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Paul Bishop, landscape and local history: a life and a legacy

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ABSTRACT

Paul Bishop's interest in local history was longstanding. As he neared retirement, he expanded his researches into local landscapes and a longheld interest in industrial archaeology. As Paul's desire to minimise his carbon footprint increased, so did his research into the local area where we lived in East Dunbartonshire. As well as using his skills and experience as a geomorphologist, Paul extended his research methods, examining dovecotes, horse gins, ha-has, lime kilns, bleachworks, flax mills, the linen industry and other topics related to his great loves: landscape, mills and local history. Paul went in, waders and all. This piece is designed to trace the origins of Paul's enthusiasm for local history, to discuss the characteristics of Paul's involvement in this research area, his collaborations and his significant contribution to local history in Scotland, not only through research but by his service to various groups and bodies involved in Scottish local history. Part of Paul's legacy is his ability to enthuse and engage people in learning about their local environments. He leaves behind an extensive archive. A more general point is made about personal archives and how we might approach them in order to preserve such materials.

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Introduction

I was honoured to be asked to write this piece and to deliver it as a talk at the commemorative event for Paul Bishop. It is important to acknowledge the contributions of Paul's academic colleagues. I also acknowledge the work done by Chris Philo, in bringing us together to celebrate Paul's work.

In the weeks leading up to the event to commemorate Paul's work, the School of Geographical and Earth Sciences mourned the loss of Professor Rod Brown, a colleague and compatriot of Paul's. Rod was to have spoken at the event. Rod's contribution as a colleague is to be remembered as is his generous spirit. Another loss to Geography in 2022 was Professor Paul Cloke, a friend and colleague of Chris and others but also someone who influenced my own research. Rod Brown and Paul Cloke were two generous, lovely people and are much-missed.

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I was asked by Chris to talk about Paul's contribution to the field of local history. Colleagues at the commemorative event told us about Paul's academic research in many areas of earth sciences across the globe.

The more I thought about Paul's work on local history – I cannot call it his 'other work' because it was never 'other' – the more I realised the longevity and inevitability of Paul's road to local/global history and his interdisciplinary approach. His wide-ranging interests and his pleasure in all of them came from decades of curiosity, reading, and enthusiasm. These attributes made it natural for him to work as an interdisciplinary scholar. It was always there, ticking over, growing, developing into what would become a formidable body of work. Paul's various contributions to local history and cartographic journals, while less extensive than his list of academic publications, is testament to his formidable output as a researcher and a writer. In writing this piece, even I, who was married to him for 42 years and heard about his projects, was startled by just how prolific he was.

Paul's interest in, and work on, local history did not spring up once Paul retired. It was a decades-long gestation. It would be tempting simply to present a long list of Paul's interests: designed landscapes, flax and the linen industry, lime kilns, cut nails, telephone kiosks, industrial heritage, mills, horse gins, Bardowie Loch, Baldernock Mill, vernacular buildings, Baldernock local history and beyond, bleachworks, academic fraud, canals and so on. It would miss the point of Paul being who he was. His contribution to many groups, for example, as joint chair of the Baldernock Local History Group, as Chair of the Scottish Local History Forum, as a member of the Charles Close Society, involvement with the Knightswood History Group and many more organisations, was also part of who



Figure 1. Paul Bishop in waders, field work in W. Scotland. Photo by Duncan Cook.

he was: to quote his long term friend, Michael Crosby, ‘big, bold, brassy and over the top.’ (pers. comm) Paul was in, waders and all (Figure 1).

Paul was a self-described internationalist. The global informed his local research and vice versa. Once when up on the moors with his friend and fellow Chair of the Baldernock Local History Group, Niall Logan, Paul commented ‘I love this place’ (Logan, 2022, p. 125). ‘I love this place’ extended beyond local or global. It was universal. As I said earlier this year, it was a crowded marriage. When it came to place, he was polyamorous but his great love was the small, rural parish in which we lived.

Paul Cloke and Owain Jones, in their paper on ‘dwelling’ or the concept of being immersed in place and landscape, wrote about a Somerset cider apple orchard, explaining the dynamics of being in the landscape as ‘embodied, practised, contextualised ... [a] melange of experience.’ (Cloke & Jones, 2001, p. 664) The complexity of places demands ‘dynamic rather than fixed ways of understanding embodied engagements with landscapes.’ (p. 664) That goes some way to describe Paul Bishop’s approach to local landscapes. It is interesting to note that one of Paul’s earliest publications with a colleague who would influence Paul’s research into local history and industrial archaeology, was on orchards as well. It is most appropriate to quote from Cloke and Jones for another reason, as Paul, with our neighbour, Brian, made cider and very good it is. Paul’s cider-making and other exploits in the local landscape led to his alter ego on my Instagram feed, Hens, Harvest and Hearth, as Mr Hearth. He delighted in this role, as forager, chainsaw-wielding woodgetter and carpenter. His entanglement with landscape was not solely as a researcher but always embodied and often performative, as his short video demonstrating the advantages of the Timbercroc versus a sawhorse demonstrates and for which he was paid, to his delight, €50.

In this commemorative piece, I explore the origins of Paul’s engagement with local history, cartography, industrial archaeology and landscape history, the breadth of his interests, his contribution and his commitment to local groups and communities. Paul’s work was embedded in collaborative ventures. Some of the significant and diverse collaborations in Paul’s work are discussed, followed by a reflection on Paul’s insistence that a holistic approach to localities and landscapes, in which the conflicted, sometimes creative, usually messy and often exploited presence of humanity, was centred.

Origins and longevity

Paul’s interest in local history began in his childhood. He grew up in Terrigal, a town on the Central Coast of New South Wales, between farmland and sea. It is now a very busy tourist destination and residential area. From when I first met him, Paul was interested in local history and he collected many books on Central Coast history. His time at Sydney University between 1978 and 1989 was also important. He worked with Dennis Jeans, (Bishop & Jeans, 1982) whose specialism was industrial heritage. His later work derives from those early years and that influence.

Wherever he lived, or visited, he walked, read, talked with locals and learned all he could. Our trips to the Morvern Peninsula each year to the cottage of our friends, Celia and Geoff Burns, were a good example of Paul’s deep dives into the local. Maps were spread out, walks were undertaken and many, many books read. He also met

with the factor at the nearby Ardtornish Estate, talked to locals, and took photographs. In looking at his work in preparation for this article, I found a considerable number of photographs devoted to the skew on the gable end of a bothy. That was the immersive nature of his exploration of place. His knowledge of the University of Glasgow and its history was also extensive, even down to his insistence that the Cloisters were actually an undercroft. He gave a memorable tour of the University to conference delegates in 2015. Greg Condon, his long term friend from school and university, who attended the commemorative event for Paul, would agree that this was ever Paul's *modus operandi*. Paul did not decide, upon retirement, that he would start working on local history. He began that before we moved to Scotland. That was what he always did wherever we were. He loved that he could walk at ease around so many locations, cities, and landscapes.

Engagement

As I said earlier, Paul was a waders and all, enthusiastic participant in whatever research he was doing. Nobody could be in doubt of his enthusiasm. One of the last pieces of work Paul did not long before he became so ill, was for a friend of ours, outside of Baldernock Parish, who had concerns about a development that might exacerbate flooding. Our friend told me later that Paul arrived, had a brief chat then wellies on, strode across the field, jumped over the wall and into the burn. Coupled with his engagement was generosity. As our friend wrote in an email to me: 'Paul's advice and practical input was the fulcrum for our case in preventing the development. Almost every time we walk past the site we mention Paul's name.'

I would add, here, that this is not an exercise in valorising Paul or attributing words or views to him. I am bringing together other people's reaction to Paul's engagement, his written work and also some of the many discussions we had about so many things. Just before the commemorative event in September, 2022, I received a letter from someone who had only met Paul once but who had initially been in virtual contact with him during lockdown. He commented on Paul's warmth and generosity. Paul's engagement, whether it was listening to oral history or helping out with scientific expertise, was central.

Enthusiasm

Part of that engagement was down to enthusiasm. Enthusiasm was driven by an inquisitive nature and a love of fun. It was also driven by a phenomenal work ethic. He loved what he did and wanted others to love it too. Communication was essential to Paul's identity as a researcher and his enthusiasm informed the performative nature of his communication with people. He loved extending that enthusiasm to others, whether in student field classes or on local history walks. So many of the people who heard Paul speak have mentioned this to me: how his enthusiasm for his subject and his ability to communicate enthused them.

When he was first in hospital in 2021, Paul made heroic efforts to contact those closest to him about his prognosis. In the course of discussing this with his friend Michael Crosby, Paul and Michael somehow moved on to the Scottish Enlightenment

and Deep Time. Paul said to Michael, 'If only I had my slides with me, I could explain!'. His enthusiasm, even in that most difficult of circumstances, remained. He was also keen on observing the work done by medical staff and was thrilled to watch them at work, trying to ease some of his symptoms, most notably a high level of calcium. When I walked in to see him one afternoon, he explained it to me, saying, 'They were doing *proper science*.'

As well as being enthusiastic, Paul was also fun. Yes. He could be grumpy and impatient – I will mention the famous eye roll later – but his sense of joy and fun was present in the interdisciplinary work he carried out. He also wanted it to be fun for others as well.

Reading

One of the central building blocks of Paul's work was reading. As my brother-in-law, Michel once remarked, '*C'est une maladie*' ('it's an illness'). Reading, for Paul, was close to essential, the intellectual blood that coursed through him. Paul's eclectic reading tastes led him to the obscure, the arcane and the mainstream. Unfortunately for us, we both suffered from the same illness but in different directions, leading to an inevitable overflow. It cannot be emphasised too much how significant reading was both to satisfy Paul's curiosity and as a means of refreshment. It was essential to the interdisciplinary nature of the research he undertook.

Artefacts

Paul's research required a simple collection of artefacts: glasses, geopick, tape measures, camera, maps, boots, pencils, hat, magnifying glass and above all, his fieldwork notebook. Paul's fieldwork notebooks were neat and meticulously detailed. Not one, even from undergraduate work, was discarded.

Other essentials were waders and Wellington boots. Paul was the Imelda Marcos of wellies, preferably bought from the middle aisle of Lidl. He also bought in different sizes so that visitors and colleagues could stomp through the landscape in a dry state.

The arty bugger

It is important, when looking at Paul's local or global work, to understand the breadth of his engagement as an interdisciplinary scholar. Again, Paul's involvement with the arts began in childhood, with music, after which came art, ceramics – more of which later – poetry, textiles and a good deal else. His love of landscape was as much an aesthetic response as a scientific or historiographical one. This was the context in which he worked and collaborated. Some months after Paul died, I came across a poem Paul had composed about his pianist grandmother, published when he was in his early twenties (Bishop, 1971) in a journal for which he would later, with his friend, Greg Condon, design and screen print subsequent covers. His decision to continue with research as a career, rather than with a life as a musician, came when he was already embarked on a PhD.

Dougalston

The long gestation of Paul's relationship with local history, came together when Paul began to explore the Dougalston Estate, owned and developed by John Glassford, one of the Tobacco Lords, in the eighteenth Century, now a golf course and woodland/recreational space.

The major work, both as an academic (Bishop et al., 2010; Bishop et al., 2017; Bishop et al., 2022; Bishop & Jansen, 2005) (add Bishop & Munoz-Salinas, 2013) and in local history, that Paul undertook over the past fifteen years was on the Dougalston Estate. This work was his great love. It is difficult to distil everything he did related to this central project: geomorphology, mapping, designed landscape history (Bishop, 2018a), masons' marks, doocots (Bishop, 2015–2016), international commerce, canal development, the slave trade, family history and ha-has (Bishop & McBride, 2019). On the latter, we were walking around Dougalston early in our time in the local area and Paul was puzzling over them. I explained what they were and reminded Paul of a visit to a small manor house in Yorkshire in 1985 where I had given him a mini-lecture on ha-has. He became a ha-ha 'collector'.

Researching Dougalston led to such a network of people and interests that even Paul found it overwhelming. He began to work with thick description, embarking on an unfinished paper on Dougalston. Dougalston's life in the present is more than its heritage. It is a diverse habitat, largely untouched in some places, admirably cared for, balancing safety with biological diversity, by Mark McBride, Stevie Paton and the staff who maintain Dougalston Golf Course. Mark, Stevie and the staff were Paul's collaborators in his researches, generous with time and facilitating his exploration of the Dougalston doocot (dovecote) among other things. Dougalston is also a recreational area used by local people, never more so than during lockdown when it was an invaluable natural resource. Our house had been on the estate and its history formed part of the work Paul undertook on Dougalston (Bishop, 2021).

Publications

No longer tied to peer-reviewed journal articles, Paul wrote for many journals and other publications. He simply loved the freedom of casting about for the right place for his writing. Evidence of his relish for this new side-hustle came when he had written a very long article about our house. I was working on a peer-reviewed book chapter at the time and we would often share our experiences. I was given very firm instructions by the editors to cut back, having really stretched the editors' patience over the length of my chapter. Many of you will have experienced this rather turgid but necessary process. I duly resubmitted my chapter. Paul commented that the editors had asked Paul to do much the same for his article. Sometime later, I asked him whether or not he had prospered in arguing for the extended word length. Well, he explained, 'I told them I wouldn't cut it and they said they couldn't publish it, so I withdrew it.' It was published elsewhere (Bishop, 2021) much to Paul's glee at the freedom from academic publishing.

Collaborations

Paul was a collaborator. His instincts were interdisciplinary, and he worked with Don Hein for a number of years in Thailand at Sisatchanalai on the archaeology of the

ceramics industry and the transportation of ceramics. Paul's love of ceramics was given full rein. It led to friendship and a broadening of Paul's research (Bishop et al., 1992; Bishop et al., 1996) and much more, including wading through snake-infested canals.

Paul and Niall Logan, a microbiologist and local historian, set up the Baldernock Local History Group before they both retired. As Niall wrote, they 'found synergy and formed a strong partnership' (Logan, 2022, p. 127). They did field work together and planned walks and talks. This collaboration brought the community together. The group has now joined with Torrance local history group and Niall continues the work that he and Paul began together.

Paul began working with artist Rachel Mimiec on the Trails and Tales project, Scholar's Rocks <https://www.trailsandtales.org/trails/artworks/rocks-milngavie> This was one of Paul's most enjoyable collaborations, combining landscape, ceramics, industrial archaeology and local history.

Lockdown meant that Rachel and Paul did not have all of the time together that they wanted but it was a fruitful collaboration. The residue from the lime kilns, when pounded and worked with produced a glaze that Rachel used on the ceramics. Rachel's exhibition at the Lillie Art Gallery contained some of the ceramics made using the glaze <https://www.whatsonglasgow.co.uk/event/109629-still-life/>. The exhibition notes (Mimiec, 2022) thank Paul, who was 'Once walked with, never forgotten.'

Paul also worked with archaeologist Heather James, securing funding for a dig at Baldernock Mill to uncover a flax mill nearby and also at Drumshanty. The people working on the dig were volunteers and Paul revelled in the excavations. It also led to one of the famous Bishop eye-rolls that many colleagues will know. Someone suggested, not entirely jokingly, that I could take on the role of tea lady for the dig. Cue the eye roll. I just laughed. Sometimes you have to pick your battles and this was not one of them.

Paul collaborated with many groups and organisations across East Dunbartonshire, mounting exhibitions, giving talks, working with others to share research. He collaborated with Don Martin, James Kennedy and many others, including museum curators and heritage groups. One critical aspect of Paul's work was giving talks. He was much in demand as a speaker and saw it as a collaborative process between voluntary groups. His background as a teacher meant that he lived up to the old motto of Macquarie University taken from Chaucer: 'And gladly teche'. Talks were an essential part, as he saw it, of communicating enthusiasm for local history and landscape.

Paul's enthusiastic presentations were well-received and led to him receiving a number of requests to speak (Figure 2). As my publicist, Paul would also volunteer me as a speaker and that is how we came to be so closely involved with the Knightswood History Group, an enthusiastic and lively group who are delightful to meet with. When Maureen McRobb, who organised speakers, died, Paul stepped in and he and I worked on finding speakers, with Paul throwing a wide net across the local history scene and the University of Glasgow. It is something that was very dear to both our hearts and I have continued to work on the syllabus for the group. I am constantly on the lookout for speakers, as was Paul.

Although not strictly a research collaboration, the close and enduring friendship with Greg Condon, Michael Crosby and Moy Hitchen played its role in Paul's engagement with local and global history. When the four of them got together, Paul would organise special walks and visits with them specifically in mind and I know he loved their group



Figure 2. Paul Bishop giving a talk, East Dunbartonshire. Photo by Diane Webster.

discussions. One particular collaboration was a visit to Inversnaid to see the knickpoint there. It also involved Michael reading from Gerard Manley Hopkins poem, 'Inversnaid.' Paul rejoiced in planning these events and his researches were thorough. He was invigorated by that particular collaboration and the enduring friendship.

Paul and I also collaborated. Our relationship was founded on allowing each other to flourish as individuals but we worked well together. There is a photograph of me in Thailand, helping Paul with fieldwork. Paul is laughing. Early in our relationship, Paul was doing his honours dissertation, having come back to study after some years teaching. I would sometimes accompany him. This turned out to be not such a good idea. Holding a theodolite wasn't my idea of a fun date, so that practice didn't continue. Ten years later, when I helped Paul in Thailand and the photo was taken, Paul insisted on photographic evidence (Figure 3).

That said, we did field work again, minus the theodolite, investigating the topography of Dumfries and Galloway, for example, for our papers on Dorothy L Sayers' *Five Red Herrings* (Perriam & Bishop, 1999; Perriam & Bishop, 2000a, 2000b). At one point we were parked on the old road, checking maps and I read out the relevant passage that mentioned the granite crushing mill nearby and the scent of wild garlic. Sure enough, we were surrounded by wild garlic (Perriam & Bishop, 2000b). We worked on other projects and I



Figure 3. Paul Bishop and Geraldine Perriam, Thailand. Photo by Toni Hein.

encouraged Paul to read Sayers' *Gaudy Night* (1935) which hinges on academic fraud – for what better person to speak on this than Paul Bishop, former Senior Senate Assessor for student conduct? The result was a wonderful paper given virtually at Somerville College, Oxford in 2021 – Paul's final conference paper, ever – fortunately recorded (Bishop, 2023). Being Paul, he dived in, waders and all, covering some spectacular academic fakery, essay selling, and other misdemeanours. My copy of *Gaudy Night* (Sayers, 1935) has the equivalent of Paul's field notes: a closely-written set of notes on academic practice and ethics as evidenced in the novel. This shows again the grasp of interdisciplinary inquiry that was a feature of Paul's work. Our final project, still in progress, is a paper on the natural and historical heritage of Dougalston. I am still working through an archive of material on the natural environment, but I do hope that our last project together can reach publication.

One other collaboration will be mentioned later.

Scotland's involvement in the slave trade: the local view

One of Paul's significant contributions to Scottish local history was a local perspective on the slave trade. It was inevitable. Glassford and the activities of the Glasgow Tobacco Lords had to be given context. As chair of the Scottish Local History Forum, Paul organised what he called a mini-conference in April 2021. A second conference was scheduled for just a few days after he died but was then held in April, 2022. Paul and I had quite a few conversations about this and about how to tackle it so that the discussion was meaningful. Paul's perspective extended to other areas of Glasgow's history. It is not a universally popular move. Some of those involved in raising these issues, such as Corinne

Fowler, have been labelled extremists on social media and not everyone agreed with Paul's view.

Humanity

Humanity was central to Paul's researches: the workers in the flax retting ponds, the local coal miners, the lime burners, the masons working on local buildings (Bishop, 2017–2018), the under gardeners at Dougalston, the foundry workers. He gave one of the Hunterian lunchtime talks on hand cut nails, having investigated these after finding them on our roof slates. He talked about the five year olds who made them, having to complete a number per hour, the children being tied to their parents and having to work for various reasons, one of which was debt. Having taught five year olds, knowing their still-developing fine and gross motor skills, the size of their hands, I was appalled at hearing this.

Suffering was one of Paul's preoccupations. I will not say any more than that as much of it was, like his religious faith, very personal and private but it informed his approach to life, including its poetics and its politics. It was the reason he loved Auden's poem, 'Musée des Beaux Arts', which was read at his funeral: suffering in the everyday context and its extraordinariness in the midst of the ordinary. He discovered, during his researches, that John Glassford, owner of Dougalston Estate, had made life more difficult for poorer residents by diverting a road, making the route much longer for people to haul coal back to their houses (Bishop, 2018b). He also gave a Hunterian talk on the hardship this caused which can be found here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wRep6DzyOq8>.

Archive

I was going to provoke some thoughts about archives from those attending the commemorative event for Paul but on thinking it over, I decided on something more instructive. Paul and I were fortunate enough to be able to discuss things before he died. That is not the case for everyone. I have some requests from Paul about various items and I have had some discussion with John Briggs about a few things as well. It is going to take a long time to sort through and there are the other aspects of our shared life as well to be going on with.

Here is my advice: if you have an archive in any form or of any size, leave clear instructions for partners and family. Do not put it off. A bereaved family does not need the uncertainty of what do with your stuff. That is unless you want it all binned. And give a thought to all of the other things that bereaved partners and family have to contend with. Write it down, talk about it, declutter, sort, donate, do whatever.

One of the things that happens when one loses a partner and fortunately, only a minority of people behave this way, is that the partner left behind, particularly if she is a woman, is told what do to. 'You should' is not what the bereaved need to hear. A few people, unbidden, decide what they want to emerge from that archive, without any reference to Paul's wishes and give instructions, allocating to me the role of keeper of the flame because what else will I do with my life now? As I say, it's only a minority but it is infuriating. That is why the commemorative event, so thoughtfully organised by Chris, is important. This is the archive emerging in a way that is meaningful, from those who collaborated with Paul. So do please make your wishes clear to those who

love you and be as clear about what you do not want. I for one found it enormously helpful.

Pete and heavenly revelations

Finally, a brief mention of one of Paul's earlier collaborations. Some of you may remember Dr Peter Hunt the Australian science journalist who often presented on the ABC's (Australian Broadcasting Corporation) Science Show. Paul and Peter went a long way back. They had been at university together and did their PhDs at the same time. They also played music together in the Haymarket Players, with Peter on flute and Paul on trumpet. We also formed a quartette for a time and had a few gigs in the bar at Macquarie University. Paul and Peter researched together and Paul would come back from field work, often on the Lapstone Monocline west of Sydney (Bishop, Hunt & Schmidt, 1982), with Peter having talked about a lot of weird and wonderful things, as well as the science. They were as mad as cut snakes when they were together. One of Pete's contributions to these off-the-wall discussions was what he wanted to happen when he died. 'When I get to heaven,' Pete said. 'I want to see the formation of the Sydney Basin.' Paul was captivated by this and often talked about it. When



Figure 4. Paul Bishop at Glen Ettive. Photo by Brad Pillans.

Peter died aged 38, Paul was bereft but later he did say to me, ‘I wonder if Pete got to see the formation of the Sydney basin.’ I recalled this when Paul died, and I wondered what his request would be. The formation of the Sydney Basin might have not have been enough to satisfy that expansive man. Quite recently I was re-reading Salman Rushdie’s *Imaginary Homelands* for some work I was doing and I came across a passage that gave me something of an answer:

‘There’s a beautiful image’, wrote Rushdie in the title essay, ‘in Saul Bellow’s ... novel, *The Dean’s December*. The central character, the Dean ... hears a dog barking wildly somewhere. He imagines that the barking is the dog’s protest against the limit of dog experience. ‘For God’s sake,’ the dog is saying, ‘open up the universe a little more!’ And because Bellow is, of course, not really talking about dogs, or not only dogs, I have a feeling that the dog’s rage, and its desire, is also mine, ours, everyone’s.’ (Rushdie, 1992, p. 21)

And I think Paul’s request would be that: ‘For God’s sake, open up the universe a little more’ (Figure 4).

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