



**“LAYERS of RESPONSE” A Weekend in Pateley Bridge, Nidderdale, ‘Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty’ (AONB) 4 – 6 September, 2009.**

LAN Members were invited to join the artists in the King Street Studios and workshops for a weekend of stimulating and creative activities shared with the Friends of Nidderdale AONB. Over 46 hours we walked across moorlands and a picturesque gorge, explored caves and a disused lead mine, were guided down through the layers and folds of the vast Coldstones Quarry; and in between times we attended two exhibition Private Views and a series of talks focused on a range of environmental and creative issues. And we ate and slept splendidly in the comfortable and friendly Harefield Hall Hotel.

Proceedings began on Friday evening with the opening of two exhibitions at the King Street Studios. In number 6 studio gallery LAN member Sue Harrison showed assemblages of materials, some culled from nature, dock leaves, twigs and vegetable debris, others from old household fabrics, fibres, paper, etc. These she puts through various processes, transforming them into delicate and poignant suspended creations. In workshop number 8 Paul Harris showed beautiful enlarged close-up photos of water, pebbles, light reflected from ripples or leaves, nature seen in a grain of sand. Sue had also made sketch books out of torn fragments of recycled envelopes, she asked each of us to choose one which we could use (or not!) for jotting our personal ‘layers of response’ and finally local estate owner Stephen



Ramsden gave us an insight into sustainable and responsible husbandry. He managed to convey the complex and often contradictory issues he deals with while keeping us all amused as well. And this was just the first evening!



**'Jenny Twigg and her Daughter Tib'**

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**I have come away fuelled with ideas that I think will sit with me for a bit before they become physical.**

**Fiona Deighton**

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Saturday morning offered us choices: different walks were led by Friends of Nidderdale AONB: over the moorlands with Ted Flexman to see two vertical wind eroded outcrops, known as 'Jenny Twigg and her Daughter Tib', or along the Upper Stean Gorge with Paul Harris, or a tour of Pateley Bridge including St. Mary's church yard. At midday we gathered at Stump Cross Caverns for welcome rolls and soup, a hot drink and buns. Fortified, we then descended to the caves after an introductory talk and video by owner Richard Bowerman. He guided us through the passages and caverns and their awe inspiring stalactites and stalagmites, dramatically lit to show their fragile beauty. He explained our route on a map of the caves which showed that we had only



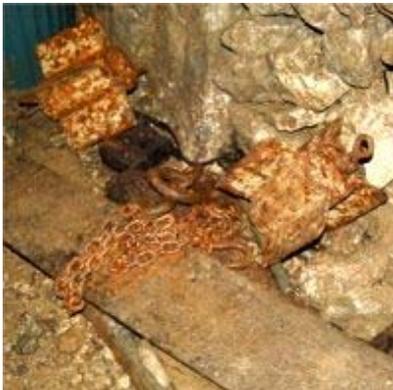
gone into the top layer. Beneath our caves were further descending layers, all formed by the power of water. If the caves offered us a horizontal section of the underworld, the next was vertical; Bob Orange of Hansons led us down the main access ramp which cuts through the rock of Coldstones Quarry. There was time to look, to examine details of minerals and colours and to wonder at the huge scale of the quarry and the unimaginable forces which had heaved up, folded and faulted the rock layers as if they were no more than puff pastry.



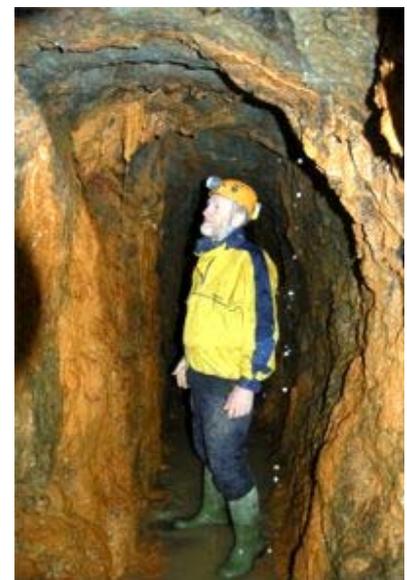
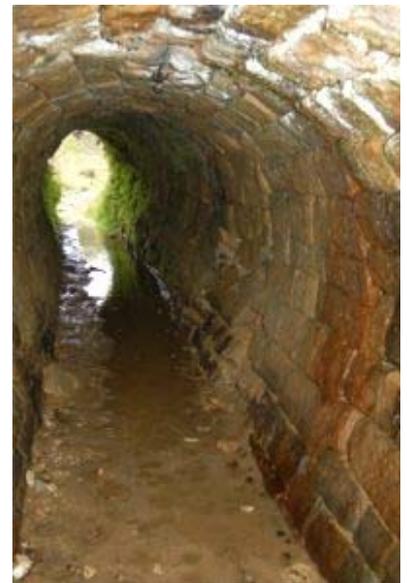
Later, after a sumptuous dinner back at Harefield Hall, we heard from three artists who have worked in the quarry. Several years ago the Yorkshire Quarry Arts project organised a programme of artists' residences at Coldstones. David Walker-Barker and Victoria Farrand-Scott each told us about their involvement and how it related to their art. For David, rocks and quarries are part of his background and life experience and his work reflects his life-long interest in rocks and minerals expressed in layered images and cabinets of specimens, unique works which convey his love of his subjects. By contrast, for Vicki, it was a completely new experience which she approached by familiarising herself with the site, assimilating its impact by degrees.\*

Landscape artist Andrew Sabin is also involved in the Quarry. Recently the Quarry was enlarged, absorbing within it a platform which had allowed the public to view it. Now, it is surrounded by a protective bund. In the opinion of Friends of Nidderdale AONB and Nidderdale Visual Arts such a valuable and useful resource should at least be visible to all, and Andrew was asked to draw up plans for a replacement Viewing Platform. He thinks that most urban dwellers have no realization of the debt owed to quarries for their streets and

buildings, and has responded with a plan to cut a walkway through the perimeter bund to the viewing platform, But in addition to providing a view of the Quarry, his computer generated images of the appearance of the feature suggest resonances of archaic beliefs in the sanctity of the land as Earth Mother. These after-dinner talks also included a fascinating account by Kevin Cale of the long history to be gleaned by looking at the varieties of dry stone walls. All talks were illustrated with slides.



And so to our final day and another choice: a walk in the open or going into a now disused lead mine led by Shirley Everett and colleagues from the Greenhow Local History Club. Entering the lead mine was a truly unique experience, involving wading in gushing water using the mine path as its personal river bed. Wearing miners' helmets, our head lamps lighting our way, we waded along the entrance passage, then came into the working areas. A layer of shale had been burrowed out leaving a cavernous space beneath a huge arch, actually the fold of the strata along which different mineral deposits including galena were visible. On one side, the arch plunged down beyond our view, blocked by a rubble barrier; above, it soared to higher levels requiring a climb up a long vertical metal ladder to reach another working level. The glitter of crystals, the deposits of coloured oxides, the white and green algae created an indelible impression, and a variety of left-over tools, rails, props, etc conjured up the vision of working conditions. And there was water everywhere, dripping from above and sweeping past our feet.





A final gathering back at number 6 studio gallery for lunch was followed by 'shared responses' -a general display of our various garnerings, sketches, photos, and the uses to which we had put Sue's original sketchbooks. Time was now running out and some of us had trains to catch so this final exchange was unfortunately somewhat hurried. As with other LAN visits and events, the main focus is on the exchanging of information between individuals and their various disciplines with the hope that this will bring valuable new insights into all our creative and environmental concerns, and I would have enjoyed a longer time to mull things over with the others. So I am including a brief description of my own responses and I hope others will become a Fan of Landscape and Art Network on FaceBook and leave their comments on the Discussion page

[www.facebook.com/pages/Landscape-Arts-Network/75441370953](http://www.facebook.com/pages/Landscape-Arts-Network/75441370953)

This whole programme was organised by Bobbie Millar and Sue Harrison and what an excellent event it was: many thanks to them. And to Sue for her sensitive and imaginative sketch books. Also to the artists of King Street studios and to Bidy Noakes whose vision it was to set up the nidderdale visual arts and to develop the workshops into inspiring spaces for artists. To the Friends of Nidderdale AONB, and the members of the Greenhow Local History Club, to Richard Bowerman, Stump Cross Caverns and Bob Orange of Hansons, Thanks. To all those who provided transport for us who came by public transport, and to the warm reception at the Harefield Hall Hotel, and its breakfast banquets, thanks. LAN is grateful for funding contributions by The Lord Mayor's Fund and University of Leeds' Yorkshire Quarry Arts project.



**LAN hopes you will all add your own personal responses to this record of our visit.**

### Response by Tam Giles

My perception of 'the ground beneath my feet' has changed. Of course I am familiar with the cycle of water from ocean to evaporation, precipitation and its return via streams and seepage, (currently I'm working with tidal movements) but the guides and the visits they lead brought home to me the extent to which our ground is not solid but porous; and within our 'solid' ground there are continual drips, sluices, torrents of water seeking ocean or water-table. And in choosing one of Sue's sketchbooks I saw one with particularly landscape/skyscape colours and an area resembling water (a lake in the hills?, an estuary?). As I waded in the lead mine, thinking about the upper world's suggested in Sue's booklet, with its watery colours, these words kept ringing in my mind "...where Alph the sacred river ran, through caverns measureless to man, down to a sunless sea..." If you stand immobile and watch your shadow you see it change position millimetre by millimetre but you know it is not the shadow which moves but you, as you are moved with the turning earth. It is this sort of change of perception which remains with me. (Thanks to you, Sue, for your imaginative sketch-book)



### Response by Sue Harrison

As a local to Nidderdale I am very familiar with its surfaces; they never cease to give me cause for thought and wonder. However, in the company of like minded fellows, familiar nooks and crannies take on new meanings and fascinations. It is 'areas of tension and ambiguity' which draw my eye and harness my imagination. Indeed, the more evidence eludes explanation and authoritarian certainty, the more it grabs my interest. It isn't that I don't want to know facts; I just want to enjoy other ways of knowing.

Ironically, it was when we went below the surface that things became clearer for me!

We were in the dark damp narrow confines of the lead mines, being led in small intimate groups through areas normally inaccessible to visitors, that I began to 'see' most clearly - although we had limited visibility! I was following the intrepid Tam (who was so enthralled that she failed to notice her feet were below water most of



the time). We were led in two small groups by Paul and Dave, two local caving and local history experts (and Paul was also an ex-miner). We did have safety helmets with torches, but the leaders' skill was to give us a certain amount of freedom to make own danger limits but with the reassurance of their watchful eyes. I felt inspired to crawl along a narrow cleft which had formed in layers of strata which had reared up to form an anticline. In so doing, I felt part of the layers of deposition and so momentarily lifted from my world of 'narrow time' into that of another and 'deep time'. Here human kind had less significance than even the grains of sand which had helped form the shales on which I lay. In this landscape, I was no longer passive observer but active ingredient. So it was the point at which I was furthest away from certainty and safety that my interests and responses were heightened. The haptic senses which I personally seek to harness in my work were on full power in the diminishing light and restricted views.

In our daily lives we have little access to real adventure, shielded as we precious humans are by 'Health and Safety'. No wonder as a species, we view the landscape in increasingly distant and disengaged manner. Perhaps if more of us had to mine for our resources we would be able to be more in touch with the earth!

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Article written by Tam Giles

Photos by Paul Harris and attendees of the weekend, more photos can be seen on [www.landartnet.org](http://www.landartnet.org)

*\* Reproductions of work and text by David Walker-Barker and Victoria Ferrand-Scott are featured in an excellent University of Leeds publication, 'The Naked Quarry', with a Foreword by John Woodman, then Director of the Centre for Landscape and Environmental Arts Research (CLEAR), University of Cumbria.\**

