability by introducing new species of flora and fauna. The estate will have to figure out how to deal with such changes. Human communities have changed in relation to 'lived experience', although 'traditional' activities such as farming continue to dominate the agenda and the lifestyle of some tenants. The estate will face the challenge of adapting socially as its tenant community changes.

2. Faced with an uncertain future (precarity), how resilient is Holnicote, ecologically and socially?

The Holnicote estate staff team appear prepared to meet the challenges they will face in an uncertain future. However, it seems that more detailed planning is required to enable the estate to adapt to challenges as they appear whilst maintaining the spirit of place. In many ways, outlining the spirit of place is not enough. What is required is to outline a plan for how spirit of place can be used in a practical manner to guide the decisions of future management.

3. What are the lived experiences of people at Holnicote, past and present, and how well do they prepare them (and us) for the future?

The lived experiences of people at Holnicote are diverse but the accounts gathered for this project have shown that they share key elements which help to maintain community spirit and to prepare them to face an uncertain future. Size and scale were identified as core ingredients of the estate in the interviews. The local community is maintained through an active social calendar as well as shared experiences which helps to foster unity. By recognising the challenges they face and planning for them together they are in a stronger position to tackle them. The traditional model of society, described by Turner in his study of Luccombe, with the twin pillars of church and aristocracy, were able to maintain local society. In some ways the role of the aristocratic landowner has, in this case, been replaced by that of the National Trust. However, their preferred approach to the relationship with their tenants is based on the notion of partnership rather than paternalism which will stand them in good stead as they grapple with future challenges.

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14. Appendices

Survey results (x2 = listed twice)

How does the Holnicote estate make you feel?

Relaxed
Frustrated
Disappointed
Homely
Pleased
Restful
Grateful to the Aclands
Happy that we have such pleasures
Like returning home

What makes the Holnicote estate special for you?

Space
It's a place where young people can continue the farming tradition
Surroundings
Beautiful scenery
Natural beauty
Beautiful landscape
Protects the landscape
The whole environment
Dunkery/Horner
The beautiful walks
Peace and tranquillity

What one thing do you think makes the Holnicote estate unique?

Tranquillity
History
Access for all
Scale
Completeness x2
Large open spaces that are unspoiled
One landowner for large estate
Size
Patchwork of things
Lots of working farms
Combination of coastline and moorland
The location
Free access
Freedom x2
It's a protected area
Gifted by the Acland family
Fascinating family history
Position in the countryside
Mixture of landscape types all in one place

Amazing views
Scale and size
Community x2
Diversity of habitats
Unspoilt
Red Deer

What words would you use to describe the Holnicote estate?

Diversity x2
Wild
People
Landscape
Freedom
Quietly inspirationally breath-taking
Clueless Higher Management
Special
Beautiful
Scenic
Preserved
Outstanding
Old Family Home
Out of this world (4 words)
Beautiful x2
Peaceful
Unspoilt x2
Quaint
Green
Accessible
Rural
Picturesque
Beauty

What is your favourite place on the Holnicote estate

Selworthy Beacon
Selworthy Church and green x2
Selworthy
Selworthy Woods
Horridge wood
Selworthy Lane
Woodlands x2
Coast
Dunkery Beacon
Bossington Beach
Horner Woods
Horner Combe
Cliffs
Heathland
Horner Valley

Too many to name one
Horner Water
North Hill
Selworthy
Tivington Woods

How would you describe the natural environment of the Holnicote estate?

Something of all of Exmoor in Holnicote
Diverse
Natural x2
Unique
It isn't manicured
Wild
Breathtaking
Picturesque
Wonderful
Diverse
Well managed
Deteriorating with the loss of working farms
Well preserved by generations of tenant farmers, labourers, cottagers etc
Managed but natural
Stunningly beautiful
Varied

Are there any particular animals or plants that you associate with Holnicote?

Deer x10
Exmoor Ponies x4
Heather x6
Birds of Prey
Sheep
Beech trees
Rabbits
Bramble (blackberries)
Samphire
Sheep
Horses
Buzzards x4
Swallows
Gorse x2
Bracken
Birds x2
Badgers

How would you describe the local community and social life?

Busy, varied and interesting
Amazing, supportive, close knit, safe
Brilliant
Welcoming

Friendly
Welcoming
Inclusive
Cultural
Easy going
Great and unique – wouldn't live anywhere else
Rural
Vibrant but diluted by incomers
Friendly and Vibrant
Excellent
Good community spirit x2

Has the estate changed since you have known it?

The 'honeypot' bits at Selworthy have been allowed to go into decline.
Loss of farms
People – used to be a bigger community
Staff turnover
Defra project – change in the way land is managed
Management of tree diseases
The planting of Blackford Wood
Yes
Amalgamations of farms; too many empty properties
Yes – fewer staff in office and constant changes 'at the top'
Beginning of 'explorer sites'

What are the big challenges that the estate will face in the future?

Income
Tourism
Attracting more people
Conflicts as a result of tourism
Climate change x4
Bracken
Growth in visitor numbers
Jobs for local young people x2
Maintaining the built structures
Funding
Parking
Financial sustainability x3
There is a severe danger of becoming a museum – ie loss of jobs, home rented out to retired 'incomers', instead of deserving 'local' families.
Loss of young people as traditional lifestyle eroded
Maintain it as it is
Affordable housing x2
Lack of jobs for young people
People wanting to build
Number of tourists x2
Fear that the majority of NT houses will be rented as holiday homes
Congestion on roads

Maintaining the current environment

What could be improved on the Holnicote estate?

Housing for young families.

Broadband

More bins

Tourist information points

Sat nav directions to NT car parks

Internet access

Mobile phone reception x2

Parking facilities

Return to free parking

Housing

Employment for local people

Transport x2

Reduce parking costs

What needs to be conserved for the future at Holnicote?

Access – footpaths, bridleways

The woodlands

Tenant farms – workshops

Porlock Marsh

Rural traditions

The walks and views

Maintain the status quo

The land

The countryside x2

Villages

Wildlife

Vegetation

Seascape

Footpaths

Cottages

Land

Properties

'Holnicote, 1915. Lines by Sir Arthur Dyke Acland'

On Memory's Tablets let us write
A little song of joy and praise,
For refuge in this much-loved home,
In these dark days

Here, Nature Spirit, thou hast strewn
Thy richest gifts with magic spell;
We count them o'er, and thus the tale
We strive to tell.

Centre of all, the brown-thatched house,
Its garden-scents, its flowers gay,
And, out beyond the garden-wall,
The fields of hay.

The pale green grass, the shepherd's voice
Bidding his dog round up the sheep,
The dark red plough-land, and behind
The fire-wood steep.

The poplars grey, the Ash trees tall,
The gnarled old oak with rugged bark,
And, with its silvery under-leaf,
The Ilex dark.

We cross the road, we climb the lane,
We climb the famous lane once more;
We gaze in silence at the hills
From the Church-door.

Walking ancestral memories,
We pace along the Sunday walk;
Of honoured names, of by-gone days,
We love to talk.

We watch the orange-coloured grass,
Its tethered billows rushing fast,
Wave upon wave, bowed to the breeze
That hurries past.

We reach the Cross, its memory reared
Of him who loved that landscape wide,
Who planned the winding paths that climb
The steep hill-side.

We read the text, in granite carved,
"Ye Fire and Hail, Vapour and Snow,

Ye Fruitful Trees, Ye Stormy Winds
That thundering blow.

Dragons and Deeps, Mountains and Hills,
Each creeping thing, each flying Bird,
See that ye all, with reverence due,
Fulfil God's word."

Across the valley, Dunkery's line,
Against the sky cuts sharp and clear;
And Horner curls round Dunkery's side
Where lie the deer.

There is where, hidden, Cloutsham stands,
And there the way the Priest once trod,
As up the steep he climbed to serve
The House of God.

Above the congregated clouds
In grey and silver masses lie,
And, slow and silent brotherhood,
Go sailing by.

We turn towards the western sun,
And on the glittering Channel gaze,
Point after point stands out, enwrapped
In golden haze.

Spirit of Nature, silent here,
We look again on land and sea,
For silence best our tribute pays,
Our debt to thee.

Then down the paths we slowly wind,
Watching the lights on sea and shore,
And reach the hospitable arms
Of home once more.

How strange the peace of this fair home,
Amidst the turmoil of the world,
Where deadly shells destruction deal
In masses hurled.

And yet, a healing force they bring,
These hurrying rain-clouds, this red earth,
The purple moor-land, whence the streams
Can trace their birth.

The deep dark woods, the red deer's haunt,

So undisturbed by foot of man,
That one might almost hope to hear
The flute of Pan.

Inspired by their beauty spread,
O'er hills below, o'er sky above,
We feel life's duties clearer shown,
Courage and Love.

So, too may come for those, our friends,
Who stay to rest a moment's space,
Some memory of a lingering spell,
Of charm, of grace.

The Trees, the streams, the fleeting Storms,
The dappled Moor in shade and shine,
These are the true philosophers,
Teachers divine.

