

EDWARD FAWCETT

## The ICOMOS Landscape Working Group

**T**his Group was formed in the UK in 1991, with David Jacques as its coordinator, and chaired by Edward Fawcett. The ICOMOS International Gardens Committee has said that it does not wish to extend its brief to cover landscape, but wishes the Landscapes Working Group to keep it informed.

The formation of the Group was further propelled by the difficulty experienced by the ICOMOS World Heritage Committee in assessing the UK's nomination of the Lake District for inscription as a World Heritage Site. It was considered in 1987 as a mixed site, in September 1989 as a cultural site, and in 1990 at Banff in Canada, when the nomination was again deferred,

due to the different views taken on natural and cultural sites by IUCN and ICOMOS. The ICOMOS secretariat was asked to consider and develop its criteria for cultural landscapes and to report to UNESCO. This task has been deputed to the ICOMOS Landscapes Working Group.

The work of the Group has so far been carried out at meetings of the ICOMOS UK Historic Gardens and Landscapes Committee, and by correspondence with some fifteen other countries. This paper is an attempt to bring together the tentative conclusions reached so far, with expressions of opinion on some of the outstanding issues.

TIMOTHY DARVILL

## Heritage Landscape Sites

### An Introduction to the Work of the Group of Experts

**T**he purpose of this short presentation is two-fold. Firstly to introduce you to the nature and scope of the important international project on the subject of Heritage Landscape Sites which is currently being carried out under the auspices of the Cultural Heritage Committee of the Council of Europe. And secondly, briefly to outline for you some of the initiatives currently being considered by the Group of Experts.

Turning first to the nature and scope of the project itself, it is worth remembering that since the European Architectural Heritage Year in 1975, the work of the Council of Europe has related mainly to monuments and townscapes, with rather less attention to the issues of safeguarding, managing and enhancing heritage landscape sites. Such sites were, however, one of the components of heritage defined by the *Convention for the Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe*, the 1985 Granada Convention, and accordingly, in the later part of 1990, work began on the assembly of a Group of Experts from European countries to address this very matter on a wide front. The objectives of the project may be summarized as a consideration

of the issues connected with the identification, protection, management, conservation, development, and promotion of Heritage Landscape Sites.

The first colloquy was held in Luxembourg in May 1991 and a second meeting took place in Dublin in September 1991. In addition to this gathering here in Cologne, it is proposed to hold a number of further sessions, the next being in Stockholm in September 1992.

As you will all appreciate, the very idea of a Heritage Landscape Site is a complicated concept and one that is not easily defined. It is, however, widely recognized that perceptions of the development of the countryside and townscape are becoming more sophisticated and that a more holistic understanding of the relationships between the natural and the man-made environment is becoming widespread.

The current phenomenon of opening-up and explaining the countryside and historic townscapes has the corollary of increasing social demand. The difficulty we face in assessing this

Schloßpark von Sceaux, Treppe zum Pavillon d'Aurore ▷







social demand lies in the fact that it is changeable and above all because its various categories overlap. Thus it is not easy to separate the aspiration to contemplate a site in the quest for healthy exercise in a natural environment from the desire to encounter nature and discover its biological or archaeological interest. Indeed, in looking at the question of heritage landscape sites as being the embodiment of relationships between man and nature it is doubtful whether such distinctions have any real relevance anyway. All activities in the countryside and historic townscape probably cover several categories of interest at once, with variable intensity depending on the individual, the place, and the conditions under which it may be visited and appreciated.

Having said this, differentiating between the spheres of interest within the social demands for the countryside and historic townscape does have the advantage of enabling us to tailor supply to demand and improve the management of sites which are subjected to public pressure. In order to formulate an effective national or regional analysis of the capacity of heritage areas to fulfil this more specific demand, and in order to improve our development and administration of them, this assessment may provide the basis for the overall formulation of appropriate development and management measures.

In the light of these general considerations, the Group of Experts have been working towards a closer definition of what might be considered as a Heritage Landscape Site. The starting point has been the definition provided by Article 1.3 of the Granada Convention which says that Heritage Landscape Sites are: "The combined works of man and nature, being areas which are partially built upon and sufficiently distinctive and homogenous to be topographically definable and are of conspicuous historical, archaeological, artistic, scientific, social or technical interest".

This definition contains four important ideas which are central to the discussion:

First there is the recognition that such sites comprise an *amalgamation* of the works of man and nature. Secondly there is the idea that such sites are *distinctive* and can be singled out for attention because of their characteristics. Thirdly, there is

the principle that such sites are *topographically definable*, and may presumably be of any scale from a single group of buildings up to many hectares of countryside. Fourthly, there is the point we have already touched upon that a range of subjects or *spheres of interest* may be used to define a cultural landscape or site either singly or in combination. If we develop this idea a little further we can usefully divide these spheres of interest into "hard" landscape features such as archaeological or historical monuments and "soft" elements such as artistic appeal, literary connections, and social interest.

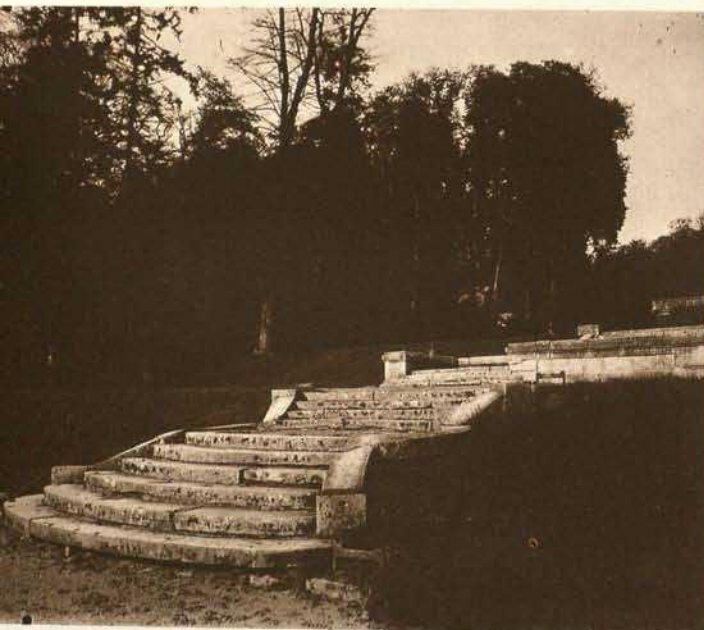
Three potentially rather important ideas seem to be missing from the definition provided by the Granada Convention.

First there is the interest that arises from appreciating and understanding *relationships* of various kinds between the various spheres of interest. The connections that naturally arise, for example, between the nature of agricultural activities and the topography, terrain, or micro-climate of a specific area.

Secondly, there is the value of *diversity* within any one of the identified spheres of interest. In the case of "hard" landscape features there may be added value or importance where, for example, agricultural practices, evidence of settlement, and sacred or ritual areas are all represented.

Thirdly, and following on from the idea of diversity, there is the importance which derives from some kind of *integration*, whether physical or spiritual, which links together the various

▽ *Staint-Cloud* ▷



components or items of interest in a landscape or historic townscape. Within the idea of spiritual links we might include oral traditions, folklore, places of memory, and links forged by popular history.

Drawing all these threads together, the basis of a revised definition is currently being considered. This defines a Heritage Landscape Site as:

"A topographically defined area of countryside and/or townscape which by virtue of the features and characteristics that it has acquired through human agency, the artistic or literary representation that have been inspired there, or the historic events that have taken place there, can be regarded as



being of exceptional architectural, historical, archaeological, environmental, cultural, scientific, social, or technical importance.”

Looked at in this way, Heritage Landscape and Sites will almost always be areas of dynamic working countryside or historic townscape, in many cases preserving and representing traditional ways of life, perceptions, or physical features that may extend back many generations, sometimes many millennia. In looking to develop management strategies for these areas there should be a presumption against fossilization. The aim of management actions should be to perpetuate and enhance that which already exists.



Each of the meetings of the Group of Experts have taken special themes which are relevant to the general question of Heritage Landscape Sites. At the meeting in Luxembourg, discussions focused on key points relating to the definition and identification of sites. In these discussions, as in all the other work of the Group, emphasis was placed on the cultural and historical dimension of the environment as a conservation and management issue, but due regard is also being given to the problems relating to ongoing development, social questions, and to the physical and economic planning inherent in the application of the Granada Convention.

At the second meeting in Dublin, attention focused on the controversial issues relating to the management of public access to Heritage Landscape Sites. Questions of free access, restoration works, reconstruction, and the role of local communities in such projects were all addressed and a number of visits were made to examine at first hand some projects in the Republic of Ireland.

Here in Cologne the programme before us focuses on conservation and planning, and will again include some excursions to see and experience case studies at first hand. Later meetings will move on to consider in some detail a number of other important themes, for example the impact of agriculture and forestry, training, and public relations.

From what I have said so far I hope you will have a clear impression of the nature and scope of the subject being reviewed



◁ *Saint-Cloud*

*Versailles, Orangerie* ▷

by the Group of Experts. My colleague Yves Luginbuhl, who is also a consultant to the Group, discusses in his presentation the identification of Heritage Landscape Sites.

Now I would like to move on swiftly to the second part of what I have to say by way of introduction to the work of the Group of Experts and outline very briefly some of the specific initiatives that are being worked upon.

First and foremost is a formal Recommendation for consideration by Member States which deals with the Principles for the Conservation and Management of Heritage Landscape Sites. A first draft of the Recommendation itself together with a supporting statement has already been produced and will be considered by the Group of Experts over the next few days. Further revisions will take place at subsequent meetings with a view to completing work on the Recommendation by the spring of 1994.

Training has been identified as an important issue by the Group and a number of provisional proposals have already been received. A small working group is being established to look at specific proposals in more detail.

Disseminating information about Heritage Landscapes in general, and work in specific sites in particular, has been recognized as being important. Such work should include both academic and popular formats, and may include traditional kinds of publication such as books and leaflets as well as more innovative media such as videos and perhaps even educational games. Detailed proposals for an Atlas of European Landscapes and a Technical Manual are currently being prepared and will be considered at the Stockholm Conference in September.

Naturally, the Group of Experts would welcome any additional suggestions in respect of possible initiatives. The first main phase of work is expected to be completed by the early part of 1994 and will be marked by a major symposium, probably in Strasbourg, at which the Recommendation will be launched and a series of papers presented which reflect upon the main subject-areas that have been addressed by the Group in the course of its deliberations.