Chapter One  
Cultural Geography on the Norfolk Broads

A Geographical Visit

In the Nature of Landscape offers an excursion around an eastern English wetland, the Norfolk Broads. This chapter introduces the region, and gives an account of cultural geography on the Norfolk Broads, ideas from a field of enquiry put into play. For over a hundred years people have taken boat excursions on the Broads; here cultural geography goes on the Broads, investigating landscape, finding how it might shape regional understanding.

This is not the first geographical visit to the region. In 1927 Albert Demangeon’s Les Îles Britanniques examined the Broads:

The peaty swamps, the still sheets of water hidden by reeds, the wide channels overhung by willows, and the lonely marshes frequented in winter by water-fowl exhibit Nature in all her wildness, loneliness, and melancholy. But in the summer these solitudes are full of holiday-makers, and the Bure, Ant, and Thurne, together with Wroxham, Salhouse, and Oulton Broads, are dotted with motor cruisers and sailing yachts. Away from the Broads and swamps, the ground is covered with grass and forms a rich pastoral district in which graze thousands of cattle. Green fields, grazing cattle, windmills, willow-lined channels, boats sailing among trees – all these remind one of the scenery in Holland. (Demangeon 1939: 282–3)

Demangeon shows an early twentieth century French regional geographic sensibility abroad, his passage signalling lines of enquiry followed throughout this book; the
Figure 1  Map of Broadland. Source: Fowler 1970. © Jarrold-Publishing.
aesthetics of regional description, the geographies of regional discovery, and Broadland as a region whose ‘curious features’ are reminiscent of somewhere else (Demangeon 1939: 282; Clout 2009). The landscape features itemised too warrant continued geographic scrutiny; reeds and birds, marsh pastorals, cheer and melancholy, seasonal shifts.

This chapter gives an outline of region and book, conveys the possibilities of thinking through landscape and culture, examines early accounts of regional scenic governance, and considers regional cultural landscape as a term worth revisiting for its theoretical, political and poetic potential. The chapter concludes with a survey of Broadland institutions and scholarship, and an introductory Broadland tour.

Outline

Six rivers flow, some into one another, all waters ending in the North Sea. To make up the ‘Southern Rivers’, the Chet joins the Yare, and Yare and Waveney meet at Breydon Water. For the ‘Northern Rivers’, the Ant joins the Bure, the Thurne and Bure meet, and the Bure continues, ending in the Yare below Breydon. Only the Yare keeps its name to the sea at Yarmouth, though six river waters meet the salt; which itself moves inland upstream daily for various distances according to tide. Northern and Southern systems are gathered under the regional name of the ‘Norfolk Broads’, though the Waveney forms the Norfolk–Suffolk county boundary, the term ‘Norfolk and Suffolk Broads’ sometimes used. The broads are shallow lakes distinctive to the region, between 40 and 50 of them depending on definition, filled-up medieval peat diggings whose artificial industrial origin was figured with some surprise 60 years ago. Some broads sit to one side of the rivers, linked by dug channels (as with Ranworth on the Bure, or Rockland on the Yare), some occupy the river as if it had simply ‘broadened’ in its flow (as for Barton on the Ant).

The Broads appear in print in upper or lower case, and the conventions followed in this book can help clarify aspects of the region. There are many broads in the Broads, lower case individual lakes in a region named from them, otherwise termed Broadland. An individual broad achieves upper case when named, as in Rockland Broad, or Barton Broad. Deciding on a holiday, you might imagine cruising on the Broads (a regional experience), or on some broads (several points to visit). Such case conventions are followed in this book. One further element of regional nomenclature is worth noting, concerning fen/Fen. The Broads are sometimes regionally confused with the Fens, the former-wetland agricultural flatland in west Norfolk, Cambridgeshire and Lincolnshire, where rivers flow to The Wash. As a wetland, Broadland includes extensive fenland, but the Broads are not the Fens, and indeed there are few fens in the Fens.

Instructive questions of terminology also surround the status of Broadland as wetland and/or waterland. Broadland as waterland carries qualities of scenic beauty, land framing water, free open air, leisure for profit, territory for regulation. Broadland as wetland triggers a poetics and politics of habitat, a landscape neither-water-nor-land, refuge for flora and fauna (human included), or waste wanting reclamation, needing
drainage (Purseglove 1988; Bellamy and Quayle 1990; Giblett 1996; Cameron 1997). In *The Conquest of Nature* Blackbourn (2006) traces conflicts over German water landscape, the reclamation of marsh and fen provoking both eulogy and lament concerning the transformation of landscape and German identity. Parallel regional matters of hydrology and identity shape Broadland, whether in the maintenance of grazing marsh as iconic regional landscape, contests over rights of navigation, or the defence of fen and reedbed as home for regional fauna and flora, against both human reclamation and natural succession.

Five chapters follow this one, along with two interlude studies of regional icons, the wherry and the windmill. An outline of book topography will convey the shape of argument. Chapter Two, briefer than the rest, addresses Broadland origins, but rather than begin with geological or prehistoric background, historiographic analysis emphasises contested narratives of regional landscape formation. The 1950s discovery by Joyce Lambert that the broads were flooded medieval peat diggings prompted argument over the regional standing of science, and the value of landscape features no longer deemed natural. In keeping with studies in the historical geography of science, emphasising both the geographical shaping of scientific enquiry and ‘the geographies that science makes’ (Naylor 2005: 3; Livingstone 2003; Lorimer and Spedding 2005; Matless and Cameron 2006; Cameron and Matless 2011), the chapter shows claims to regional authority shaping the reception of origin accounts. Definitions of and claims to the region shape scientific argument (Matless 2003a). Here as elsewhere the book examines ‘geographies of authority’ (Kirsch 2005), with institutions and individuals exercising claims to regional knowledge.

Chapter Three turns to conduct. From the leisure ‘discovery’ of the Broads in the late nineteenth century, sponsored by railway companies and boat-hire firms (and with an associated discovery of regional folk life), the region has been defined through contested pleasures, as either essentially a pleasure waterland, or a nature region threatened by such conduct, with particular sites, notably Potter Heigham, a focus for dispute (Matless 1994). The moral geographies of leisure, concerning conduct becoming or unbecoming a particular landscape, are shaped through guides, novels, films, posters, detective stories, children’s literature, political campaigns and policy documents, cultural geographic excursions on the Broads demanding that connections are made between such diverse sources. Policy debate has turned on the modes of conduct deemed appropriate to the region, and the scales of authority – national, regional, local – appropriate for Broadland governance. Thus the possibility of Broadland becoming a national park brought decades of argument over conduct and the geographies of authority; what kind of region should this be, and who should exercise authority over it?

Consideration of conduct in Broadland also encompasses folk life and the comic. Broadland as waterland of leisure life is shadowed by narratives of authentic regional culture. The working lives lived by those long resident, heard as manifest in folk song and dialect, have been subject to collection and performance by those beyond and within the region. The discovery of Broadland entailed the discovery of a regional folk, in keeping with wider enthusiasms for folk culture as emblematic of national and local identity. The performance of folk life, including its self-conscious articulation by
local residents such as dialect artist Sidney Grapes, could mix serious cultural labour with comic effect. An emphasis on conduct in work and leisure indeed draws attention to the comic qualities of landscape, the Broads as a space of amusement, an issue perhaps neglected in recent formulations of emotional geography (Davidson, Bondi and Smith 2007). Jokes and satire, joy and laughter, shape Broadland cultural geography.

Between Chapters Three and Four, and Five and Six, come two interlude studies of regional landscape icons, the wherry and windmill. The wherry as river vessel carrying regional cargo, or pleasure craft carrying leisure visitors, has, over 200 years, stood for the regional present and past, and since the mid twentieth century been subject to heritage salvage. Another technology of air and water, the windmill, the key mechanism for drainage until the mid twentieth century, and since subject to efforts of preservation and restoration, has likewise achieved iconic Broadland status. From their depiction in early nineteenth century ‘Norwich School’ painting to their restoration by present enthusiasts, the wherry and windmill work as Broadland icons, with questions of navigation, drainage, heritage, governance and beauty condensing around them. ‘Wherry’ offers an interlude after discussions of leisure and regional life in Chapter Three; ‘Windmill’ sits between the accounts of marsh and drainage in Chapters Five and Six.

Chapters Four and Five concentrate on the human encounter with the non-human world, the animal and plant landscapes of Broadland. Non-human life shapes cultures of landscape, subject to human attention, care and exploitation, acting in accordance with or across human expectations, human and non-human subjects and objects defined through relation. The title of this book, In the Nature of Landscape, plays on Broadland’s qualities of nature, notably the prominence of the plant and animal in accounts of the region, yet also the use of nature to underwrite, indeed naturalise, human power, not least in overlapping categories of land ownership, sanctuary and reserve. The term ‘nature’ has been questioned for the impossibility of fixing categorical boundaries between the natural and cultural, and the ways in which things deemed distinctly ‘natural’ emerge from hybrid relations such that the supposedly ‘pure’ category quickly collapses under historical scrutiny (Latour 1993; Whatmore 2002). It is nevertheless worth retaining ‘nature’ and associated terms (natural history, nature study, natural science, etc) to register its complex colloquial work, whether in specialist languages of science, aesthetics and spirituality, or in vernacular and/or popular appreciation. For all its problematic conceptual status, ‘nature’ may retain powerful communicative coherence. Specific genres of writing and picturing may convey the non-human such that their practitioners become ‘nature voices’, authorities on particular species or conveyors of a general value in the natural world (Matless 2009a). The complexities of nature, for Raymond Williams ‘perhaps the most complex word in the language’ (1976: 184), are such that it happily problematises itself, as a working word impossible to erase.

Chapter Four considers Broadland’s animal landscapes, emphasising the ways in which mammals and birds have variously appeared as objects of biodiverse value, quarry for killing, creatures for careful observation, cherished regional icons, or alien intruders. The term animal landscapes carries enquiry through fields as various as
marsh, river, committee room, reedbed, museum and sky (Matless, Watkins and Merchant 2005). Naturalists and nature institutions study, document and broadcast, landowners reserve nature in private, voluntary and state bodies reserve nature for public interest, specific species such as the bittern and coypu concentrate argument over Broadland life. Chapter Five concentrates on Broadland plant life, botanical and ecological study finding scientific and cultural value in Broadland flora. Cultural geographies of the non-human have tended to concentrate on the animal, giving little attention to vegetation (Head and Atchison 2009); the investigation of plant landscapes also entails movement across marsh, committee room, undergrowth, museum, reedbed. Processes of ecological succession, advancing in part through the relaxation of human marsh management, inform dispute over what Broadland’s plant landscape should be. Key sites concentrate argument, including the private Edwardian Sutton Broad Laboratory, the Wheatfen reserve established by naturalist EA Ellis, and Long Gores, home of ecologist-artist Marietta Pallis. If Chapter Three considers the collection of regional human custom, and Chapter Four the human gathering of regional fauna, here the cultural harvest of vegetation is addressed.

Chapter Six turns to the ends of landscape. Broadland’s present is shadowed not only by origin disputes but forebodings of destruction, via overgrowth by wood, aquatic transformation through eutrophication, drainage for cultivation, or flood invasion by the sea. Possible futures haunt the present; as threats, or sometimes as opportunities. Stories of flood echo the narratives of plant succession explored in Chapter Five, for some an erosion of distinctive scenery and habitat, for others the restoration of natural order. The prospects for destruction are explored through historic narratives of past floods and former estuaries, and of the region thrown in and out of balance as land and water shift. Climate change concentrates minds on a possible regional end, with senses of irreversible change, interpreted as loss, increasingly governing Broadland accounts. The Broads as waterland is set in relation to the North Sea and its underwater topography, the coast a historically shifting line, the sea bed once land, the land perhaps under future sea. The possible ends of landscape – undersea, overgrown – haunt the region, Broadland’s outline forever on hold.

Landscape Colloquial, Culture Resounding

It is in the nature of landscape, as a word, to move, between paint and ground, people and rock, vegetable and animal, profit and emotion, the wistful and the earthed. For Daniels, landscape’s potential proceeds from its ‘duplicity’, ‘not despite its difficulty as a comprehensive or reliable concept, but because of it’ (1989: 197); the implication is that ‘We should beware of attempts to define landscape, to resolve its contradictions; rather we should abide in its duplicity’ (218). Duplicity emerges in part from the historical geographies of the term, with landscape’s varying proprietal, communal and imaginal associations (Cosgrove 1984; Olwig 1996; Matless 2003b; Olwig 2008). For Wylie, ‘landscape is tension’ (2007: 1), of proximity/distance, observation/inhabitation, eye/land, culture/nature, tension making landscape a subject/object tangle. To a coinage of duplicity and tension I would add landscape as colloquial, denoting the
presence of different voices, forms of attention given, and a varied cultural constitution, moving across the academic and popular, the specialist and ordinary. Thus landscape entails a colloquium of disciplines, specialisms conversing over shared interest, though in the manner of conversation sometimes talking over and past one another. Subjects from the humanities, social sciences and natural sciences chip in; this book gives a cultural geographic voice. Landscape also invites the colloquial; everyday talk of vernacular tone, skilled talk of vernacular tone, voices of other accent, quality and formality, also able to talk over and across one another, or to make deep chat. Accents of landscape, whether spoken or written, articulate multiplicity, with questions of technique and accomplishment, commonplace and slang, always pertinent, whether for broad dialect, tones of authority, Received Pronunciation, regional wisdom, formal poetics.

Sound and voice indeed register throughout this book, whether in leisure sound, regional song, scientific speech or bird call. While landscape is shaped through senses in combination, the particular qualities of sound, especially of the being-heard rather than being-seen, alert us to landscape’s shaping of and through forms of address, mark landscape as colloquial. Broadland indeed shows sound’s capacity at once to transgress and reinforce social division, to travel across open air regardless of the listener’s readiness or willingness to hear. Voices marked by accent, timbre, intonation are given different hearing in popular culture and policy argument. Vocabularies of tradition, expertise, craft and fun shape the Norfolk Broads. For some the region is to be marked by silence (a silence of nature sound with barely a human utterance); for others a jolly cacophony belongs. In A Voice and Nothing More, Mladen Dolar states that: ‘We are social beings by the voice and through the voice; it seems that the voice stands at the axis of our social bonds, and that voices are the very texture of the social, as well as the intimate kernel of subjectivity’ (Dolar 2006: 14). The texture of voice achieves political charge, with regional accent effectively ‘a norm which differs from the ruling norm’: ‘The ruling norm is but an accent which has been declared a non-accent in a gesture which always carries heavy social and political connotations’ (20). Attending to voice regionally allows scrutiny of the processes whereby voices achieve popular and official hearing, whether authority is marked by expert language spoken without evident regional connection, or by embeddedness heightened by the self-conscious performance of accent and dialect. Differences of authority are shaped by traces of region in the voice.

Dolar also argues for attention to the materiality of voice alongside the explicit meaning of words uttered, with the voice ‘the link which ties the signifier to the body’, which ‘holds bodies and languages together’ (59–60), though paradoxically ‘does not belong to either’ (72). In Broadland, we find body, language and voice interplaying in complex style, in the accounts of travellers discovering the region, in scientists’ and naturalists’ fieldwork and findings, and in dialect performers putting region into public play. Dolar’s psychoanalytic approach seeks to direct attention to the ‘object voice’ (4), the ‘material element recalcitrant to meaning’, stating of the voice: ‘it is what does not contribute to making sense’ (15). This statement should not though be taken to imply a rigid analytical division between the three senses of voice elsewhere identified by Dolar as ‘vehicle of meaning’, ‘source of
aesthetic admiration’ and ‘object voice’ (4). Cultural analysis would indeed empha-
sise the ways in which sonic qualities such as accent and noise disturb any clear
distinction of object and sense, materiality and meaning. Dolar takes his title, ‘a
voice and nothing more’, from Plutarch’s account of a man plucking a nightingale
and finding little to eat on the bird: ‘You are just a voice and nothing more’ (3).
The phrase provides a departure point for a rewarding meditation on the constitu-
cency of voice, yet attention to culture might suggest the unrealisability of marking
out voice alone. The nightingale, plucked in death as flying in life, evidently was
something more; in corporeal terms the ‘nothing’ here is more a surprising ‘not
much’. That Plutarch’s incident turns on an irony, of disjuncture in body and
voice, meat and song, suggests less a lack than a narrative ‘something more’, cul-
ture abhorring a vacuum. The edition of Plutarch’s _Moralia_ cited by Dolar indeed
renders the passage as: ‘A man plucked a nightingale and finding almost no meat,
said, “It’s all voice ye are, and nought else”’ (Plutarch 1949: 399). If ‘a voice and
nothing more’ emphasises wistful reflection on the tiny carcass, the alternative
foregrounds human frustration and hungry resignation. Variety in translation,
between the plaintive ‘just a voice’ and the hollow bombastic ‘all voice’, further
underlines vocal complexity.

Questions of voice are central, in different fashion, to Anne Whiston Spirn’s _The
Language of Landscape_, a landscape architectural study conjoining ‘the pragmatic and
the imaginative aspects of landscape language’ (1998: 11). Spirn’s rich and nuanced
analysis indicates however potential cultural tensions concerning voice and landscape
literacy. If Spirn offers a generous, open language of landscape, culminating in an
appeal for ‘cultivating paradox’ (262), openness and paradox nonetheless carry a
shadow side. When Spirn gives a general diagnosis of linguistic loss, asking whether
people (in everyday life, or the professions of architecture and planning) can any
longer ‘hear or see the language of landscape’ (11), the prevailing tone of generosity
turns:

> most people read landscape shallowly or narrowly and tell it stupidly or inadequately. Oblivious to dialogue and story line, they misread or miss meaning entirely, blind to con-
> nections among intimately related phenomena, oblivious to poetry, then fail to act or act wrongly. Absent, false, or partial readings lead to inarticulate expression: landscape
> silence, gibberish, incoherent rambling, dysfunctional, fragmented dialogues, broken
> story lines. The consequences are comical, dumb, dire, tragic. (22)

This passage comes within a pertinent critique of planning and development around
a buried, canalised creek, prone to return in flood, but the tone has a striking sweep.
Absent here is any reflection on the cultural constitution of landscape voice, and land-
scape literacy, and the shaping of formations of subject, citizen and people through
such process (Matless 1999a). Attending to the landscape colloquial might conversely
allow movement across fields of articulation, with landscape literacy always a matter
of cultural contest, and claims for unfair dismissal of voice heard. Linguistic land-
scape policing might be resisted. Silence, poetry, dialogue, the fragmented, gibberish,
all are heard in their fashion.
Such a hearing of voices is in keeping with attention to cultures of landscape. If the ‘culture’ to which geography (along with other disciplines) was deemed to have turned through the ‘cultural turns’ of the late twentieth century has perhaps been neglected, or taken for granted, in some recent work, its capacities and complexities still reward reflection, allowing the term to resound. Williams may have judged nature most complex, but culture was also ‘one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language’ (Williams 1976: 76). The complications of culture remain richly evident in recent deployments of cultural geographic thinking beyond geography’s disciplinary borders, as in Sanders’ work on early modern drama (Sanders 2011), and in a significant body of work on the geographies and archaeologies of material culture, as in Tolia-Kelly’s studies of landscape, race and visual culture, or DeSilvey’s constellations of landscape’s material histories (Tolia-Kelly 2010; DeSilvey 2007; 2012). The narratives of memory and place examined in and produced through such work are echoed in Hauser’s cultural histories of archaeological enquiry, where visual technology, historical imagination and impulses to collect conjoin through figures such as OGS Crawford (Hauser 2007; 2008; Johnson 2007).

The ‘culture’ in cultures of landscape variously indicates ways of life, habits of place, spheres of representation, material objects, forms of media, the province of a ‘cultured’ elite, that which is popular, that which is not nature, the modes through which nature is valued. Cultural geographic excursions into Broadland thereby necessarily move between high arts and low pursuits, ways of life and popular forms, the site of culture becoming variously the painting, the folk play, the bird photograph, the bittern, the postcard, the iconic boat, the riverside gesture, the marsh tool, the diary, the novel, the cruise, the sail, the stick of rock. Attention to cultures of landscape demands an approach both open and discriminatory, giving space to all manner of acts and artefacts, while exercising critical judgement on their enactments of power and claims to value. Culture, like landscape, entails movement across fields, sometimes obviously adjacent and conversant, sometimes ostensibly living in discrete parallel.

Cultures of landscape also denote fields of conduct. If recent geographical landscape work has brought renewed attention to direct landscape experience through phenomenological study, notably through the work of Wylie (2002; 2005; 2009), phenomenology nevertheless continues to keep culture at arm’s length. In contrast, emphasis on conduct sees culture and experience necessarily conjoin, conduct registering the rituals and conventions of landscape experience, its geographical formation and ‘historicity’. Seeking to elaborate ‘the notion of experience’ in a manner avoiding deterministic explanatory resort to economic and social context, or ‘a general theory of the human being’, Michel Foucault posits ‘the very historicity of forms of experience’, via ‘a history of thought’, where ‘thought’ is ‘what establishes the relation with oneself and with others, and constitutes the human being as ethical subject’:

‘Thought,’ understood in this way, is not, then, to be sought only in theoretical formulations such as those of philosophy or science; it can and must be analysed in every manner of speaking, doing, or behaving in which the individual appears and acts as subject of learning, as ethical or juridical subject, as subject conscious of himself and others. In this
sense, thought is understood as the very form of action – as action insofar as it implies the play of true and false, the acceptance or refusal of rules, the relation to oneself and others. The study of forms of experience can thus proceed from an analysis of ‘practices’ – discursive or not – as long as one qualifies that word to mean the different systems of action insofar as they are inhabited by thought as I have characterised it here. (Foucault 1986: 334–5; also Foucault 2000: 199–205)

Such a formulation of thoughtful living usefully sidesteps polarisations of practice and representation which have informed recent geographical debate (Nash 2000; Lorimer 2005; Anderson and Harrison 2010), but also speaks to earlier humanistic geographical study, where work on landscape experience, notably that of Jay Appleton, certainly proceeded from a ‘general theory of the human being’. In The Experience of Landscape Appleton argued that landscape aesthetics could be rooted in a human behavioural preference for habitat sites combining ‘prospect’ and ‘refuge’, capacities to see and hide, spy and shelter (Appleton 1975). Such facets of landscape experience are present in this book, with, for example, the bird hide giving a classic site of prospect and refuge, a particular form of human observational power thereby secured, birds coming under human view unawares. The intent here though is less to present a hide as indicative of general human aesthetic preference, than to examine the cultural and historical geography of such settings, techniques and experiences.

Scenic Governance

The first combined pictorial and written account of Broadland rivers was James Stark and JW Robberds’ 1834 Scenery of the Rivers of Norfolk comprising the Yare, the Waveney, and the Bure (hereafter the Scenery) (Stark and Robberds 1834). The Scenery can serve here as a bridge between the discussions of landscape and culture above and regional cultural landscape below, and offers a chronological opening into the regional story. Stark’s pictures and Robberds’ words indicate key elements of Broadland landscape complexity, notably tensions of aesthetic and commercial value, the narration of human and natural history to inform the present, and the connections of scenic imagery and governance, with the book an intervention in aesthetic and political debate over regional identity. The Scenery also allows discussion of the place of Norwich in Broadland, the city’s centrality or peripherality dependent on the manner in which the region is defined.

The Scenery included 36 engravings from paintings by Norwich artist Stark (1794–1859), pupil of noted landscape painter John Crome. Stark would later be grouped within the ‘Norwich School’ of landscape painters, his career shuttling between Norwich and London (between 1814 and 1819, and from 1830) (Hemingway 1979; Blayney Brown, Hemingway and Lyles 2000). Robberds, a Norwich worsted manufacturer, contributed ‘Historical and Geological Descriptions’ (Edwards 1965; Hemingway 1992; Beadle 2008). The ‘scenic’ register allowed landscape art to occupy a distinct aesthetic space, while also connecting to schemes of landscape change, notably an ethos of ‘improvement’ directed to navigation and commerce. As Revill
(2007) suggests in his study of William Jessop’s work on the River Trent, landscape improvement, whether for agriculture or navigation, entailed a mode of landscape governance. The Broadland rivers had been subject to improving legislation from the late seventeenth century, with navigation on the Bure above Coltishall extended to Aylsham in the 1770s, and the Ant extended by canal beyond North Walsham in the 1820s (Boyes and Russell 1977). The Scenery supported Norwich civic and commercial schemes under the 1827 Norwich and Lowestoft Navigation Bill to connect the city by river to Lowestoft, thereby bypassing and undercutting the port of Yarmouth, in the process enacting the slogan ‘Norwich a Port’ (Robberds 1826: iii; George 1992).

Words and pictures in the Scenery anticipated engineering works, notably the digging of the New Cut canal connecting the Yare and Waveney, and the construction of Mutford Lock for navigation between Oulton Broad and Lowestoft, and on to the sea. Landscape appreciation and commerce appear in navigational alignment, with pictures and text giving both a nostalgic record of scenes which might be lost through development, and projections of a fine future (Beadle 2008). Thus ‘Reedham Mill’ depicts the Yare riverbank with a ferry boat taking passengers from a landing stage. Trees, cottage and mill stand behind, with another mill distant through the trees. This is a sight for picturesque appreciation, but also with commercial appeal from its potential transformation: ‘the proposed ship canal will shorten the connection between the Yare and the Waveney. It is intended to commence this work where the

Figure 2 ‘Reedham Mill’, by James Stark. Source: Stark and Robberds 1834, image courtesy of Norfolk County Council Library and Information Service.
group of cows is standing, and the mill which is perceived through the trees, marks the spot where it will join the other stream’ (Stark and Robberds 1834: no pagination). Reading the text, and spotting the mill across marshes cast in bright light, transforms pastoral scene into industrial prospect.

The navigation works were completed by 1833, though never achieved the expected return, traffic being further eroded by the Norwich and Yarmouth Railway, via Reedham, opening in 1844. The Norwich and Lowestoft Navigation Company was itself purchased in 1844 by railway entrepreneur Samuel Morton Peto, who sought to shape Lowestoft as port and resort through rail, extending the track from Reedham to Lowestoft by 1847, running alongside the New Cut. The navigation company was wound up in 1850, one mobility overtaken by another (Edwards 1965). Peto had acquired the Somerleyton estate in the Waveney valley, rebuilding Somerleyton Hall from 1844 as a modern mansion in Jacobean style, Peto one of several national business and political figures to remake aspects of Broadland for their own image (Pevsner 1961: 390–1; Port 2004).

Stark and Robberds’ *Scenery* also projected landscape through historical and geological narrative. In 1826 Robberds had published *Geological and Historical Observations on the Eastern Vallyes of Norfolk*, and his arguments on landscape formation informed his river commentary. Robberds argued from geology, archaeology, tradition, place names and historical records that the area had been an estuary in historical times. Natural history underwrote ‘Norwich a Port’: ‘It cannot be otherwise than satisfactory to the advocates of the measure, to find, that their plans, if realised, will follow the original course of nature, by restoring what appears to have been the most frequented entrance to the ancient Gariensis’ (Robberds 1826: ‘Advertisement’). The *Scenery* presented the restoration of the ancient Lowestoft estuary entrance, avoiding Yarmouth’s difficult harbour. Stark’s pictured ‘The Mouth of the Yare’, choppy waters at a tricky harbour mouth, while ‘The Lock at Mutford Bridge’ was shown ‘as it will appear’, boats waiting for calm passage. If Yarmouth’s ‘feudal tyranny and chartered monopoly’ had barred ‘the free exercise of natural rights and advantages’, frustrating Norwich’s business, the light cast across the Reedham marshes for the course of the New Cut denotes the light of reason and improvement, ‘the more enlightened and liberal spirit of the present age’, regional rivers freed for prosperity (Stark and Robberds 1834: no pagination). Parallel questions of navigation, trade and open waters would shape discussion of Broadland governance throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The broads and the northern rivers receive attention in the *Scenery* only in pictures of ‘St Benedict’s Abbey’, ‘The Island at Coltishall’, and ‘Decoy Pipe for Wild Ducks’ at Ranworth Broad, Robberds briefly discussing ‘many extensive and deep hollows, filled with water and forming numerous lakes, which are locally termed *broads*.’ If later regional narratives are dominated by the Bure and its tributaries, this first work on Norfolk river scenery is dominated by the southern rivers, and is not framed by the term ‘Broadland’. There are broads here, but this is not ‘The Broads’, with the lakes noted only for fish, wildfowl, reed and rush, and their name a vernacular curiosity. Stark’s image of ‘St Benedict’s Abbey (On The Bure)’ (a frequent contemporary art subject, commonly termed ‘St Benet’s’), and discussed in the ‘Windmill’ section below
(see Figure 34)) does however prompt Robberds to reflect on ‘at once an emblem and a monument of fading glory’, abbey ruins suggesting the grandest schemes might fail (Stark and Robberds 1834: no pagination). Improvement is shadowed by hubris, St Benet’s effectively registering buyer beware in a scenic prospectus. The New Cut would be cut, but the navigation would fail, and a train run its embankment.

The opening of the New Cut saw celebration in Norwich, civic identity renewed by new navigation; two city pubs adopted the celebratory name ‘Norwich a Port’ (Thompson 1947: 37). The episode underlines however Norwich’s particular Broadland role, as the major regional city, but at the navigational limit. If Stark and Robberds’ Scenery emphasised Norwich as river city, and if its port would handle significant freight well into the twentieth century, Broadland as leisure region placed Norwich on the periphery. Norwich is on the river Wensum, upstream of its meeting with the smaller Yare near Thorpe; the Wensum loses its name in the merger, the river marked by its Yarmouth destination. Norwich is a long river journey (down to Yarmouth, and back up the Bure) from the northern river leisure centres. Norwich’s yacht station remains modest, offering mooring and basic services, though the 1945 City of Norwich Plan had hoped for something more, envisaging a new station with a riverside walk to reinstate Norwich as a river city, and raise its Broads profile: ‘a Yacht Station, worthy of the name, with full club facilities and properly laid-out grounds’ (James, Pierce and Rowley 1945: 69). In the event the existing station continued, a riverside walk only emerging decades later. Norwich remains at the head of navigation on the lesser-used southern rivers, with leisure Broadland centred north.

Regional Cultural Landscape

Revisitation

‘Regional cultural landscape’ is familiar as a theme, if not always as an exact phrase, from earlier modes of geographical enquiry, and from a wider extra-scholarly topographical literature. The term might usefully be revisited given the comprehensive rere theorisation, across a range of disciplines, of each of its constituent terms: region, culture, landscape. What happens if region, culture and landscape, in their various ways rethought, are brought together again? This book serves as a demonstration piece for such an exercise. This is not a matter of combining three conceptual terms into a new steady template for empirical application; rather their recombination generates a productive complexity and instability, from the cultural baggage through which they are constituted, and the various intellectual traditions shaping associated thought. As with landscape, we might abide in rather than seek to resolve such instability.

Landscape and culture have been considered above, but region requires further discussion, the distinctiveness of this study coming in part from its regional focus. This section considers regional definition and governance, cultural geographic engagements with region, and traditions of regional writing.
Running regional rule

Broadland is maintained through boundary work; barriers to keep water fresh by holding sea out, edges of jurisdiction between historic port authorities and contemporary planning bodies, symbols and markers registering Broadland, or select parts of it, as enchanted or magical; cultural efforts to proof the region, themselves forming a significant part of the regional story. All such work is provisional; in terms of provisional as tentative, always requiring rework, and in terms of provision as sustenance, food for geographic maintenance.

The term ‘region’ carries associations of rule, Bourdieu (1991) and Williams (1983) noting the word’s root in definitional regulation, though with spaces defined as regions inevitably contested. Paasi’s Finnish studies offer a substantive geographical contribution, highlighting landscape’s work ‘as a visual and territorial category’ for national and regional identity (Paasi 2008: 513; Paasi 1991; 1996; 2003; Jones and Olwig 2008; Prytherch 2009).6 The definition of regional scale, in authority and affiliation, itself here becomes part of the regional story. Defining a region may entail moral rhetoric, whether in the policy projection of appropriate regional conduct, or the bio-regionalist ideal ‘to become dwellers in the land’, where the region becomes the chosen scale for eco-critique (Sale 1985: 42; 1984; Whitehead 2003).7 Regional cultural landscape inevitably concerns the articulation of scale and its political, economic, imaginative, emotional consequences, with the definition of a region an active and mutable component in its life. Region carries such questions in a way which ‘place’, for example, may not, with the term conveying a dual status of something carrying its own (contested) integrity, yet also being a region of something else: ‘There is an evident tension within the word, as between a distinct area and a definite part’ (Williams 1983: 264). If the Norfolk Broads are presented as a region distinct, an enticing leisure waterland or rare remaining wetland, they are shaped by flows of water and structures of governance from beyond their boundary; and while the late twentieth century brought a single planning body, the Broads Authority, other authorities continue to jostle.

If the term ‘region’ suited the discipline of geography in the early and mid twentieth century, this was in part for its scalar politics; in France and England it could denote political balance between nation and region, whole and constituent parts (Fawcett 1919; Vidal de la Blache 1928), while Estyn Evans could seek an Ulster ‘common ground’ in contested territory through a rural regionalism of peasant material culture (Graham 1994; Evans 1996). Regional cultural landscape might indeed achieve renewed twenty-first century political purchase, notably in terms of geographic identity in a future England (Matless 1998; 2000a; Colls 2002; Jones 2004). In a future of possible Scottish independence and British political fragmentation, the politics and culture of England and Englishness may surface. Within an England politically and economically dominated by London, questions of regional England might arise. Whether or not the particular issues shaping Broadland regional cultural landscape would loom large everywhere, questions of regional articulation, in forms appropriate to a given region, could well return.
Regions turned cultural

Earlier geographic engagements with the region carried a cultural and political complexity often passed over in textbook disciplinary history, with regionalism a focus for concerns of governance, landscape and citizenship (Livingstone 1992; Matless 1992; Clout 2009). Attention to culture in such work tended however to be circumscribed, whether in studies of the region as material expression of a distinct way of life, as in Vidal de la Blache’s possibilist studies of France as ‘a medal struck in the likeness of a people’ (1928: 14; Robic 1994), or in specific attention to aesthetic outlooks manifest in leisure, as in Bryan’s work on ‘the cultural landscapes of recreation and the gratification of the aesthetic sense’ in Michigan and north Norfolk (Bryan 1933: 341). Recent geographical works however work through the complexities of culture to fuller effect, indicating the possibilities of a revisited regional cultural landscape.

Hayden Lorimer’s works on the Cairngorms and wider Highland Scotland effectively combine into a regional cultural study, encompassing field study and the geographer-citizen, landholding and animal killing, natural histories of flora and fauna, and the animal landscapes of herding Cairngorm reindeer. Lorimer indeed sets the latter within ‘the treatment of locality in geography’s longer heritage of landscape study’, revisiting materiality and observation though different ‘cultural topographies of inquiry’: ‘The footwork and field trudge may remain the same but the manner in which landscape is approached and expressed can be retuned’ (Lorimer 2006: 515–16; 2000; 2003; Lorimer and Lund 2003). Fraser MacDonald’s research similarly makes for a Hebridean regional cultural study, with folklore, photography, militarism, geography and archaeology shaping island landscape (MacDonald 2004; 2006a; 2006b; 2011). Dydia DeLyser’s Ramona Memories likewise takes a region for scrutiny, the ‘Ramona Country’ of southern California, defined touristically following Helen Hunt Jackson’s 1884 novel Ramona: ‘The most important woman in the history and geography of southern California never lived, nor has she yet died, for Ramona lingers here still’ (2005: 188). The sense of a ‘Ramona myth’ itself becomes a ‘regional vernacular term’ (xvii), DeLyser examining regionally iconic maps, guides, pageants and relics. If there is no equivalent Broadland literary fiction in terms of transformative effect, Broadland is certainly a region significantly made through writing, with a parallel interweaving of publishing and touristic discovery.

Reflections on the life and work of Denis Cosgrove following his death in 2008 (Cultural Geographies 2009) have tended to concentrate on two of his three monographic studies, Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape and Apollo’s Eye (Cosgrove 1984; 2001), to the neglect of Cosgrove’s middle 1993 The Palladian Landscape. The overlooking of this study may reflect not only a seemingly lower theoretical ambition, but also its geographic particularity. The Palladian Landscape offers however an instructive example of a late twentieth century cultural geographic working of a region, which also signals some tensions of regional enquiry. Cosgrove states: ‘I have written the work as a geographer and it aims to be a geographical interpretation of a region of northern Italy in the specific historical period of the late Renaissance’ (1993: xiii). The term ‘Palladian landscape’ made sense for Cosgrove not simply as a
shorthand for the regional and international significance of Palladio as architect, but because Palladian designs worked landscape as an integral part of their effect, acting, whether in central Venice or the rural Veneto, ‘quite directly to articulate the dramatic qualities inherent in the topography’ (3). Palladio’s work thus characterises ‘a small region where, during a relatively brief historical period, particular social groups sought to refine a vision of their human place in the order of nature and to represent that vision through various forms of landscape making – in texts, pictures and maps as well as in building, agricultural practice and environmental engineering’ (5; Cosgrove and Petts 1990). Cosgrove moves across the visionary and prosaic, from cosmogony to land drainage, the Veneto also shaped by visions and objects of the transatlantic ‘New World’, whether in utopian dreams or new crops, regional monographic study dragging attention across the globe.

*The Palladian Landscape* nevertheless displays tension concerning the place of theory in regional study, evident in the structure of Cosgrove’s opening chapter, which moves from conceptual discussion of landscape and culture, through a biographical account of Palladio, to ‘outlining in conventional terms the geography of the Palladian landscape’ (Cosgrove 1993: 5). A three page account distinguishes three physiographic areas according to relief, surface geology and drainage history, and outlines historic urban morphology and contemporary post-industrial development. Questions of aesthetics are by implication curiously absent from the bulk of this ‘conventional’ geographic account. Occasional impressionistic seasonal evocations interrupt, and thereby confirm the conventionality of, Cosgrove’s regional geographic description: ‘Venice swims into a morning light’ / ‘uplands emerge as islands from the summer haze of the low country’ / ‘long-extinct volcanoes rise blue in early autumn mists’ (24). The remaining description shows conventional restraint, the interruptions taking differently conventional flight, as if Ruskin were interrupting Dudley Stamp. Questions of theory and description, held awkwardly apart in *The Palladian Landscape*, are returned to in the final section of this chapter.

Regional cultural landscape also preoccupies scholarship beyond geography, with parallel questions of theory and description, and retumed tradition, posed. Matthew Johnson’s *Ideas of Landscape* thus examines the ‘habits of thought’ of the ‘English landscape tradition’ in archaeology and landscape history through figures such as WG Hoskins and Maurice Beresford. Johnson crosses a presumed landscape divide between theoretical reflection and defiant empiricism: ‘Landscape studies are simultaneously one of the most fashionable and avant-garde areas of scholarly enquiry, and also, paradoxically, one of the most theoretically dormant areas’ (Johnson 2007: 1; Matless 1993; 2008a). Johnson, who prefaces his work with a regional exercise, ‘Thinking about Swaledale’, jumps any division between those pursuing pure theory, and those deploying an empiricist (anti) aesthetic of practical mud-on-boots common sense, his ‘Glossary’ of landscape terms offering indicative alphabetical leaps: genius loci, gentry, hachuring, hermeneutics, hundred, husbandman, ineffable (Johnson 2007: 204).

Regional landscape enquiry also navigates the historic and experimental in performance studies (Daniels, Pearson and Roms 2010). Mike Pearson’s book *In Comes I*: *Performance, Memory and Landscape*, like his subsequent ‘Carrlands’ project, takes a patch of north Lincolnshire to develop the possibilities of performative engagement
with landscape, with performance ‘a topographic phenomenon of both natural history
and local history’ (Pearson 2006: 3). As in the Veneto, and Broadland, drainage shapes
Pearson’s country; dialogue with Pearson’s Lincolnshire work has shaped this study
(Matless and Pearson 2012). Pearson presents documentation of and proposals for
performance pieces in the field, and a performative form of writing. ‘In Comes I’, its
title from the introductory line of characters in folk plays, strikingly adopts longstanding
geographic landscape conventions of fieldwork and mapping, perhaps most obvi-
ously in the ‘neighbourhood’ excursions section of the book, around Hibaldstow,
Redbourne and Kirton in Lindsey (Pearson 2006: 96–141). Pearson notes of his text
that: ‘For periods, the aesthetic practice of performance is barely mentioned, though
the text itself remains resolutely performative: it employs voices of different discursive
register in a number of narrative styles, in juxtapositions of material from various
disciplinary approaches’ (16–17). Surface geology, enclosure, field labour, town lives,
appear through prose of field observation, autobiographic memory and historical geo-
graphical fact, Pearson writing through different registers to show landscape as a
matrix of related stories (17), to be tapped in performance.

Pearson’s work prompts reflection on disciplinary approaches to regional cultural
landscape, made in the spirit of the 2001 invitation in Pearson and Shanks’ Theatre/
Archaeology: ‘And the folklorist, the archaeologist, the geographer are most welcome
to come and stand in our field. We do not want simply to appropriate their method-
ologies. We want them to look, and to enable us to look through them, at perfor-
mance’ (Pearson and Shanks 2001: xiv). Pearson takes region (rather than author,
period or genre) as his ‘optic’ (Pearson 2006: 3) for enquiry, noting that his journeys
‘resemble acts of contemporary chorography’ (xiii); it is worth pausing at the word
‘resemble’. This is performance moving close to, perhaps mimicking, but not pretend-
ing to become, something conventionally set as other to itself. If performance entails
reflection on the conventions, techniques and rituals via which a subject (a person, a
discipline) shapes itself, geography and performance studies find themselves per-
forming in subtly different fashion. For Pearson region carries novelty, but for the
geographer the word might signal rediscovery, even reassertion; or a rut escaped. The
resemblance becomes a family one, with all the complexities of affinity, anxiety,
enchantment, familiarity and contempt which that term might entail (Matless 2010). Performance and geography carry different genealogies to meet over ‘region’, the
word migrating between the novel and familiar, the avant-garde and old hat.

Regions of writing

Introducing a collection on the narration of landscape and environment, Daniels and
Lorimer identify themes of textuality, temporality and locality as shaping renewed
geographical engagement with narrative, with the region one variant scale (Daniels
and Lorimer 2012). Wylie develops such themes in his study of Tim Robinson, whose
Galway and Connemara writings and mappings appear exemplary in presenting a
regional problematic of dwelling (Wylie 2012). Landscape and region have long met
in regional writing, whether fictional (Snell 1998) or documentary, and consideration
of such work concludes this section, indicating further possibilities for regional cultural landscape.

Across the Humber from Pearson’s north Lincolnshire, on another English east coast flatland, Yorkshire’s East Riding was put into fictional play in Winifred Holtby’s 1936 novel *South Riding*, subtitled ‘An English Landscape’ (Holtby 1936). One hundred and sixty-eight participant characters are listed at the outset, with Holtby’s plots of love and local government set off by the arrival of young headmistress Sarah Burton. The prosaic low regional landscape holds, and sometimes struggles to contain, the dreams and ambitions of those within. Early in the novel, squire’s daughter Midge Carne looks out from Maythorpe Hall onto dullness, little knowing what is to come:

> There was not a hill, not a church, not a village. From Maythorpe southward to Lincolnshire lay only fields and dykes and scattered farms and the unseen barrier of the Leame Estuary, the plain rising and dimpling in gentle undulations as though a giant potter had pressed his thumb now more lightly, now more heavily, on the yet malleable clay of the spinning globe.

> A dull landscape, thought Midge Carne. Nothing happens in it. (29)

Holtby’s regional landscape work was recognised from 1967 in the Royal Society of Literature’s Winifred Holtby Memorial Prize, awarded for ‘the best regional novel of the year’, winners including Graham Swift’s 1983 Fenland novel *Waterland*. Swift told of life by another ‘River Leem’, tributary of the Great Ouse, and the agrarian reclamation of a wetland, the turning of fen to productive Fens (Swift 1983). Regional work has since however appeared to run against the literary grain. In 2003 the RSL replaced the Holtby Prize with the Ondaatje Prize, an annual award of £10,000 for ‘a distinguished work of fiction, non-fiction or poetry, evoking the spirit of a place’. The new prize was endowed by businessman Christopher Ondaatje, also a leading geographical benefactor, with the main Royal Geographical Society lecture theatre now named for him. Literary attention shifts from region to place, and indeed to nature, as in a 2008 issue of literary magazine *Granta* on ‘The New Nature Writing’, also featuring Fenland stories, discussed further in Chapter Five below (Granta 2008). The prized literary region retreats.

If the Holtby prize has gone, however, the region still attracts literary study. Thus Ralph Pite’s *Hardy’s Geography: Wessex and the Regional Novel* argues for a transformed sense of regionalism as central to Hardy’s radicalism, challenging any assumed conjunction of regionalism, conservatism and constraint (Pite 2002), while a recent collection on ‘regional modernism’ takes architectural ‘critical regionalism’ as a starting point for excavating a neglected literary conjunction of the regionalist and modernist, resisting an orthodox historical ‘metronormativity’ aligning modernism with the metropolis (Herring 2009: 2). The Lincolnshire stories of Jon McGregor, making up *This Isn’t the Sort of Thing That Happens to Someone Like You*, demonstrate continuing life in the regional modernist meeting, vocabularies of landscape harnessed for formal nuance and experiment; geometries of drainage, trajectories of power, topographic secrets, place name litanies (McGregor 2012).

Two further examples of regional work, deploying words and pictures through a variety of forms and sensibilities, indicate how regional attention continues to play
productively. Michael Bracewell and Linder’s 2003 collaboration, *I Know Where I’m Going: A Guide to Morecambe & Heysham*, writes through present and past coastal Lancashire, imagery and souvenirs from lost heydays evoking and transgressing the regional guidebook form, the work introduced with the summative: ‘Our region is Pop, surreal and neo-Romantic’ (Bracewell and Linder 2003: 7). Named after a Powell and Pressburger film, the book exercises a fondly possessive regional authorship. Motorways, holiday camps, monastic ruins, hotels, graves, promenades and nuclear power vie for regional attention, and Bracewell posits a particular presence of history, where sites ‘articulate the past within the present with particular, at times unsettling, intensity’ (8). In different fashion, Colin Sackett rubs older conventions of landscape and regional survey against themselves through a series of book works around twentieth century English sources (Sackett 2004; 2008). In ‘Hereabouts’ (1999), Sackett takes JA Steers’ post-war coastal geographies of England and Wales, moving clockwise around the coast from Axmouth and back again, re-sorting words from each of Steers’ photographic captions into alphabetical order (Sackett 2004: 68–70). Acts at once systematic and arbitrary are performed on old geography. Sackett’s *The True Line: The Landscape Diagrams of Geoffrey Hutchings*, takes cropped sections from the sectional diagrams and drawings of a pioneer of regional survey and field studies, showing anew Hutchings’ graphically economical landscape transcription (Sackett 2006). Regional geography makes for contemporary book art, convention sparking experiment.

Recent geographic literary studies include John Tomaney’s account of Basil Bunting’s modernist autobiographical poem *Briggflatts*, highlighting ‘the storied nature of regional identity’, Bunting’s work showing a ‘subtle, complex, and pluralistic sense of his Northumbrian home-world’ (Tomaney 2007: 355–6; cf Tomaney 2010). For Tomaney, Bunting challenges those presenting regions as relationally subordinate to the global, or classifying concerns for regional identity as atavistic: ‘Bunting’s poetry demonstrates the progressive potential of regional narratives while avoiding recourse to a crude metaphysics of scale’ (Tomaney 2007: 356). For Robert Colls, Bunting stands in succession to the late nineteenth and early twentieth century ‘New Northumbrian’ movement, with an ambivalent relationship to England, simultaneous concern for the modern and historic, and attention to conventions of travel and dialect: ‘In culture, the movement had to wait for over fifty years before its credo was distilled into a single work of art – Basil Bunting’s *Briggflatts*’ (Colls 2007: 177). Bunting and *Briggflatts* can conclude this section.

Bunting (1900–85) published *Briggflatts* in 1966, its attention to biography, history and dialect, and the animal, vegetable and mineral non-human world, offering motifs for a revisited regional cultural landscape (Bunting 1968; Makin 1992; McGonigal and Price 2000). Makin stresses Bunting’s blend of pantheism and Quakerism in the scrutiny of things, observation shading observance: ‘*Briggflatts* is an ecology of fox, slow-worm, rat, blow-fly, and weed; sheepdogs and pregnant sheep; light on water and foam on rock: things seen’ (Makin 1992: 16). *Briggflatts* takes its name from Brigflatts, the Quaker meeting house in rural Westmorland, key in Bunting’s autobiographic territory; Peter Bell’s 1982 film on Bunting shows the poet journeying to Brigflatts by car and foot, poem extracts read over scenes of house and adjacent River Rawthey (Bunting 2009). The poem traces other historic and present Northumbrian regional edges; the
coast with stars over sea, their light travelling 50 years to earth, as Bunting lives 50 years on from remembered childhood Brigflatts love: ‘Then is diffused in Now’ / ‘The star you steer by is gone’. Brigflatts is a poem of region and passage, of life time and migratory journey, in Bunting’s life through Europe and Asia and Northumbrian return in 1952, in historic movement shaping Northumbrian kingdoms, with ‘Baltic plainsong speech’ carried over the North Sea. The books of the poem proceed through seasons, from spring to new year, with fauna variously signing Bunting’s masculinity; the ‘ridiculous’ and ‘sweet tenor’ bull opening the poem by the Rawthey, the slowworm as a mark of life, moving in spring, sustained by autumn gleanings, moving with love and starlight in late life (by which time the bull has turned to beef). Makin notes Bunting’s tropes of webs, weaves and shuttles, commenting: ‘the solidest basis is a mobility’ (Makin 1992: 149). Region in Brigflatts marks passage from, through and back to, Bunting’s middle life return posing a regional question: what would I have settled for?

The Broadland Scene

Bodies and sources

Broadland has been shaped by organisations operating at various scales, from supranational bodies such as the European Union, shaping farming in Broadland as elsewhere in Europe, to national bodies as diverse as the Ministry of Agriculture, the Great Eastern Railway and the British Association for the Advancement of Science, to specialist regional organisations such as the Norfolk Wherry Trust, concerned to preserve particular objects. All will feature at various times in this book. Other institutions however have Broadland as a whole within their remit, or shape regional landscape through their Norfolk work, and require introduction in advance. While the term ‘region’ may often denote a scale greater than the English county, the Broadland region is a sub-county unit (though it also cuts across the Norfolk–Suffolk boundary), and Norfolk county institutions have played an important role.11

The Broads Authority (BA), formed in 1978 as a joint committee of existing authorities, became the planning authority over an area granted national park status in 1989. Broadland’s waters were previously under the jurisdiction of the Great Yarmouth Port and Haven Commission (GYPHC), successor to the Yarmouth Haven and Pier Commission, established in 1670. Yare jurisdiction was historically divided between Yarmouth Corporation downstream of Hardley Cross, and Norwich Corporation upstream, successive Acts consolidating responsibility for the haven and for Yare, Waveney and Bure navigation with the GYPHC (George 1992: 343–5). The work of the BA, in navigation and other fields, is considered in Chapters Three and Six, but here it is worth noting their intellectual policy deployment of landscape, whether in the early 1980s landscape classifications discussed in Chapter Six, or through their 2006 Landscape Character Assessment, identifying 31 distinct ‘local character areas’ within the Authority region, their qualities to be considered in planning decisions (Broads Authority 2011: 28).12 ‘Landscape’ here follows the European Landscape Convention’s definition: ‘an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action
and interaction of natural and/or human factors’ (27); a definition designed to allow formal assessment and political latitude, but which stretches towards breaking point when the complexities of culture are injected.

Broadland institutions have emerged not only through governance but commerce, with holiday hire companies such as Blakes and Hoseasons shaping the region as leisure landscape, staking the Broads as core business territory. Other bodies emerge through enthusiasm; the Broads Society, established in 1956 by sailing enthusiasts but with a remit of vigilance and care over regional landscape; the Norfolk Naturalists Trust (NNT) (now Norfolk Wildlife Trust), established in 1926 to hold land for nature conservation, and with a significant portfolio of Broadland reserves; the Norfolk and Norwich Naturalists’ Society (NNNS), established in 1869 to foster study and appreciation of county flora and fauna, with Broadland a key field site. The Transactions of the NNNS have been central to the record and dissemination of Broadland field study. Broadland science was also the province of the state Nature Conservancy (NC; precursor to the current Natural England), established in 1948 and with its East Anglia office in Norwich, and of the University of Cambridge and the University of East Anglia (UEA), established in Norwich in 1963, and whose personnel would, as discussed in Chapter Six, play significant roles in regional research and governance. Facets of all of the above institutions’ work feature in the Museum of the Broads, established in Potter Heigham in 1996 and moving to Stalham Staithe in 2000. The Museum’s rich displays range from a reconstructed wherry, card models of Broadland craft, boat engines, boat lavatories, gun punts, coypu traps, a coat of mole skins, EA Ellis’s coypu fur hat, beer mats and ashtrays, and the borer through which Joyce Lambert established the broads’ artificial origins. The Museum’s span of objects crosses the remit of this book.

Existing scholarship on Broadland has shaped public regional debate, whether on culture, history or ecology. The late nineteenth century Broadland photography of PH Emerson has acquired an international art reputation, and been subject to detailed research, notably by photographic historian John Taylor (Taylor 1995; 2006). A 1986 UEA exhibition, to which Taylor contributed, reasserted Emerson’s regional status, setting his imagery as a key reference point for contemporary Broadland (McWilliam and Sekules 1986). The UEA has also shaped two key regional monographs. Tom Williamson’s The Norfolk Broads (1997) provides a regional landscape history, outlining key landscape types and emphasising issues of industrial history and land drainage. Brian Moss’s The Broads: The People’s Wetland (2001), an ecological survey within the New Naturalist series, and successor to EA Ellis’s 1965 New Naturalist regional volume (Ellis 1965), gives an overview of late twentieth and early twenty-first century Broadland science, discussed further in Chapter Six. The standard reference for any Broadland research remains however Martin George’s The Land Use, Ecology and Conservation of Broadland (1992). George played a key role in Broadland as Nature Conservancy Regional Officer for East Anglia (1966–90, following a term as Deputy 1960–6), and was awarded an OBE on retirement for ‘services to conservation’. From 1991 he served on the committee of the Broads Society, acting as Chair from 1998. From the NC offices in Norwich, and a house overlooking Strumpshaw Fen, George has produced key works on the region.
Archival and interview sources are noted in the Preface preceding this chapter, but a key informant, who became both a source of research material and a commentator on research as it developed, was the late Joyce Lambert, who established the broads’ artificial origins in the 1950s. Lambert’s contribution to this research deserves discussion here. After an initial interview at her home in Brundall, where she lived after retiring from Southampton University, I met Lambert on a number of occasions, in
Brundall and later in a nursing home on the edge of Norwich, discussing issues of shared interest within and beyond Broadland, from ecological research and landscape history to local sport and national politics. Examination of private research documents, and press cuttings concerning the origin findings, were crucial in researching origins debates. Lambert offered comment on my own Broads publications, and on articles in draft, notably a piece considering her own origins research, the article improved in both historical accuracy and level of argument through her commentary (Matless 2003a). The generous donation of her general archive of Broadland press cuttings, compiled between 1947 and 1970, proved immensely valuable, with many, though not all, references to press material from that period coming from Lambert’s collection. The composition of her cuttings archive is itself worth consideration, as it demonstrates the categorisation of Broadland and Norfolk by a leading regional scientific figure. Three folders contain clippings, largely from the Norwich morning paper, the *Eastern Daily Press (EDP)*, but also other regional and national newspapers and magazines, organised by topic and date. Folder 3, ‘Newspaper Cuttings 1956–1968’, paper-clips articles together in six-monthly or yearly bundles. Folders 1 and 2, labelled ‘NORFOLK BROADS, ETC. Newspaper Cuttings. 1947 –’, have articles cut and pasted onto pages, each section ordered chronologically between 1947 and 1956, topics grouped under 21 headings. The topic list itemises Lambert’s regional study:

**NEWSPAPER CUTTINGS**

**INDEX**

1. Norfolk Broads – General administration
2. Norfolk Broads – Access
3. Norfolk Broads – Riverside tenancies
5. Norfolk Broads – effect of proposed lock.
7. Norfolk Broads – Flora
8. Norfolk Broads – Fauna
9. Norfolk Broads – Economic utilisation
11. Norfolk Broads – Historical
13. Coastal erosion and protection.
15. Geology.
16. Archaeology.

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17. Norfolk Research Committee
18. Norfolk Naturalists Trust
19. Norfolk and Norwich Naturalists Society

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20. Breckland and other Norfolk areas
All of Lambert’s 21 categories feature in this book. Her ‘Miscellaneous’ included museum news, archive stories, Fenland pieces and uncategorisable nature news; a cultural geographic miscellany might also stretch to painting, comedy, wildfowling, novels, poetry, film, television, holidays, architecture, postcards, souvenirs.

Field excursions have also shaped this book. John Barrell memorably began his 1982 Journal of Historical Geography essay on ‘Geographies of Hardy’s Wessex’, examining ‘the means by which … various characters and narrators explore places and come to know them’, by stating: ‘I have never been to Dorset – though I believe I may have passed through it on the train to somewhere else. But I make that confession, not to disqualify myself from writing this essay, but to indicate at the outset the sort of essay it will not be’ (Barrell 1982: 347). I have been to Broadland many times, but have passed by it many more, the region thereby acquiring a peculiar kind of familiarity. For the past 25 years visits to Broadland have been accompanied by the possibility of research, first as a site for a possible element of doctoral study, never realised, then as the focus of various research papers, some on the region as a whole, some on individuals or specific aspects – animals, origins, sound, film (Matless 1994; 2000b; 2000c; 2003a; 2005; 2010; 2011; 2012). Visits in adult life have therefore always carried the academic with them, shaping the perspectives and pleasures gained, even when walking a riverbank, or chugging on a day launch. Sometimes trips have aspired to the systematic; cruising a range of rivers over a weekend, or driving select sites for a day. Before research reared, however, another geographical psychology was in play. I grew up near to the Norfolk Broads, around eight miles from the nearest broad, but had little experience of the region. This was not an autobiographical centre, but rather a region at close distance, a remote zone near home, difficult to access unless you had a boat, with little to see of the region from the road. Growing up in suburban Norwich, I recall only a couple of boat excursions on large tour boats from Wroxham. Boat hire came only after I had moved from the area, and thought of Broadland as a research site. The Broads had earlier been something adjacent, but apart, a site of special interests other than my own, less appealing than the open and free coast ten miles further on. I had no enthusiasm for fishing or birdwatching. This regional account thus emerges from a particular geographical psychology.

**Broadland tour**

This chapter concludes with exercises in geographic description; journeys down the river valleys in this section, and attention to six sites to end. Description in academic geography has tended to be a pejorative term. Whatever geography’s etymological claim to ‘earth writing’, ‘descriptive’ has often denoted lack of analysis, a bland surface accounting, with any greater descriptive adequacy out of reach, as in HC Darby’s 1962 diagnosis of ‘The Problem of Geographical Description’:

It is a humiliating experience for a geographer to try to describe even a small tract of country in such a way as to convey to the reader a true likeness of the reality. Such
description falls so easily into inventory form in which one unrelated fact succeeds another monotonously. How difficult it is to transcend a painstaking compilation of facts by an illuminating image. (Darby 1962: 2)

Description may however carry other cultural possibility. As Svetlana Alpers suggested in her 1983 study of seventeenth century Dutch painting, there is a complex ‘art of describing’, Alpers seeking to recast studies of visual culture away from Italian art historic emphasis on symbolic narrative, and querying the distinction between description and narrative action: ‘northern images do not disguise meaning or hide it beneath the surface but rather show that meaning by its very nature is lodged in what the eye can take in – however deceptive that might be’ (Alpers 1983: xxiv; Wall 2006). Far from being a dull inventory trap, description offers complex cultural practice, at once calculating and generative, giving an account of landscape in the sense of both patient itemisation and events proceeding. Description carries a usefully dual performative sense of, on the one hand, distanced representation – the observer set back, however closely, from a scene – and on the other inscriptive enactment – the instrument describing, engraving, a line.

In 1967 the naturalist JA Baker wrote: ‘Detailed descriptions of landscape are tedious. One part of England is superficially so much like another. The differences are subtle, coloured by love’ (Baker 1967: 7). Baker’s statement appears early in The Peregrine, a book which, far from avoiding landscape description, pursues a heightened poetic prose on the Essex landscape life of the peregrine falcon. Baker’s successor volume, The Hill of Summer, extends the technique through elements of Essex landscape, April to September: ‘While describing twelve separate landscapes, I have recalled the memories of many years’ (Baker 1970: 8). Baker renders a consistent intensity of observation, outdoor prose concentrated in subtle attentiveness, whether at enclosed wood, waterside or open field. Mark Cocker indeed sees The Hill of Summer as pared down ‘to one goal: how can a naturalist capture in words what he or she sees and experiences’ (Cocker 2010: 11). The differing modes of description (at once, in Darby’s terms, both painstaking and illuminating) informing the journals of poet RF Langley further indicate descriptive capacities. Langley’s Journals render detailed observations of landscape, insects, plants, buildings, written at intervals since 1970, wrought prose lending quizzical observation and scrutiny to things, words shuttling between the lyrical and staggered, the reader attentively following the observing writer. Langley does not loom over words with personality, claiming a country for his own; rather he exercises a first personhood restrained, a different at-one-remove for the reader to inhabit (Matless 2009a). Langley walks a rural Suffolk ‘Uncle’s Lane’, the name mooted from the Anglo-Saxon Uncuo, unknown or strange:

There is a grim sort of pleasure in this landscape, so stripped down and simplified, and the power given by this stripping down is given to what is left, such as the flints in the soil, white or black or brown, split or knobbed, and the open flashes of the butterfly wings. There are often three or four skylarks which rise and sing, sometimes two close together. At the top of their climb, they stiffen their wings, float level for a distance, then turn down and plummet. They were doing it, were they, 4,500 years ago, when people walked this track, heading for the higher ground on the northern skyline, with their illusions that matter-of-fact was not all there was to it? Uncuo. Strange, or unfriendly. Weird. Matter spread out almost flat.
Wings that flicker at your feet. The popping sound of swollen seed cases. All this seems to be holding back, stopped in its tracks, caught hard and dry within itself. No ecstasy, just the slightly astonishing ferocity in the lark’s dive down at the earth, a somewhat desperate curving attack. Or the sense that the spread of quick colour in the butterfly wings is a blink, as you meet, momentarily, face to face. Life itself was weird, the Saxons felt. Is this a possibility? Today I like very much this all that there is. I would come back for it. (Langley 2006: 119–20)

Broadland can be a region of peculiar rhythm and visibility. The end of a Broads boating holiday is typically marked by a dramatic shift in pace, from a week at a few miles an hour to ten times the speed in a car or train, and sudden movement across the river valleys which have taken so long to windingly navigate. Waters retreat from view, become hard to spot, indeed away from the river Broadland is commonly characterised as a region of elusive waters, as in Pevsner’s guide to the buildings of Norfolk: ‘Sails sliding silently among fields against the low horizon are as much a recurrent sight of the Broads as expanses of reeds behind which one does not at once see the water’ (Pevsner 1962: 14). Unless on a boat, broads are difficult to see. Thus Reginald Wellbye’s 1921 *Road Touring in Eastern England*, in the ‘Roadfaring Guide’ series, could happily hymn the car’s ‘special outlook on the country’, aiding ‘a perception of geographical continuity’ (Wellbye 1921: viii–xi), but found a problem in Broadland: ‘It is well that the roadfarer should realize that the wide fame of the Broads is due to the facilities they offer for a water holiday, and that, unless he himself will take to the water, they will not present him with anything like the same satisfaction, since he will not be able to see very much of them’ (39). Wellbye noted river viewing spots, but of the ‘typical broad’ stated: ‘The roadfarer has to obtain his view of the Broads themselves in peeps – delicious peeps, it may truly be said, and by no means infrequent, though all too few’ (41).

Here, the riverfarer will be followed down each valley, allowing quick introduction to the regional scene, beginning with the northern rivers, and ending at Cantley on the Yare.

**Bure**

Canoes might make a way from the former head of navigation at the market town of Aylsham, past Buxton to the current head at Horstead mill. Boats only ascend as far as the mill, turning again down to the riverside green at Coltishall. Woods line the long bend past Belaugh, to Wroxham’s arched main road bridge and boatyards, and well appointed riverside homes downstream. Either side of Horning village a series of side broads – Wroxham, Hoveton, Ranworth, South Walsham – connect to the river through dykes, bankside carr woodland opening up below Ranworth and the Ant mouth. The ruins of St Benet’s Abbey are passed on the north bank, with open marshes around the south turn of the Bure at Thurne Mouth, to Acle Bridge. Through Stokesby and down to Yarmouth the Bure winds embanked through grazing marsh, on the northern flank of flats stretching south to Breydon, the north view short into low upland, the south views long, Yarmouth the east horizon frame.
Ant
Canoes might make a way from the former head of navigation at Antingham, down the disused North Walsham and Dilham Canal, to the current head around the main road Wayford Bridge, where houseboats view the A149. Downstream branch channels head up to Sutton and Stalham, the Museum of the Broads by Stalham staith. The Ant widens into Barton Broad, side channels leading to Barton Turf and Neatishead, the river exit passing Irstead and through open marsh and extensive reed to How Hill, an Edwardian country house, now an education centre, looking down to the river, a Broads Authority estate around. Ludham bridge is low with a right angle turn after, and a short trip to meet the Bure.

Thurne
The Thurne enters the Bure at Thurne Mouth, but has various beginnings. Journeys starting a mile from the coast on Waxham New Cut and taking in Horsey Mere (with mooring by the mill for Horsey village and the coast) and Meadow Dyke, or at Hickling and across Hickling Broad and Heigham Sound, or at West Somerton and through Martham Broad, all through wide marsh and reed, remote from road traffic, meet above Potter Heigham to pass riverbank chalets either side of modern and medieval road bridges. Past the entrance to Womack Water (for Ludham village) and Thurne Dyke fronted by a white mill, the river meets the Bure, embanked through grazing marsh.

Chet
The shortest river, the head of navigation shared between Loddon and Chedgrave, boats leaving the basin for an embanked stream, passing Hardley Flood and meeting the Yare at Hardley Cross, remote sixteenth century monumental limestone marker of the former break in Yare corporate jurisdiction between Norwich and Yarmouth.

Waveney
Canoes might make a way from the market town of Bungay or higher, down to Geldeston Lock, current head of navigation, and on through marshes past the south bank town of Beccles, following the Norfolk–Suffolk boundary all the way. Past Burgh St Peter staith a channel goes right to Oulton Broad, centre for summer speedboat racing, framed by suburban Lowestoft, Mutford Lock connecting to the town’s industrial Lake Lothing and the harbour and North Sea. Beyond the Oulton turn the Waveney goes north past Somerleyton, tracked and bridged by the Lowestoft–Norwich railway, the high ground of Lothingland close on the east, grazing marsh opening to the west and north as the Waveney and Yare valleys merge, viewing north across flat miles to the Bure. By Haddiscoe station the straight canal of the New Cut heads north-west to the Yare, taking the train alongside. The grazing marsh of Haddiscoe Island is bounded by the Waveney, Yare and New Cut, the two rivers meeting at the head of Breydon Water, the Roman fort walls of Burgh Castle on the hill to the east.

Yare
Canoes might make a way past Bawburgh and Marlingford and under the Norwich southern bypass to the University of East Anglia, with its broad dug from gravel, to
the head of navigation above Trowse. Downstream heads past elements of industrial Norwich, the Wensum entering from the city, Thorpe’s suburbia with a short New Cut cutting off a meander and avoiding two rail bridges, skirting recently dug recreational broads at Whittingham. Under the Norwich southern bypass bridge, by the foamy outfall of the sewage works, by isolated Riverside pubs at Bramerton and Surlingham, on to Brundall’s north bank boatyards and Riverside estate across from the south bank Coldham Hall pub, the valley opens from woods to the marsh and reed of the Strumpshaw reserve, with Surlingham, Wheatfen and Rockland Broads on the south side. The Lowestoft railway tracks the north side to Reedham, marsh widening and open, past the Chet mouth and Reedham’s chain ferry and village, beneath the rail swing bridge and the New Cut going south to the Waveney, through wider marsh with the Yarmouth rail line on the north side and views north to the Bure and south to the Waveney, to roadless Berney Arms with rail station, mill, pub and few houses, and into Breydon. A channel between posts keeps craft from Breydon’s mudflats, shown at low tide, and across the water under Breydon Bridge. The Bure joins from the north, the Yare continues south under Haven Bridge, between Yarmouth and Gorleston quays, shipping moored, with a final turn east to the sea.

Also apparent on the Yare is Broadland’s most substantial riverside structure, though one often ignored in regional accounts, the Cantley sugar beet processing factory. The 1962 and 1997 editions of the Pevsner ‘Buildings of England’ series pass the factory by, noting only the village church, but for its architectural and arable presence Cantley deserves attention here (Pevsner 1962; Pevsner and Wilson 1997). Established in 1912 on a 40 acre site by the Anglo-Netherland (later Anglo-Dutch) Sugar Corporation, Cantley was the first beet sugar plant in England, built with Dutch expertise to reduce dependence on imported cane sugar. Sugar beet gave East Anglian farmers an autumn and winter harvest, the processing ‘campaign’ running from September to January. Cantley had its own rail siding, and the Yare offered water supply and barge transport. Sixteen further factories were established in the 1920s, all part of the British Sugar Corporation from 1936 (Watts 1971). Donald Maxwell’s 1925 Unknown Norfolk described the new industry, observing winter workers living on moored holiday vessels, and illustrating a wherry in sail passing the smoking factory, and a steam lorry tipping beet into a trench, Maxwell discovering a Norfolk ‘unknown’ to the tourist (Maxwell 1925: 23–32). John May likewise visited Cantley in a 1952 guide, his wife having countered a suggestion to visit Langley’s abbey ruins: ‘People don’t build ruins … Let’s go on to something a bit modern – this sugar factory’ (May 1952: 30). On the front cover of Richard Denyer’s 1989 Broadland photographic survey Still Waters, Cantley’s plume blends with clouds, both reflected in the river, Denyer presenting Broadland as working landscape, a flying coot helping gather the factory into the scenic (Denyer 1989).

The great majority of Broadland narratives ignore this most conspicuous regional built structure, unmissable by any Yare cruiser since 1912, the sizeable original factory (its main building 197ft long and 62ft high) later supplemented by larger silos. For accounts of Cantley the reader must instead seek out Watts’ 1971 Transactions IBG survey of the beet industry (Watts 1971), or the 1913 Journal of the Board of Agriculture. Twenty years of British debate had considered ‘the great possibilities of
sugar beet’, yet ‘the first factory has been erected chiefly through the enterprise and confidence of strangers’ (Chadwin 1913: 582; Robertson-Scott 1911). Cantley offers one of many Broadland-Dutch connections, returned to at this book’s conclusion.

**Six sites**

To end this chapter, six pieces of landscape description are offered. If the preceding accounts have given quick valley excursions, these condense regional landscape and culture around specific sites. The six selected are relatively evenly distributed across the various river valleys, at pressure points within the regional cultural landscape, where tensions of landscape become acute, viewpoints can be taken, contrasting pleasures meet, anxieties surface. Various aesthetic principles inform the composition of these accounts, as indeed the rest of this book. There is a democratic attention to all kinds of regional object, treating things in non-hierarchical fashion but attentive to the ways in which hierarchies (of value, of beauty, etc) operate. There is likewise a cross-regional democracy, with all kinds of location treated in non-hierarchical fashion, but with attention to the ways in which hierarchies (of service provision, of cultural distinction) operate. Landscape is worked through all senses, though with attention to the ways in which hierarchies of sense operate; the truths of sight, voices heard, sounds and textures of objects. The accounts here are monovocal, deliberately singular, unlike the remainder of the book, where landscape’s colloquial multiplicity is given hearing. They respond to an assumed request to describe a landscape without reflex reference and resort to the commentary of others. Singularity of voice may sometimes entail evocation of specific personal experience, but more commonly this is experience amalgamated across times and places, offering composite motion through the region.

**Ranworth**

Two ways to reach Ranworth Church: by car to the small parking space near the gate, or on foot from the water. From a boat moored at the staithe on Malthouse Broad (Ranworth Broad being private), the church is a quarter mile up a lane, west up a gentle rise of the land. By car you might arrive without viewing a broad.

Into the church to an open stone floor, the holy end right beyond a painted saints screen. Across the floor another door and spiral stairwell, stone inside the tower, moving by ladders through the belfry towards the top, and out of a narrow hatch. To a rare airy prospect. Onto something unexpected (boats!), or something just seen (boats). Fields, fruit trees in line, and in the far east water towers, and turbines; some in the sea. South, in season, factory smoke. The city south-west, seven miles out of sight. Leaning over low railings to graves, tilting slightly back with perspective. West the broad with boats, north the broad without; with thatched, floating, conservation centre. Where the two join, a straight dyke cut to the Bure. East a huddle of ex-abbey walls, with some tower. Modest landmarks. The valley north-east thick wooded, to the right open to marsh, sails evident over the flat. Yachts and mills. Rare perspective in the region.
Reedham
The train from Norwich stops, a proper station at the edge of a village barely seen. Moving on past few buildings in cuttings, off left a line goes across marsh to Yarmouth, the Lowestoft line curving right. An empty cutting heads back left to the other branch, then under a bridge and some building backs and out to bridge a surprise of wide expanse.

The Yare swing bridge, open for rare sea coasters and high masts, with its flags and operatives, viewing riverside Reedham; a quay and moorings, green and housing. The tidal Yare takes the slack of rope; cruisers wake at a different level. Boats run away with themselves approaching on the flow. A couple of bends up, the last chain ferry, cars saving miles for a fee, inn and tents by the marsh. Otherwise distance with little to lean on.

The line continuing, curving left, gaining the bank of the straight New Cut and on dead straight under high slim pylons and a concrete span, curving to Haddiscoe and the furthest east of England.

Potter Heigham
For a mile the banks lined with chalets, one deep on either side between river and grazing marsh. The Thurne a front garden to cruise, noting variations in chalet form, standard shed to quirky millstump, a verandah or a lawn, fishing spot or private mooring. The river as lounge, or chalet-ruined. After a mile a modern boatyard tower, a basin of cruisers for hire, a tight bridge arch ahead, medieval stone. Aim and duck. A high road bridge bypasses where rail ran. Chalets further on the rond.

Traffic lights over the hump, into riverside Potter Heigham, the village proper a distance on. Busy Saturdays in season; boat turnover, day hire, ices. Year-round callers for local bargains; clothing, provisions, souvenirs, maggots, rods.

The village sign towards the staithe, bench-circled, with carved scenes and history text. The old bridge and packhorse, Roman potters, reed boats, heron, bittern, drain-age mill, yachts, cruiser, angler, peat cutter. The origin of the Broads explained.

How Hill
On a rise above the Ant, a house, thatched, substantial, south facing for the sun, sheltered from any north wind, taking in the valley view. A polite landscape, with lawns, topiary; a hundred years a model estate. Closed gardens nurture exotics. A boardwalk trail finds a stick in carr woodland ground, to be pushed and pulled up and down for ten feet, liquid mud beneath. By the river, restored mills of unusual type, once marsh pumps. Cut reeds stacked for transport. Electric boats carry silent tours through narrow waters, stopping at hides, noting reedbeds, their birdlife, their management. Painting classes by water. A marsh cottage restored, tight accommodation, eel tools, dampness. Education, propriety, the sustainable.

Forty years ago, visiting to play at cricket on the neat grass. Young excitement, the Broads of no interest.

Twenty years ago, an elderly gent on his young estate life, the family car coming home from the city, seeing its lights the only lights across the marsh.
Cantley
The B1152 between Potter Heigham and Acle, by Clippesby and about to dip into Bure valley, factory smoke on the south winter horizon. Sugar beet process at Cantley by the Yare, the plume seen from ridge roads and valleys beyond; Thurne, Waveney, A146.

The Yare downstream of Brundall between open marsh. The Yare upstream of Reedham between open marsh. Stumps of mills, cattle, rooks; trains along a train line. Silos and chimneys and stores stand for miles on the flat. On the reach by Langley marshes Cantley grows, a pub dwarfed underneath, the new pleasure staithe a small mooring. The eye drawn; distracted, grabbed; blot or beauty.

A station and yard. Industrial movement. Beet trucked, once by train or wherry. Arable Norfolk in Broadland.

West Somerton
The top end of the river. Through Martham Broad, the Thurne turning to West Somerton staithe. Free mooring. Permanent boats in still weed beyond. A small green, a village sign. Mill, wherry and church in black metal. Over fields the North Sea, under two miles; forceful waters. There are the dunes, just over there. The Lion, with noted double cod. Wind farmed on the hill.

For once you can stand on the waterside, look down, and see clarity. Plants visible, greenery through wind ripples. The only Broadland spot which never clouded.