

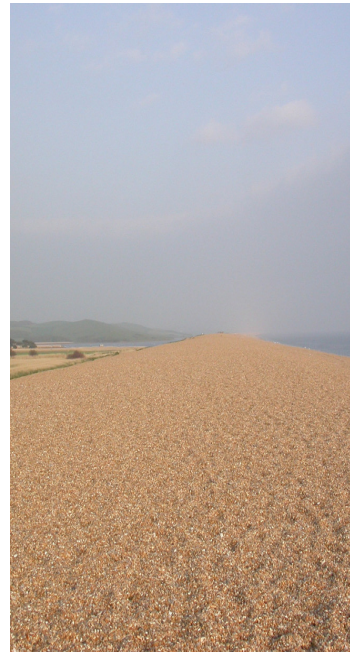
BACKSUCK OF COBBLES

seminar opening poem

12 December 2008

THE WIDE, OPEN

"If you want to build a ship with others don't begin by gathering wood, but awaken in them the longing for the wide open ocean." Antoine de Saint-Exupery



So, mmm...

Maybe we need to talk to about The Budapest Declaration otherwise known as WC dash 02 forward stroke CONF full-stop 202 forward stroke 25 comma 9 within the framework of each State Party's primary duty to ensure the identification protection and conservation of World Heritage properties as stipulated in Article 4 of the *World Heritage Convention Decisions* report (Christchurch, 2007) WHC dash 07 forward stroke 31 full-stop Cee-Oh-eM forward stroke 24 comma page 3

and

maybe we need to acknowledge that the verification process under the reinforced monitoring mechanism may be activated in exceptional and specific cases prior to institutionalizing the reinforced monitoring mechanism in the *Operational Guidelines* in risk preparedness policies and action plans making use thereby of the Policy Document and the Strategy for Risk Reduction at World Heritage properties...

or maybe we just need to stop, look and listen at rock, sea, sky; what is around us, under us, what carries us, bears us, receives us, what is dumb about us, what sings in tongues, where we get it from, what of it we want to pass on down the marching line of the years, and who to, what shall be lauded on high in the halls of the mighty and savoured in the dwellings of the meek...

'When I was poet-in-residence at Tintagel Island (of Arthurian fame), I used to observe the grockles' behaviour. Many would come as high as they could get on the island, then just sit on a rock and stare out to sea. I would come back in half an hour, and there they still were, sitting on a rock and staring

out to sea. What is our, the human race's heritage? Wide, open; that solid clutch of earth under our wandering feet, over us the booming arc of the heavens, the seething swell of sea, sea, nothing but sea, sea'

CIRCLE THE POEM CLOCKWISE!

The poem is circled clockwise; as the earth circles the sun.

This afternoon oh two-legged latecomers to the fossil record we shall be torrid, orotund, serendipitous, swayed by the general and the particular, we shall look wide and close, wide and closer yet, skipping o'er West Bay surf singing as we sprint towards infinity:

Look wide:

Cast our minds from Budleigh Salterton to Old Harry
(Via Sidmouth, Beer, Seaton, Lyme Regis, West Bay, Portland, Weymouth, Swanage): what is of value to me, you, the nation, the world, the Universe

Look closer:

the Triassic, Jurassic, Cretaceous ... It is only by following the guide of the bare bones stuck in the craw of time that we know ourselves for what we are...

Look wide: Triassic red oxides.

Look closer: Rhychosaurus;

Look wide: Jurassic deep water clays, sandstones, shallow water limestones:

Look close: ammonites, Dimorphodon, ichthyosaurs, pleiosaurs;

Look wide: dazzling white Cretaceous chalks, the Great Unconformity, early mammals.

Look closer yet: do we want this intensely dramatic and beautiful coastline turned into some sort of theme park?

REVERSE TIME - ROTATE THE POEM WIDDERSHINS!

The poem is rotated widdershins as we, the Great Unconformists of Creation conform world without to world within...

Ah, yes, I see you are wondering very much, are you not, about how to reconfigure the whatchamacallit of the scoping thingamibob as far as world heritage or outstanding universal value are concerned and where that all fits into the strategic imagineering of the gorblimeywhizzbang as set out in tablets of burocrateeze leaning at angles varying from the horizontal to 93 degrees, are you not, hmmm?

Never mind

We shall become murmurous of angels, snuggled up to the whispering breeze and ensconced in anticlines; we shall name the name that named the cuddled hills, for are we not inherently, naturally, instinctively drawn to value – to what is of worth; to wholeness, not to sterile ‘perfection’? As Charles Darwin said in ‘Origin of Species’,

“There is grandeur in this view of life, with its several powers, having been originally breathed into a few forms or into one; and that, whilst this planet has gone cycling on according to the fixed law of gravity, from so simple a beginning endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful have been, and are being, evolved.”

And where is the proof of this? Here, on the Jurassic Coast; proof that we are what we are because countless lifeforms have been what they have been

RAISE AND LOWER THE POEM!

The poem is raised and lowered - as the surface of the earth has been raised and lowered over unknowing ages

How?:

Well, listen to what burns through the night and breathes out in leaves, grass; observe what is laid down in wood, obdurate stone; feel the crinkle-wraps in the corrugated cardboard of Flowers Barrow, on a cool night watch what slithers out to sea in Black Ven, hear what whispers in flints, cherts, be soothed by what echoes in the backsack of cobbles on Chesil Bank

TEAR UP THE SCRIPT!

WRITE OUR OWN!

Let the seminar begin!