THE DUNSTON MANUSCRIPT

BOB JARVIS
Gateshead Rvisited
5 December 2001 London

Cawcroas Street in December, the UDG Christmas event... exactly how do Urban Designers celebrate the season and more?

This year Dr Bob Jarvis of Southbank University and the regular Endpiece writer in Urban Design Quarterly launched himself on an attentive audience with the Dunston Chronicles, an illustrated poetic reading of an hour's length.

Fish out of water, voice out of time, style out of fashion? Far from it. Bob's flow drew the audience over an atypical, but all too typical, urban design project, the Gateshead bid for a National Garden Festival, which failed on the narrated account, but succeeded with merit a few years later.

Visually we were treated to a sequence of images, sketches and documents dredged from the frequently janked world of local authority creativity - many moved too fast to catch the eye. Layer on this the Jarvis diary of events in the late 80s - the meetings, more meetings, the posed dance of local power-seekers as the reality of the bid unfolded. Then layer on this the problems and opportunities of the Gateshead site, the personalities - yes personalities - of the designers, and the slow progress of the dreams to the masterplan. To the inconclusive conclusion, Bob kept the audience alive with his well-pointed lines and repertoire of vocal effects... but, as they frequently ask round my way, Is this Urban Design?

For most readers, urban design has always focused on a plan and its progress, with dreams and aspirations backing and diving for contact with the finance and programmed reality. We look back on a scheme - winning or losing - as a staid sequence of drawings, minutes, decisions and outcomes. What gets lost is the personal and group development, the role of personalities, the infrequent team activities, the role of emotions and beliefs in the process. Inevitable perhaps, but surprising given the fundamental humanism of urban design.

When questioned, I find it very difficult to provide students with any published accounts of the way in which urban design schemes were conceived and affected - the human drama is kept for the family or exchanges in the pub. What Bob Jarvis succeeded in doing was to bring our shared professional interest to life... to suggest the humour and tragedy of urban designing. There was sufficient response in the multi-aged audience to recognise that he hit the spot.

Writing for an urban design audience is limiting enough, to wonder off into poetic accounts of urban design is clearly insane. I was reminded of Black Mountain and Ed Dorr, then of Louis MacNiece, but that's my problem. Nevertheless I hope that Bob finds similar settings to extend his commentary. He needs urban design, but more important, urban design needs the provocative asides of Bob Jarvis.

Brian Goodey
0. (No image)

“This is not a story my people tell. It is something I know myself. And when I do my job, I am thinking about these things. Because when I do my job, that is what I think about.”

They say:
That necromancy’s out of style these days
That soul’s roll’s the shamansm of today
and planning, that expressly rational act,
is now a science,
of muddling through.

This is what people said and did, written down at the time, so it must be true:
Words and ideas and lines on paper
where ideas come from, and who said what to whom, with what result.

Or none at all.
This is a true story.
Though this is not the story my people told long ago and far away, that midnight madness born out of Maytime’s air scented seal enough.

It’s about:
project implementation and poetic anthropology and office politics
and how things start and how they finish
and love and money
and a dream and a memory.

1. Dunston Basin (in black and white)

It’s about:
- the spirit of the place (that ghost kept locked up in professional language)
- fuzzy notions, vague ideas, doodles pinned up on the wall and sketches carefully covered up at night.
It’s a kind of long drawn out conversation, a kind of talking about spatial places.

And all sorts of things that get forgotten,
all sorts of stories in the official records,
that professionals don’t speak about much,
outside the analysys chair.

And when they say, like they often do, when they’re afraid of something they don’t say,
“you can’t use words like that”,
remember:
we deal in dreams.

2. Aerial view: track beds and car dumps.

The criteria for conservation are quite clearly set out in successive circulars,
and amplified by successive listings of buildings and designations of areas,
and the legal tests of appeals and inquiries, modified and interpreted through local practices and practice.

It should all have been clear enough.
That this was off the map.
Out of bounds.
Someone else’s patch.

But on the clycide blue chipped floor slats
in the November slat by the abandoned Hotel House,
in the archives of the Journal of Ferro Concrete,
in the small print of the Cisalpines,
between the lines of the third person passive of the administrative prose, who could tell?

3. Close up detail: structural timbers, surface decay.

Riverbed mud.
Rolled 11x15 pitch pine bolted into trusses, decked and overlaid with standard-gauge rail tracks falling towards the bankward and on a slight gradient.
Ground so soft you can’t walk over it.

Stream as had nothing lives in them.
Colo works. Subways.

Car dumps. Abandoned sidings.
The dynamic landscape of the late twentieth century.

4. Eight scenarios for Dunston Staiths: No. 1 now you try.

It’s 1970.
One of the responsibilities of local authorities
is to bring to the attention of the Secretary of State, buildings threatened with demolition, which are worthy of protection as listed buildings.

And so the letter goes. The Staiths are out of use, under threat, the last on the Tyne, 1860. Source: Terence's History of the North Eastern Railway. A third of a mile long.

And so the letter goes. And when it's added to the list of buildings of architectural or historical interest, things go up the chute.

Don’t ever forget: “Such things could prejudice Council Policy.”

This is a serious matter. “Never write that sort of letter again!”

This is not your role: be more careful with that sort of thing.”

But know what the options are:

1. Careful preservation, as is.
2. Just leave it to decay.
3. Greetings from Dunston Amusement Park, N.J.,
4. A Working Museum of Coal and shipping
5. The People’s Free Sherry Town House, a Gothic Republic of New Free Dunston
6. Arena, Realizing stage and ideadies out in the sun,
7. A Marina, waterfront, and recreation
8. The Tyne zero zero line of revelation’s shores.

9. The last’s a blank, it’s up to you.

If it’s up to them, then:

“Riveride policy has to be taken properly into account in all cases.”

“Make it absolutely quite clear that there will be no County Council involvement. Whatever.”

(Double underlining).

6. The Liberty landscaped comprehensively conserved Newcastle 900 (a half) water level subregional strategic park I

But John in Landscape sends two pages and a sketch:

“Everything that was promised on the Town Moor but never built”

“Parks are a lost art”

“Parks should be enfranchised by railings, planted with conifers and staffed by keepers in brown coats.”

On the requisite two pages of A4+ the甘ardine festival.

Undated n.s., summer 1980.

Filed on C/50 at 03:12:01.

Forgotten.

6. Floating theatre

In the confines of power, in important Ministerial meetings,

Big ideas. Big stuff. Big talk. Lots of media coverage. Save the inner city. Enterprise Zone.

Free fell, free lunch.

But are Listed Buildings still listed?

No-one seems to know, though some would wish them gone.

A seminar: the Chief Executive has a vision:

“A place where the developer can create his own environments he sees it”

Some student projects sketch a different dream:

a sail-in theatre, hanging gardens, painted gas holders, power station superstores.

The developers turn their back to such delights:

“Jobs are more important than environment” says the Chief Exec.

Even Planning asks, “Must enterprise exclude imagination?”

7. Alpha-solvent

This place is twinned with Alphaville, waiting for Lemmy Cature, another revenge-reveller,

Another strange adventure to another Capitola de la dossier; another legend.

Too complex for everyday communication, struggles against the discipline of the regulation of land use.

Silence; Logic; Safety; Precedence, and local government today.

8. Dunston Basin Marina Apartment Development (sketch?)

One of the County’s projects is to support the Industrial Monuments Trust, and John whose job that is, talks to Ian about the Staiths and Ian makes a bid, for Gateshead’s funds just for consultants fees, just to let the Industrial Monuments Trust employ just one man for a few months, just to explore the options.

Geoff gets seconded in.

Gets a desk and a phone and his own note paper.

Talks to both owners.

Talks to the police.


8 See James, R. 1984 Notes about Capital Places: University of Pennsylvania, Open University, Chapter 6, “Up the chute” pp 229-249 for a similar description of these events.
Talks to developers
structural engineers
consulting architect

And his report reports:
the Stalhna haven't deteriorated.
they could be developed with the GSA works site
for recreation
and a floating museum.
A Day out at Durton Water Park.
It would cost £600,000.
It could generate £600,000
and bring life back to the waterfront (thank you)
encouraged by the local authority (that's going to be very useful)
with investment in infrastructure (now clear your desk).

But no one can agree on who should report it
to which committee
of which authority
with whose recommendations.

No action needed.
"I doubt that the Council attaches much importance to it".

9: Department of the Environment, Room P2115, 2 Marsham Street,
March 23 1983, "Dear Mr. Miles...
I attach a copy of the press notice launching the search for the 3rd National
Garden Festival to be held in six years time".

Five and a half sides, single spaced
what a garden festival should be and do:
"clear land, the difficulties of which are such that
it would be unlikely
to be remedied quickly"-
"the catastrophic effect of deadbeats"
"high quality landscape"
"environmental improvement"
"a single plot of land"
"a hundred acres"
"near the heart of urban areas"

The letter slides from tray to tray,
like between agenda items and the daily post,
the circulation list grows
but no one picks it up.
There's all that getting things done to.
Memoranda. Comments on applications.
Conditions to scuttle.

Planning's real achievements.
This
is just another gamble.
The letters slip deeper,
occasionally between "Any observations, Mike?" and "See D, about this quickly".

10: Norwood Cemeteries (aerial view)
And receives Pete
who picks it up.
He's working on a plan for nowhere on the edges
of nowhere, edged by nowhere else,
claypits and coke sidings and suburbs.

He sees it and thinks
this could be... could make this claypit.....
or something like, at least.

He talks to D.
"Draw up a list if you like,
but don't spend too long on it".

So, over coffee, they draw up a list
and add and change around
have second thoughts,
ask around,
ask even
Conservation.

Because one of their sites includes three listed, silent Stalhna.
"This is something that might interest you,
What do you think?".

11: Cross River Park.

It's just one look, that's all that it takes.

First thoughts:
not just the Stalhna,
The Joy of Concrete,
The Sugarworks as Palazzo.

First notes:
A flat nowhere redeemed by being at least a visible flat nowhere
A hole in the ground in an inaccessible location, so negative it's positive
(The Robert Smithson Memorial Park, perhaps)
A pair that span the river, tying south facing slopes and slithers
(But the chief officer don’t talk, so that ones out)
A straggle of alleys aligned around a grid separated three way interchange.
(That’s the one we choose)
It’s just one look and that’s all.

12: Stitch and stone and motorola

So Pete writes the letters,
Bob works out some calculations
and yes he’ll do a few sketches.
This is their chance
for their fifteen minutes.

13: The allee at sunset.

Between the avenue and the underpass,
between the dandies and a poem
a joke and a bit of history
a bit of collage and a bit of licence
a bit of motorola and a bit of Milton Keynes
he drives around, on local government mileage rates
or all, sheltering from the dust,
while the dust turns to mud,
periodic somewhere between
the two spinners, and the ironworks
trying to make sense.
To deal out these dreams

14: Drainage culvert access or ventilation shaft (site notes for the
National Garden Festival, Gateshead)

Gypsies children invade and occupy the cash and carry warehouse,
that’s the first sign.
They leave the car park scattered with ashes
from the car seat covers.

Neon dog packs roam the embankments
where marsh grasses struggle through the track beds,
long after the rails have been lifted.

Shug’s breast in the underpass,
enriched with urine and dankness.

An abandoned caravan settles into the spur road.
Scrap timber stockpiles mark out dandy hill tract beds.
Car body shells pile up like wind breaks.

Crows and large raider gulls roost in the retort house,
living on rare and toxic chemicals from the site
they grow fat and weird, hallucinates,
snagging for gaskets, valve fittings and inner tubes.

Footpaths are carelessly sluiced,
washe black with the effluents of tar works and distilleries.
The unpainted state of factories judder.
Unsanitary machine processes are repeated
for days on end, even in broad daylight.

Meanwhile irises and lilies naturalise
In the carbon deposits of coal picking registers
and customs dockets of berth and loadings
burnt to the ground.

Donkeys graze on the forecourts of small garages
as if they know of something
a crisis or that the deal of the month
might never come off.
While dealers in dreams
play with fountains and cascades
and paper parklands
litter blowing their minds.

15: In the underpass

Somewhere out of nowhere.
Site and zone, once at the edge of great estates,
turn to ironworks to slip out to underpass and bypass to slab block and point block.

Each generation doing the best it can
to produce, to join one place to another.
And leaving this place:
surrounded,
fragmented,
shattered,
scared,
cut,
wounded,
braked.

16: To make sense where out of nowhere (eight frames a second)

To mend, to heal, to stitch together,
man scarp...
a revolutions of magic bearded
a trolley of conveyer belts, a
triple of ropes
fantastic archways
glittering terraces
horizons of flags.

Could this be a ribbon, a garland.
All this a dream, another scrabbled line
or do these words hold dacek deeper truths,
for those fifty minute hours to unravel?

17: To mend, to heat (detail of pen drawing over map).
She says "This isn't a dry dream, like a poem, I wonder who its really for?"

And in that park like
falls columns, forgotten memorials,
lost inscriptions, moss stained, damp scented lilies.

Relics, where at the silent night edge, script
scrabbled graffiti, obliterated letter's
spattered hell truth
with the walls of lost mansions,
in the collapsed counter of hope.

Among the fragments of language, among
the abandoned shrubberies, among
shards of sentences, among
overgrown topiaries, among
the undergrowth of sense, at midnight,
lost in the maze of possibilities its
phantoms, recollections, fragplings.

Pools undermine the rubble. Distortion enters.
Scrub covers the remnants. By chance,
weeds stir the ponds. Geometries loose focus, blur.
Larch hides the terraces.
Only rocks stand,
and silence seems like truth.

And then she says "You know, we're just like chalk and shaped"
And then D says "Thank you.Very interesting. Hope we can use it, someday."

18: Possible diagram of management and decisions.
The bid is printed up and sent in, shrugged off into the post.
Back to work:
Business as usual.

From time to time though, Pete runs through the way decisions turn,
wonders about the money and the theme.
Files examples and goa graphs.
Lioo the literatures to search.
Lionel draws some plans for planning on the loop roads.
The Department appoints advisors,
the advisors come and meet O, a man from main, the Chief Exec himself, and Pete.

They ask about organisation, sponsorship and programmes,
they praise the flair, the imagination
and get the train back south at five.

Pete drinks
they'll be in the top three,
after Hull.

On an inside page of the Gateshead Post, a two inch filler,
"Region Bids for New Garden".
The decision will be made in the autumn, they advise in the summer.
Or in November,
or in December,
or by Christmas anyway.

19: Dunston Basin, viewed from Redheugh.

And Pete has meetings,
Bob has meetings,
Ian has meetings.

The Industrial Development Team make plans:
blat out the "Soap Works", float rotten hides and skins,
(tell a million quid should do the job), bribe its inhabitants
for land fill, level up the site and grid it out
for light industrial units. laid in landscaped lines.
If only they had said, like had been taught to do,
from this swirling driftwood and debris,
shadow gardens, used ostensibly and conceivables
a wondrous vision of some new Peru.

It's in the papers now, D sends out a note.
"Consultancies will be appointed, soon, with a view to making recommendations to the Department of Environment, by the end of August. They will be approaching us directly, in mid-March. Or thereabouts."
The same routines and questions. Money and programme and sensible shoes.
"But those sketches, they're a bit fanciful aren't they?"
D shrugs it off. "Nothing serious."
"Men. That's a pity. There's something interesting there. A bit wild, a bit undisciplined. But interesting."

21: Is there anything good on TV tonight?

Pete draws up a list of headings, things to work on, like:
Master Plan and Costings,
Attendances, marketing strategy, spin-off benefits, organization.
If we can get this done, he says, "we've just about got it".
So it's:
April: Physical Master Plan,
May: Second Draft,
June: Lobbying and then Re-draft,
July: Second Assessment.
They all all round and tall:
timetables and borehole data,
waterworks and ground temperature surveys.
The Chief Executive sends a chart, of how it's going to be,
the way things will be organized.
He'd like comments from Chief Officers.

More meetings.
More memoranda.
Pete sends his note and writes him in.
Mayskovsky's ghost.
Between the paragraphs of committee reports and the conditions of planning permission:
revolutionary slogans, poems and broken hearts.

22: Carnival: So too a city needs its dreams. (Pattern 59)

"It seems to me,
we need genuine team work,
the organization of the team is part of the design,
we don't hold a common idea of what a garden festival should be.....
I could sketch a spectrum
I could write some notes on method.....
Please let me know if you'd like me to come to your next meeting."

And then,
three days through the next week
D would like to see you.
"Would you work on this bid?
"OK, but I'm a County employee. And this a District bid.
but after all, we just advise.
On a listed building, and its setting, after all."

Some people write lists of jobs, their title and their name.
Some people get left out, and get upset.
Some people go home to think,
But he just goes out. Jazz dance and midnight coffee.
Another all night drive.
Some crazy games is starting up,
Or just the same old story. The same old song.

23: File index box of notes, alphabetically listed.
There is to be no project leader!
Put aside the tyranny of the plan!
Bread and the area of search!
Send me as many ideas as you can!
Send me a postcard from 1989!
And so it strips to tan by five o two a.m.,
It’s too big to carry, fluorescent paper, gum and tape
hold together air and light and time still yet to be.
It’s almost illegible but it still makes sense.
Scribbled incantations and a joke.
It’s crazy but OK.

28: (Detail - final panel of text from above)
And halfway into this, another meeting.
Another fail. Additional material required:
the pollution of the river, the highway calculations,
the projected costs of visitors, the costs of the market,
average earnings and of public funds,
income, time and fringes.
Land costs, development costs and impacts,
perceived long term benefits.

And halfway into this the tension
between freedom and fixed outcomes,
between flexibility and a master plan,
between concept and practicality that slowly
in the pauses between
talk of planting details and video versus all slide presentations
each of which?

And halfway into this debate, he says something
about the patterns and the ideas.
"All this is too theoretical, too airy fairy, too up in the air;
we have to be practical" the one called co-ordinator says.

More drainage details. Plants per metre.
The one called co-ordinator asks the designer, each,
to prepare a version of their Master Plan.
A grand design. "High quality open space.

"How will you know which one to choose, which one is best?"
No reply.

Part talks about
"The landscape as a base, a stage".
Later he remarks:
"Single management equals no joy".

29: Liverpool Garden Festival Guidebook.
Liverpool International Garden Festival opened in April 1994.
The designers know what they’re looking for:
planning plans and maintenance and flow lines.
They’ll take hundreds of slides on walks of film.
They have a good day out.
The thrill of all those big contexts, so hard and fast,
to write home about.

He sends three post cards home.6

30: To Allison: Time was Tardis runs aground, hopes dashed.
Long ago and far away
there were temples and sacred groves;
and spirits walked the earth
as benevolently wild-eyed shepherds,
sages and seers of visions, oracles.

Today, a management co-ordinator
was sent down from the Departmental Manchester office
explained, for an hour or two,
the background and objectives.
He illustrated this with slides of sites
that any one could see from the window,
just a key across the Mersey.

The planners all took notes.
Learning from the absence of experience.
Collecting brochures and reports
with glossy covers, and before and after artists’

impressions.

In intelligence, in scientific analysis
in thinking, I think
we’ve lost the art of gardening.
The magic touch is gone.
Who sponsored Eden?
Did he get adequate media coverage, a good return
In column inches?
We’ve come a long way since
(in video equipped coach parties, mainly)
to this horticultural interrupted.

The team meets, formally for the first time, sitting down in the same room, round the same table. O. comes in and says: "It's up to you."

There's still a lot of jobs and tasks, a "co-ordinator" not leader. The project won't be fulfilled. These things are not to be negotiated. "I leave the rest to you."

But everyone's got questions: "Will there be a model?" "Will there be overtime payments?" "What's the cost code charged for this?" "When will it be reported to Committee?"

And the one who's called co-ordinator says: "The prospectus is already written. That's the basis for the presentation."

"The presentation of what?", he asks. "His job is on the list, as 'consultant'. "What is this thing that we will present?"

"The designers will design it."

The meeting ends.

24: Project office wall (May 1984)

Pete fixes up a room, in an old store somewhere back of a store, dry painted and paper thick.
"The Project Office", a kind of home from home.
Pictures, maps and plans, views of the site, designated districts.
A magic post box 
Inflatable opinion:
send me a postcard, drop me a line,
your views from nowhere,
ideas for whatever ever it is a garden festival might be.

No-one has a clue what's going on, what will emerge.
"Flying by the seat of our pants" Pete says.
Flying and falling, at the same time.

25: Why am I going out of my head whenever you're around. (drawing)

He's:
scratching at the face of reason;
an old anatomist;
dancing on the planet;
I've got a bag full of magic markers;
I've got a rock from the moon.

26: A Pattern Language which.....

He's:
running to the Xerox;
writing in silver and gold.
"And campbell stands against the reasoned geography of 'Accessible Green', pinpoints a dialectic, the schism between love and money, so to speak.
Just as an individual person dreams fantastic happenings to release the inner forces which cannot be encompassed by ordinary events.

so too a city needs its dreams.

27: ...... generates Garden Festival (Mixed media 3in x 1.5in, 1984)

The pattern grows across the floor, the tape machine is speaking tongues, crawling about a script never written.

The flow seems right enough:
promenade and night life;
common rooms and dancing in the street,
zen view and open stile,
ballroom and singing places.
Each unclipped and embellished;
a note, a line, a sketch, a wish
that you were here;
a web of silver dreams and half remembered moments,
some other time and place called up to serve as hope.
There's broken stems,
crept up limb leaves of grass
in the ornamental beds.
But the price's been paid, and time is short,
and it took a government directive
two and a half years to come to this
antidote, behind a cyclone secure fence,
cut off.
But still I'll write,
(it is a postcard and, alas! all, it's true)
"When you wrote here".

31 : To Steve and Charlotte: S.S. Typoo not the Ark. No tulips found on Ararat.

I came here with a sketch book
with lots of film and coloured pencils.
I came here looking for something
that no-one seemed to understand.
I came from long ago and far away
things were different then.

And this is what I found:
Silly wheelchairs; origins in jolly jollas cape,
giggling and drooling and looking for the potatoes;
juke-farm six counties and ice cream from Wellaby,
cooked on the spot with as much ketchup as you like;
a greeting from the City of Cologne, a seal and a fox,
a place to meet, it says, where no one would wish to meet your enemy,
late at night;
a pair of superannuated meat stalls,
shocking kids from drawing stones
and asking their dictaphone
'How can we get more life into this?'
and two pavilions and a moongate,
shipped in from Bejing,
a boat with rocky islands
from the People's Republic of China,
with love.

32: Rock pool with fishes

And I sat on one of those islands
for thirty minutes
sat cross-legged
breathing the air
standing and swaying
Sat still and turned up my headphones to cut out the racket
of the tills and announcements.

Sat still and listened to the universe in the air,
a great big house with nothing in it.
Sat still until a grey windproof wrapped
unshaven MSC sponsored smiling seaman security watch man came to look.

He hates it here too.
He understands what I meant.
I do know what's missing.

33 :To Dolan and Moira : It takes more than coffee to get to Allah from Totteh, even in the Turkish garden.

Yeah, I'd smile too,
for a Turkish coffee house,
richly timbered, marble paved and shallow domed,
with a layer of ice cream barrow girl
to joke and flirt with the clay trippers,
paper back readers all, no sale it's free.
All on the inclusive ticket to the most spectacular event
this side of nineteen sixty six, or 68 or nineteen eighty one,
north of Risa Guy Lussac, west of Bistol, east of Waffa.

But twenty five million quid won't buy you love,
just plants and earth and stained timber
and fibre glass animals that never lived,
concrete water spouts,
sponsored displays from twenty countries'\six major construction firms
three local authorities
and several quango's and charitable trusts.

34: Les monuments colerante hurl.

But this is just the tip.
The sky is rose,
That's why the Red Cross nurses
laugh and lift up their International Garden Festival all weather capes
just for me,
built from John Lennon's lad card
luck you all victory V
may be I'm amazed
in front of the giant honey pots.
35: Photoviewpoint sign, Liverpool Garden Festival.

The official notes continue:
*Generally impressive.
*but concerned that so much investment in planting will only be temporary
*Missed out on horticultural sales and commercial areas
*A shopping market could have provided visitor cover at nil cost
*Precipitation circulation was good. The level crossings forced people to stop and
    and look around
*House builders were pleased with the sales from the show houses
*The sponsored bits mean sponsors can get something out of it as well as the
    visitor
*It's important to have a variety point.
The postcards are not mentioned,
and he asks "Why not make free?" and Lionel says "It is free once you've paid to get inside'
and Peto says "Nothing really free. It's all book-keeping"


Everyone is busy now,
working with their maps round their drawing boards.
Hiding their secret embraces.

He's busy, collecting snippets here and there.
The plans of the Festival of Britain, chanced in a Densham junk shop.

Press cuttings.
Taking down notes.
Sitting in at meetings,
with the man from the Waterboard.

The men from Main Drainage,
someone from Policy.

A big blank sheet:
The Master Master Plan.

37: Catchment area diagrams and projected visitor numbers

Harry doesn't like the lack of team spirit,
and hides his drawings every night.
Ian talks about imagery
and Disneyland.

Richard writes a shopping list for architects:
Large hall: two million seven hundred and fifty thousand pounds
Outdoor auditorium: seven hundred and thirty thousand pounds
3 no. restaurants, public house, and sixty bed hotel: one million six hundred and thirty thousand pounds

Railway exhibition, three large domes: six thousand pounds
2 miles of Locomotives running, 2.5 miles high one hundred thousand and so on.
That'll do nicely, at current prices.
It all adds up.

38: Space Diagram

Postcards in Esperanto,
copies of catalogues
and Polaroids of Disneyland
and sponsors fairs.

And questions:
Is it a place or an event?
Or is it a series of rooms?
Or a series of houses in a landscape?

Should each garden have:
- a shelter and food
- a demonstration and some information,
and be intricate at eye-level,
but centred, focussed in the mind.

59: Topiary Teddy Bears' Picnics.

Reception send a teddy bears picnic,
In looking.
Alex sends his note on planting,
territory and individually,
techniques for early growth,
the canopy and understorey,
community and education.

40: Floodlight balloons on the river bank.

Pete puts up his notebook, jotted in the night.
Search lights on the riverbank.
Film show house fronts
balloons and hovercraft
"Too much emphasis on "landscape"
the opposite of gardening"?

Personalities and interests.

Enjoyable. Educational. and Exciting.
Elegant, Efficient and Economical.
41: Garden Growing Wild [from A Pattern Language]

400 scraps and notes,
one word answers to a question no one has asked.
Images and fragments.
From this four hundred he promises to produce:
a chart or diagram,
some great connecting up,
or something.
400 hundred questions,
and another last weekend
and a fact to spread them on.

No clues where this will end, or start.
Except the strongest notions come from those
who say they haven't got a clue themselves.
And just put down the first thing that comes into their minds
when
the thing they most want to see
just isn't there.

For those two days
shuffling up this oddly squared up pack
and asking "What is this thing to be?"

Go out for walks.
List every one on a roll of tracing paper,
And cut it up.
And turn to answer the phone.

42: Flow chart, part 1

She says she's got the job.
Love and kisses.
See you Tuesday.
It's just a book of rain?
A sequence.
Questions then constraints.
Investigations, possibilities.
Funds.

Begin instamata and precedents.

Patterns and the lessons of experience.
Themes and lines from songs.

New questions:
What's the difference between a clause and a sentence?
Between night and day? A place and an event?
Homes and gardens?
A list of parts?

43: Flow chart (2)

And more lists and connections,
predictable matters and fantasies awhile.
Events that are gardens.
And did you enjoy the trip?
Can you ask lots of questions?
Did you meet anyone you liked?
Would you come back another day?

44: Garden of Eden

Would you live there all the time?
Like wild cats in the grass.
Like unicorns in our dreams.

45: Project office wall. Later view.

Things aren't so good back in the room.
It's getting panicky. The assassins are coming.
Things aren't ready. What can we show them?

Who's the master plan?
Maybe we should forget the whole thing?

Do we know what they want?

Pete says it will be difficult.
Wonder what the one called the co-ordinator can conjure up.
Maybe a louse, not a plan.
Some things are known:
the costs for inundation (give or take);
the price of building bridges (more or less).

But some things are not spoken, left out of minutes:
the Soap Works and the Water?
"We'll discuss it later!"

The designers make their big bold ego-grams and slash.

a canal, a dock, a mound, a road.

Harry's on the job and happy,
but if you ask "How do you know it's right?"
he's got no answer.

O.K.'s worried too.
The costs don't add up right.
The reclamation's problematic.
A list of disillusion.

[Harley Kucinich, Blove Almov, recorded by The Grateful Dead. American Beauty. Warner Bros. 1971]
From these foans, 

and that it will all be 

another palace of disorientation 

another boulevard of despair 

another place of consolation 

another hotel of lost souls,

when this could be 

a garden of earthly delights and sweeter dreams, 

tree every at all times of day, and deep into the night 

a place to wander and to drift. 

but with who? 

mind, I am from another country. 

Cut up that map, 

set this place to drift.

47: A seat, an old brick wall and a tree.

"The first place I think of, 

is a garden, a peach tree, warm bricks, 

and wild grass." 

Simple things have to be said in all this, 

set out this astrologer's consideration, 

sitting up all night as the clouds turn back to dust. 

That wall, that tree, 

that seat in the evening sun, 

these things, 

more important than 

what's on TV tonight.

48: Sketch plan, 1984 (pencil on tracing paper)

So, on a borrowed attic table, spreading over the floor, 

words to spaces and to lines and shape. 

In seven days, 

seven miles with seven master plans 

could entitle this dream to shape?

49: Seven patterns that generate a garden festival. 

"There seemed to be some important principles", 

dee access 

dispersed parking 

restored buildings 

sequence and variety 

dfcus points of activity 

core and sites 

landmarks

50: Sketch Aerial View. 

A kind of plan, 

without a key, 

just a sketch, 

a possibility 

and some notes.

Welcome to the nether world of plans.

51: Mad Carnival, with annotations. 

These patterns are just sparks, 

points of inspiration. 

The poems, the inspirations 

and the dedications are all meant.

The rest is just the automatic writing, 

The human face. Their conscience.

This part's run out. 

Not in the minutes. 

Not in the notes. 

Not in the answers to questions. 

Just pin it up 

and leave the rest to chance.

52: Hexagram 59: 

Scattering, disintegration and dispersal. 

But persistence in a righteous cause brings reward. 

Cuts for faith, 

and generosity, 

and a place of safety. 

a temple from the life of the world.

---

Alexander, C. The Totemist Way of Building. OUP 1986 p220
53: Garden Festival as The Ultimate Trivia Game.

The Team meets again.
"Tense up, a bit proud, a little nervous.
The one called co-ordinator is in the chair.
"We'll start with the designs."

Pete wonders if that's right.
Bob asks about the basic facts of reclamation.
"We'll press on, we'll deal with that later."

Mary gets his plan out, big bold strokes,
left pen zig zags and new candle,
all coloured up.

Lionel shows us his, not quite finished,
with oldy landscape lines and scattered clumps.

Bob's got one,
with the after un-placed first,
neatly set out house plots, access roads and landfill sites,
with costs.
The rest follows on from that, he says.

And then its his turn.
Says with the hexagram and principles.
But before he reaches the plan,
the one they call co-ordinator says,
"That's what any first year architecture student could see.
Now I shall take all these plans
and draw the Master Plan myself."

Ian's note says:
"Serious points were raised
by a number of people
and met by slighting addies
or just insults."

54: List of garden festival features.

Later the Designers meet,
draw up a list of major points,
agree on the main uses.

There will be:
open air athletics, a pop festival, a glasshouse
on ice, a funfair, a marina and a car park.

The gas holders will be painted in primary colours.

The River Team will be canalised.

Transport on the site will be
rubber wheeled and operate on a hard surface loop.

At the Stalins will be a tramway.

Along the riverside will be
a miniature railway.

Will be the eternal future imperative tense
that make design so easy.

Meanwhile,
Tyne and Wear County Council submit,
as they are required so to do,
an application GD6385-568 for
the re-development of river-side land at Dunston
(including the demolition of the former OWS Sheetworks).
British Rail Property Board, at about the same time,
say for Listed Building Consent
for the demolition of Dunston Stalins.
There are no consultations.

55: Gertrude Jekyll's Garden at Lindalafarne (sketch)

The night grows lighter.
The sky's light brightness into near moonlight.
An island garden from the waves.
An old man waits for the boat, meet.

D's secretary comes round and leaves a note.
"Would you come to Monday's meeting;
will that be OK?"

56: Gertrude Jekyll's Garden at Lindafarne Castle.

Across the sheep roughened grass,
against the clear blue sky,
seal against the wind and marshes,
old songs are suddenly remembered,
I hear the walls all down, end the garden grow and finished
null lines run together
the concrete and the clay begin to crumble
scolded and cross hatched into a postcard.
I hear wonderful sounds coming out of the ground
fluorescent messages in the mill.
The same old songs,
the same moment's madness
from which there's no escape.

9 Crosby D., Alist Gardens EM 1967, on The Sundays Youngest Yesterday Q8 1957
10 Parker, K.et al., Concrete and Clay, Apthor Books, 1965, (Recorded by Unit 4x4) 11 Smyth, D. Pull up the Roots, Woman Gets Helped, 1986, (Recorded by Unit 4x4)
57: Office Wall College (mid June).

Monday, everyone's back in the office at half past eight they shuffle in.

D. says he won't discuss personalities.
"The bid should be ready by the twenty-fourth, yet nothing is ready.

First we need a report to Policy and Resources.
Polls will you write it?"

The meeting turns
to lists of sites and levels of costs
to the programme and the after use.
A logo and a number of options.

Except on specific matters
relating to the conservation of historic buildings, he says nothing.

At coffee D. comes over.
"Like a word with you.
Done valuable work,
It seems to be agreed,
you'll stay on the project
after all."

58: Official Master Plan.

It's Presentation Time.
What's it going to be?
Will it be a Master Plan?
Or a diagram?
A zoning plan perhaps?

Pete says:
"We need to anticipate what's needed" D. says:
"Our Master Plan will be too up anyway,
Whatever design the next thing will start again" Harry says:
"Presentation gives power"
D. replies:
"It must show our thinking, not too cut and dried"

Lionel says:
"It must be the best possible,
the finest drawing we can make,"
"It's like selling a car, Sir, this presentation,
the initial impact counts".

D. says:
"We're not in the car business!"
And Bob adds,
"More like a Lego set, so you can follow the thinking through"
So Richard adds, "What about a compromise—
our thinking and
a logical, possible plan"
OK. The printer needs it by the 20th.

59: Car dump and Dunston Rocket.

And so the National Garden Festival,
Second Stage Submission with Full Colour Artwork,
Master Plan (no, it's not, it's a diagram, with illustrative materials)
Green ink on Green Paper
Handicap Stakes
are go.

Against Swanses, this part time bunch of time serving
local government officers and doodlers,
Against Glasgow, who've got big time big name consultants, both of them,
who's your money on?

Pete is coordinating writing the report he's written,
and Richard's coordinating the co-ordination
He's on the bus again,
Wake up young lovers: the whole thing is over.
One time too many, too far to go.
What's that? Who's driving? Where are we going?
Nobody knows 12

Some strange ideas have Filtered In,
free access and no flood plans
at least are still around.
The theme, they tell him, is to be Experience.

"Would you like to write the masterplan paragraphs,
Explain the thinking, something like that" Richard suggests.
Pete's passing plans together,
a bit of the road diagram,
a bit of Bob's after use and recreation,
And Lionel's structure planting.
"Just so that by next week there's not just His to point to" whispers Bob.

The Dunston Manifesto (60)
00 : Promenade, Nightlife and other Patterns (Xerox copy, overdrawn)

The paragraphs collage old blends, or so their pages seem by now.
Alexander C. on the wild passion when we let go. 

Finag a. about the roman focus where the column is. 

Leaping RO. to make a point that experience is not an objective fact.
and how the blind methods of objective science destroy us all.

More notes and chance connections,
tonic memories and juxtapositions 
to and taste.
Kemp and Switzer,
et and desire.
House and Garden, feta champain 
and hill or rock and roll.
Parody or style?
Somewhere between advertising copy
Mayakovsky and a ump.
two yards psychiatry,
a dash of garden history.


He leaves the notes.
Imagines another
Rome de la Rose.
The Dream of Poliphilus.
But with a backing band 
and tight show.

Gives up.

this draughtsmen's contract is negated.
these random clues must serve enough.
The mud wide enough over Durango's Quite black basin.
gardens are symbols, 
shaped in clay and twig
talliances to decay.

62: Land Areas and Parals.

while words hold fast, 
become documents,
turn into letters of support from contractors and 
bureaucrats,
banners, claims of hotels and 
chambers of commerce.
Consultants, universities and advertising agencies are all backing the bid.

But know nothing of this tale.

The basic information is plotted, carefully.
The areas, the areas, the lengths of the perimeters planimetered, accurately.
The river mud analysis is situated, slowly.
The fisheries survey sought and settled.
The atmospheric pollution poret over.
The hydrological data and bore hole reports are there. 

awash with formulas and tables and indices,
appendices and diagrams,
suitable species of plants and relative rates of growths, 
plants that are capable of achieving the performance required.

63 : Microclimatic zones.

Lists from the Yellow Pages 
of potential sponsors and registered contractors,
suppliers of recreational equipment, and research institutions are there to show.

Whatever is.

The number of bricklayers and labourers, 
plumbers and joiners, plasterers and painters, 
seafakers and light structural erecutors, 
pavers and graziers, and all their foremen and clerks of works 
to build all the buildings and lay all the roads and paths.

in twelve months

is calculated, precisely.

Five hundred man years of horticultural affection, 
and maintenance is costed out, 
to a rounded figure.

Draws are rewritten.

Rewrites again.
Some bits go and some bits stay.

Quotations without citation,
lines of inscriptions 
are past.

like Lemmy Caulen reading Edvard in Alphaville. 

But Pate says, "This stuff's to stay, 
thought you made the drawings nervous?"

"No, no these are sketches, first thoughts and stories, 
not polished figurines, unembodied photographcs. 

They are the dreams that design might make come true."


64: Final Plan

The Master Plan is almost finished.
Now the graphics labs are busy,
touching it up a bit,
where it looked too flat.
So Pete’s guesses
and Bob’s alignments
and Richard’s approximations take some shape
— before your very eyes.

65: Happy Plastic People

Mike has done some sketches, too.
Views of bustling crowds and balance bright basins by the Statfis.
But between the Plan, all coloured up
and these polypropylene perspectives,
there’s something missing still.

D. It seems like some aerial views he’d done
(a country estate developed
in the main part of their time,
exorbitant and fast to a half moon like a draughtsman,
sketching with Claudia Glass, turns back the age,
but in the Green Belt 10
“I could do something like that again?”

66: Where only the scrapyards and pigeon coops are free (pencil sketch)

So for two more summer days
he walks the site,
sketching and scribbling,
sketching the contours
and wandering at the colours
of the pigeon coops and the bodies of scrap old cars
as the sky turns to dusk.

67: Two hundred years of Revolution 1790-1990, fires over Dunstan
(postcard).

The gas holder burns in the long rays of the sunset.
Point pockets on postcards recall past revolutions,
looking forward to new freedoms,
and so to friends,
tongues,
intercepted and misunderstood.

68: Airplane Banner and Dedication (detail)

That right,
more inventions, more dashes
unnumbered fragments of invisible cities.
Coloured pencils scratch out
a deep perspective grid,
give form and shape to dreams.
A banner and a wave,
shading and looping
nothing’s certain,
in all of this.

69: Collapsed axonometric.

Private jokes surround this love’s habitat,
On terrace ends magnificently adds graffiti,
claims to live in Blenheim once again.
Across the basin bands plug in
on floating stages.
All this in colour,
around it swirling in black line
is an ocean of concrete
that would sink this technicolour archipelago,
fit for a king.
But she has time to look.
A collapsed axonometric is the technical term.

70: Operating Diagram.

The next day the assessors come.
Their curious display shined up.
From the Parks Department, for all, a rose.
The assessors introduce themselves, their basis:

They’d like to take away all the information needed to make their assessments.
A letter is circulated with the headings
under which they’ll make their judgments.

There is a list of who’ll say what to whom.
The team sits round a horseshoe table,
and inky turn to hard questions,
number and price.
Things loosen up.
"That's OK!" Edith.
"Just a joke"
But later O. asks,
"What's in the rules, to say it can't be true?"

And so on into smaller groups.
next day we talk of artists, jugglers and sculptors.
Things loosen up.
Some talk of Alexander and then of Gaudy Clay.
The lunch is good.
The wine is fine.

71: The Final Version of the Plan.

To show it can be done Pete's patch. Xerox posted another master plan.
Another version of the future, half formed before your very eyes.
In groups, in case they tour the site.
They get out at the station.
It starts to rain.

It's Pete's birthday,
and in Saltwell's usual style they circumnavigate converging paths
through the convoluted scaffolding, still damp.

On Sunday she arrives to say she has to leave.

72 : Excuse and reason.

At this point is a break in the manuscript.
Dates and sequences of events are difficult to establish.
The notes are unclear and parts are erased.
[Plans are only lines on paper, places that aren't, yet.]

If this were a movie there would be a hero a fast and complex edit:
discussion, plans changing, books thrown in disorder, a blur of jumps and rolls, a beach at dawn, the angled chairs, the quiet voice, the fifty minute hour.
(The subject isn't raised again.)

73 : D. and the Secretary of State hold out the Master Plan.

Months later
the Minister comes.
He looks at the plan with the Host,
and sits for the photographer of The Northern Echo
and The Gateshead Post.
"This Festival could mean jobs galore!"

On the second of November, there is a press release,
which reads,
"In a statement made in Middlesbrough today..."

74 : Flower Power (Gatehead Post).

Next thing a Chief Officer's Working Group is set up.
The Chief Executive, the Director of Finance, and D.
declines.
"The Festival will not be designed" (it was in secret minutes).
This is asked
to co-ordinate the crafts,
and Lionel gets thirty thousand pounds to spend,
by Mail.
on site visit.
Richard gets busy at meetings.
Bob gets busy on next year's restoration plan.

Everybody wonders who's in charge,
who will get what money (we'll have a logo competition),
who has what's overheard
(the architects are designing a festival hall)
except they're not.
[they've got no code to charge the fee against].

75 : The Universal Traveller Badge: "Helps make dreams come true"
A ghost walks in the machine
in corridors and on the corners of the stalls.
"Hi, what's happening on the Garden Footsteps?"
as if he'd be the one to know.
75: Daytime patterns

Round about than the Assessors report is circulated.
As paragraph four point four, points out
"the philosophy was sometimes hard to grasp"
"the innovative approach was uncrystallized" but considerable thought
had been given
In what garden festivals are
or might become.
The Assessors say they were refreshed
by the "exploratory approach"
which contains
"the possibility of a step forward."

77: The structure of the Garden Festival Company

But underneath the calming sea
beak buzz food sheds with pound sign fees
"organisational ability", they snap
"nail in perception", another swift attack
"a degree of ruthlessness is called for" tasty stuff
these daydreams,
and "inner attitude" just adds a taste
to "worthy but too diffused".
Snap.
He sends a note to Pete
for what purpose now
It's all washed up, isn't clear
It ends with a satirical
something about babies
and bath water,
A final question mark, then.
"When it comes back round
to love and money
Then money walks
In sensible shoes
All over us."

78: I'm Dreaming of a city
fit was my own invention 14
ink drawing)

and silent, in parentheses and off the record:
"while love just sings
makes dreams seem true,
If only for a moment, somewhere,
at twilight in the park
a wild lost place
that might have been."

78: Impact analysis

It's time for him to see D. again.
To try and raise the wreck.
D. asks, straightforwardly enough:
"What can you think you could contribute?"
There's a million ways to work things out.15
"I'd like to explore the principles,
To design without building,
Expand the pictograms,
Draw up those charts again,
Find a balance between the ideas
And the Assessors' criticisms."
Design's a cyclic process,
I'm running in circles
Come to my senses sometimes.16

79: Mayakovsky lying in state at the Writer's Club, 52 Vorovsky Street,
Moscow, 1930.

Mayakovsky's last letter
As they say,
the incident is closed.
Leaves boat has
Crashed on
Philistine reef
It would be useless
Making a list
Of who did what to whom.
We shared weapons
And wounds.
To those who remain with happiness.17

O. Dynka, D. What a day that was, Inner Musi 1961, recorded on Songs From Broadway Production of The Catherine Wheel. Git Records, 1961.


II: Black out.

Such dreams, that magic island
all that old stuff's been junked,
stars of slow motion, dissolved the clouds at dawn.

When ruthless decisions have to be made,
what's left is just a rat in an empty skull;
skein left on a doorstep
wrapped with no message;
an illusion in plans drawn plained up on the wall;
a gap in the conversation
where the void seems to.
The end is silence anyhow.
The old astrologer dries up.
Management consultants prepare their reports.

Another boat,
another need,
same old story, same old song,
No forwarding address.
No matter,
what else is left to say.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.


An earlier version of this article (corresponding to the numbered section here) has been read in manuscript at Oxford Polytechnic, February 1992 (This is a true story's Newcastle University, May 1990) and at University of South Bank University, 1994-5 (777 Fb a Xing). This version first read at the Urban Design Group, December 1991.
HOW DREAMS END

It's a strange feeling, but one not uncommon to designers, to go back to something they sketched but others built, to see their dreams realized by others. Paying for a ticket to experience a place you've lived on paper, in another's hand, is a strange sensation. We know who owns the copyright of drawings, of the designs contractors construct, but dreams... first words, ideas, images drawn from the air... are stranger stuff. So often it is these first dreams that get written out of the authored history, yet they resonate in every telling.

Standing in line for my ticket to the Gestheal National Garden Festival, I was aware of the contours of that world dream time, that mad carnival fit for a king, whose design ideas came (see UDO 45). But the official Souvenir Programme states at Chapter 2: "In the end, there are six years of the comprehensive daylight history, the remains of the garden, and the remains of the garden."

The design of the Festival is a stunning exhibit. Spaces that strange, self-contained, visually complex yet rich in potential notions: "The Festival Bandshell" is the most spectacular event in its design. But over six years of the comprehensive daylight history, the remains of the garden, and the remains of the garden, there are six years of the comprehensive daylight history, the remains of the garden, and the remains of the garden."

"It's a shame that NGF '90 wasn't a 'designed' event," said one. "But the design of the Festival is a stunning exhibit. Spaces that strange, self-contained, visually complex yet rich in potential notions: "The Festival Bandshell" is the most spectacular event in its design. But over six years of the comprehensive daylight history, the remains of the garden, and the remains of the garden, there are six years of the comprehensive daylight history, the remains of the garden, and the remains of the garden."

BOB JARVIS

WE PROPOSE A GARDEN OF WILD PLEASURES...

AND WHAT YOU BUY IS JUST SOUVENIR PAPER AND PAPERS WITH THE SOAP WORKSHOP...

X URBAN DESIGN QUARTERLY OCTOBER 1990
The Dunston Manuscript offers a rare and intimate insight into the urban design process - an hour long epic which is equal parts design method, implementation research ... and epic poem and visual performance poem. Its influences range through Vladimir Mayakovsky, Chris Alexander and Laurie Anderson. It has been rarely performed and is deliberately unpublished - Brian Goody wrote of one of its performances, 'to wander off into poetic accounts of urban design is clearly insane'.

Dr Bob Jarvis is Urban Design Co-ordinator in the Department of Urban Environmental and Leisure Studies at London Southbank University and (probably) the only town planner to hold a masters degree in creative writing.