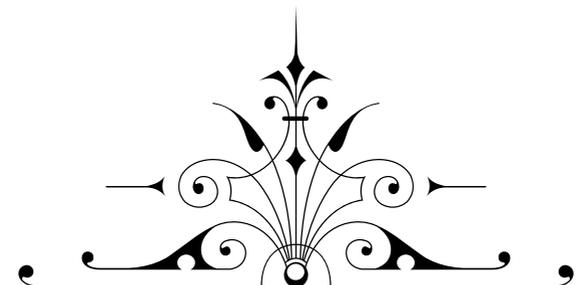


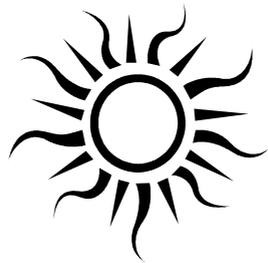
FOREST

Julian Konczak



Essay by Philip Hoare





Forest is a project that comprises film, photography and interactive elements.

*Research into history and archive forms the basis of Forest and has informed the choice of locations and documentary elements of
“Forest - A Trip Out”*

*Over the course of a year a series of walks have been documented as
“In Search of a Vista”*

*Each month follows the changing landscape in a 12 films made in collaboration with Natalia Data who reworked motifs from Vivaldi's Fours Seasons in the soundtrack for
“The Forest Seasons”*

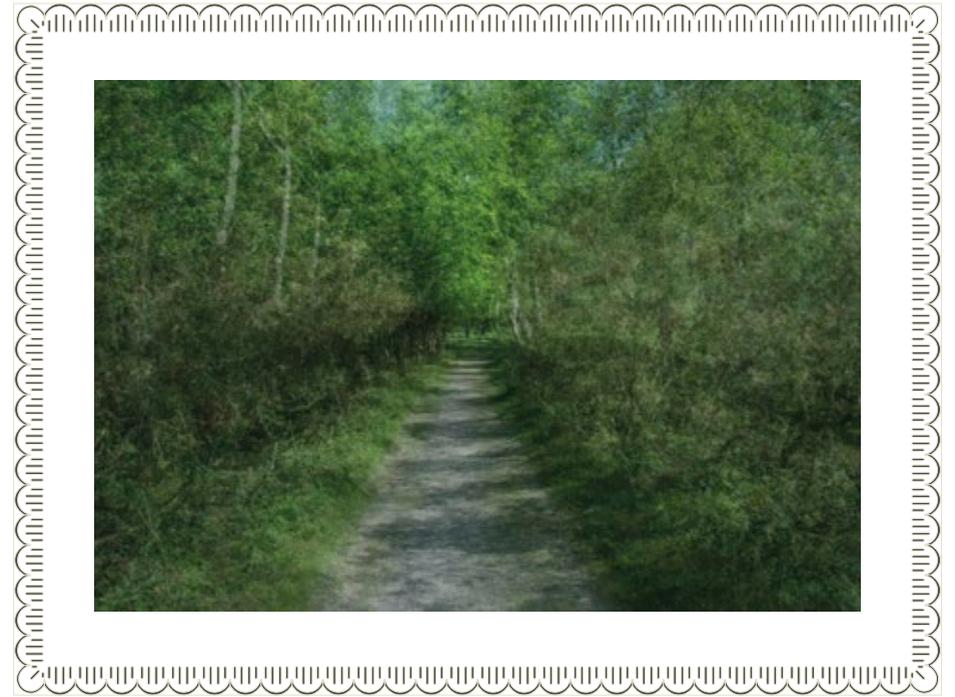
*The interactive elements allow the audience to explore the forest virtually as
“The Interactive Forest”*

theinteractiveforest.com

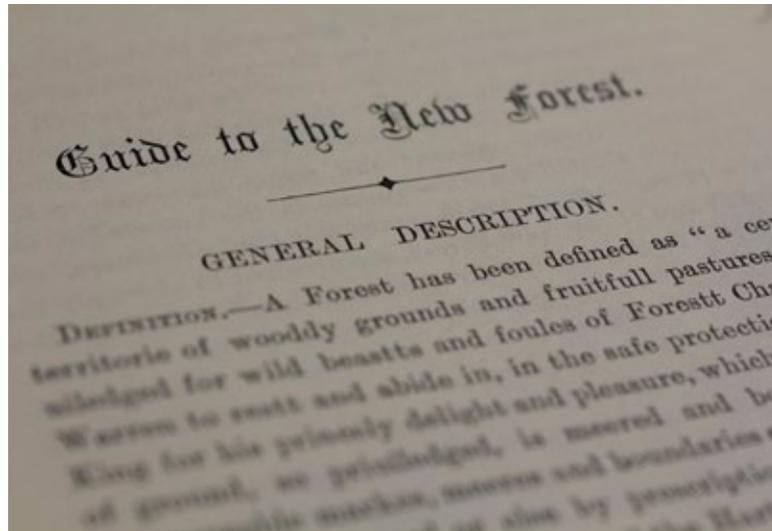




Antiquarian Map of the New Forest



Still from The Interactive Forest



The Forest frames the imagination – while its roots lie in the social economy of hunting and gathering later transmuted into ownership and enclosure ... this somewhat wooded world points to the unknown.

An open book often populated with phantasms of nature that writhe in primeval freedoms of darkness and menace; it is the stuff of storytellers and artists, who tease us down paths, lured on by fear and desire. The folklores of nature popular in the pre modern age distilled the inexplicable nature spirits into faeries and supernatural forces who resided in the wilder places.

This landscape is a playground in its purest sense - its elemental forces offer an immersive world for our senses and poetry for the soul. A foremost figment is the idea of the picturesque often packaged into the neat formulations of the picture postcard - anthropomorphic twisted gnarled trees and dark forests rendered in a warm glow of sunlight. The amenity of today's Forest partly sells itself on the search for such a vista, journeying on foot, hoof or bicycle.

The Forest is the place to escape – to take a trip out, to refresh the mechanised spirit of the modern world in this highly managed construct of the natural world – to this end it is the place to transform emotion. Time spent in this ambient soundscape speckled with birdsong draws us out of ourselves – the unfamiliarity forces senses to respond in novel ways and that lingering possibility of disorientation is utterly transformative.

However deep we go into the Forest, whatever enchantment we find in the shadows, finding creatures tangible or ethereal – that pantheon of entities are of our own making – refractions in the broken mirror of a collective unconscious that hunts for its origin.

✧ *Moving Like Drowned Men - Philip Hoare* ✧



Bookended by Bournemouth's suburban resort and the simulacra spires of Fawley's refinery, the New Forest stands as one hundred and forty four square miles of unnatural natural beauty, barely an hour and a half from London, yet immeasurably removed from its urban sprawl. A place where, only fifteen minutes from the reassuring tarmac and road signs and discarded hub-caps, you can quickly become lost, disorientated out of all proportion to a calm sunny day as the engulfing trees suck you in, each looking the same as the other, yet each assuming disturbingly anthropomorphic or even inhuman shapes.

In his remarkable book, *After London*, the Victorian visionary, Richard Jefferies, imagined England after some unspecified conflagration, an apocalyptic scenario which had allowed nature to take over, quickly reclaiming back its land. Within a few weeks, all traces of human occupation were overwhelmed. 'By this time the brambles and briars had choked up and blocked the former roads, which were as impassable as the fields'. Jefferies described a scene in which a kind of pre-Raphaelite science fiction had overtaken rural England, like a presentiment of the planet of the apes or a modern disaster movie. Soon the undergrowth had risen and with it the advance guard of the trees, the ghostly silver birch, followed by others:

No fields, indeed, remained, for where the ground was dry, the thorns, briars, brambles, and saplings...filled the space, and these thickets and the young trees had converted most part of the country into an immense forest... By the thirtieth year there was not one single open place, the hills only excepted, where a man could walk, unless he followed the tracks of wild creatures or cut himself a path.



In Search of a Vista - On Ibsley Common

In Jefferies' vivid fantasy, the whole of England becomes a New Forest. It is as if what lies in wait, dormant beneath the manicured land, is its wild and ferocious heart, a wilderness ready to be repopulated by ancient and long-extinct species. Indeed, in his recent book, *Feral*, the environmentalist, George Monbiot, has proposed a rewilding of Europe and even Britain, allowing the latent forests to regrow, and stocks of megafauna – from wolves and bison to rhinoceros and elephant – all of which once flourished here – to reoccupy their ancient lands.

Yet the reality of history – as opposed to an imagined future – would prove the reverse to be true, as England was denuded yet further of its primeval forest in the modern era. In the 1930s, T. H. White, misanthropic author of *The Once and Future King* – which proposed its own Arthurian utopia – and who was inspired by Jefferies, foresaw an entirely more dread actuality. By then the octopus reach of London's expanding suburbs had become inescapable, and White predicted the awful consequence of that spread; that 'one day the New Forest will be the name of a tube station'.

The forest represents many things, among them the sense of outpost. Indeed, the Latin root of forest is *foris*, meaning outside, a reflection of the Roman regard for the wild woods as somewhere beyond jurisdiction, beyond even their imperial reach. The Druidical human sacrifices which were displayed on trees, the Germanic peoples whose high priests led visitors into their wood bound by the hands out of respect; these dark edges contrasted with the usage to which the Romans put trees, crucifying slaves and the Son of God.

The woods were places of destruction and resurrection, rebirth in the undergrowth, perpetual and engulfing renewal like the heavenly ash tree of the Norse, Yggdrasil, which bound all time and space in its roots and branches. Later, the medieval world imagined the wild men of the woods, hairy, leafy anthropomorphic figures that reprised classical legends of naiads, dryads, centaurs and satyrs, themselves morphing into the Green Man, out of whose mouth grew branches and leaves.

Sometimes these stories would spill out into court life, in a re-enacted mimesis of the wild. Charles VI of France, for instance – known as 'the Mad', for his psychosis and belief that he was made of glass, and who wore reinforced clothes to protect himself – threw *Bal des Ardents* (Ball of the Burning Men) in 1393, during which he and four lords dressed as wild men of the forest, 'in costumes of linen cloth sewn onto their bodies and soaked in resinous wax or pitch to hold a covering of frazzled hemp, so that they appeared shaggy and hairy from head to foot'. As they cavorted about, a torch accidentally set their costumes alight, causing four of the noble lords to be burned alive, like gorse bushes on a dry heath.



Still from The Forest Seasons - October

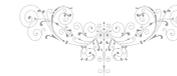
To the medieval world, the forest was animated and vengeful, full of mysteries – from the spectral white harts and mythical unicorns, to the tree-bearing troops that marched from Birnam Wood to Dunsinane to defeat Macbeth, and perhaps most powerfully of all, the Hampshire forest which conspired in William Rufus's sacrifice, a fatal act which many saw as a death foretold.

Rufus was the forty-year-old son of the Conqueror, named after his florid complexion rather than his hair, which was flaxen like his Viking ancestors. He had ruled England for thirteen years; a fair-minded king to many, but to others a godless man of pagan leanings. Some called him a warlock; others accused him of the more worldly vice of sodomy. In that last year of his reign, 1100, the Devil appeared to men 'in the woods and secret places, whispering to them as they passed'. One bishop exiled by the king saw him in a vision, condemned to the fires of Hell.

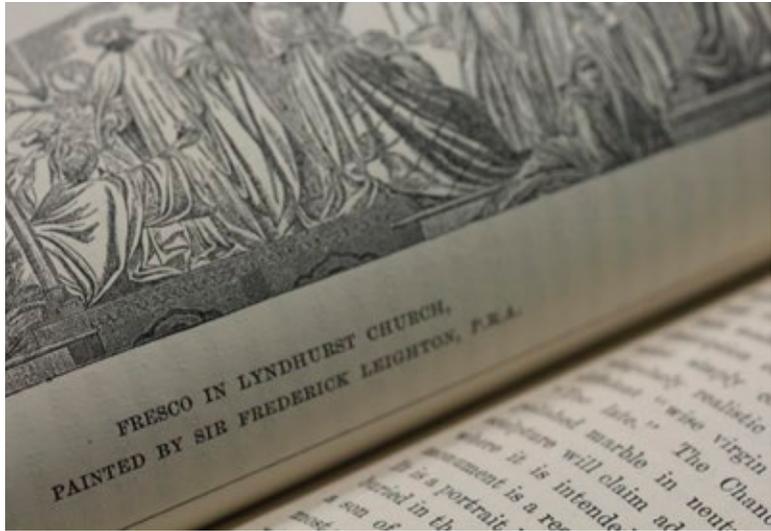
In his final hours, these stories began to accelerate around Rufus, as though the forest itself were closing in upon him. As day broke on the morning of 2 August, a monk appeared before the king's hunting party, relating a dream in which the monarch had swaggered into a church and seized the crucifix from its altar, tearing its arms and legs 'like a beast...with his bare teeth.' The cross had hurled its assailant to the ground, and 'great tongues of flame, reminiscent of the stream of blood, spurted from his mouth and reached towards the sky'. Later that day, the Earl of Cranborne went out hunting and met a black goat with the body of a naked, wounded man on its back. The animal said it was the Devil, crying, 'I bear to judgement your King, or rather your tyrant, William Rufus. For I am a malevolent spirit and the avenger of his wickedness which raged against the Church of Christ and so I have procured his death.'

Disconcerted by these portents, Rufus delayed his sport until the evening. Riding with the king's hunting party was his brother Henry, Walter Tirel of Poix and other powerful men, arrogantly jangling through a forest they regarded as their private domain. The deer were to be driven towards them; accordingly, a stag entered the clearing in which the king waited, the long shadows of the summer's evening falling before him.

It was as if the entire affair were choreographed and lit to give it theatricality. Shielding his eyes from the rays of the setting sun, Rufus loosed his arrow. As he watched the animal stagger, another appeared, distracting the king's attention and at this instant Walter...unknowingly, and without power to prevent it, Oh gracious God! pierced his breast with a fatal arrow. On receiving the wound, the king uttered not a word; but breaking off the shaft of the weapon where it projected from his body, fell upon the wound, by which he accelerated his death.

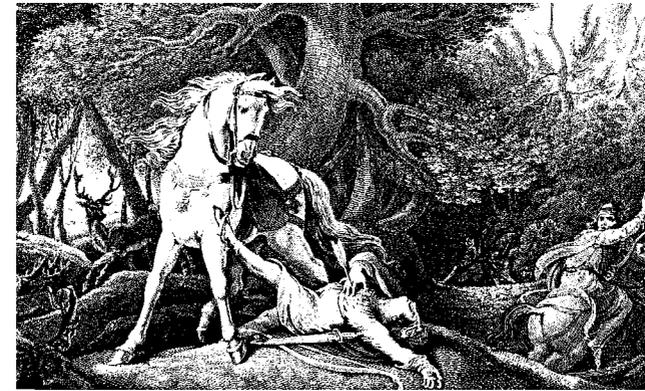


Still from The Forest Seasons - May



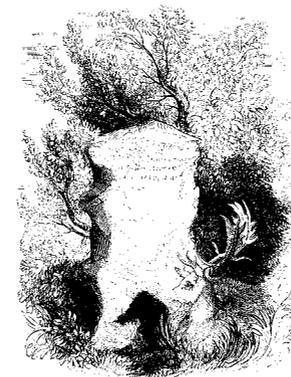
Pre-Raphaelite frescos in Lydburst from Guide to the New Forest – W.H.Rogers

In Search of a Vista – Over Ober Water



The horror of the scene - played out in slow-motion, as it were - was counterpointed by its setting: the silent beauty of the glade, the swift arrow seeking its preordained target, the venal king falling to the forest floor. And in the multiple perspective of historical record, the act acquired other meanings, as though filmed by another camera.

Over the next millennium, myth and legend gathered round this royal assassination. Some saw Rufus as 'the Divine Victim, giver of fertility to his kingdom' whose sacrificial demise came on the morrow of the pagan feast of Lammas, an act to propitiate the gods; that ritual sacrifice linked William Rufus's murder with that of Thomas a Becket; with witchcraft, Cathar heresy, and 'the persistence of "unnatural love"' as its mark. But to others the king's demise was just 'a stupid and an accidental death', nothing more than an incident, for all that its site was marked by an engraved stone.



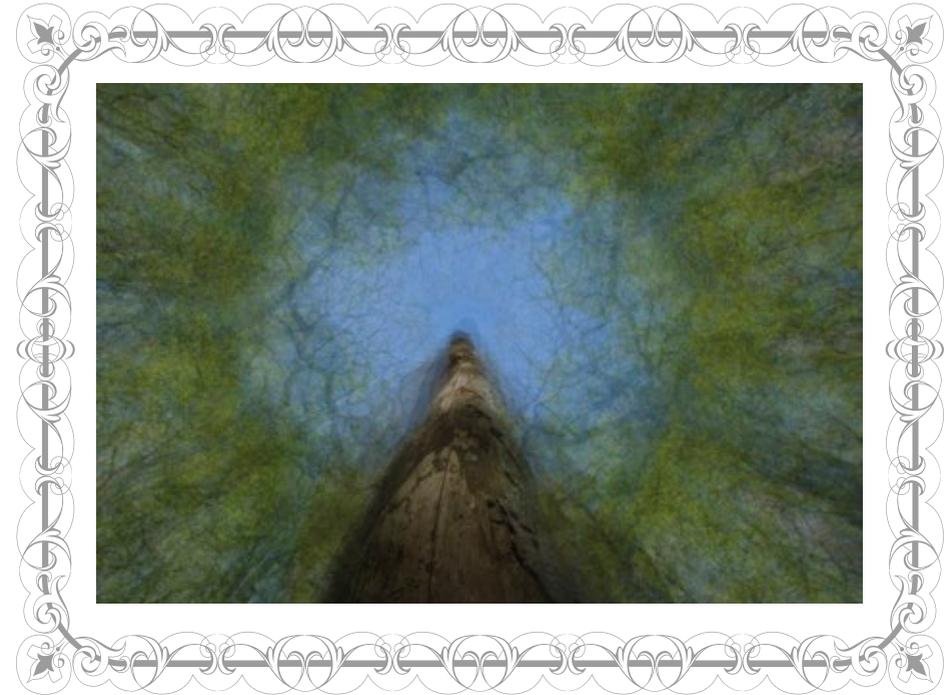
In Search of a Vista - Near Castle Hill

This new forest, which is not a forest (first-time visitors stand wondering at its blasted heaths and their lack of trees) and is centuries old, is a gravelly waste which was once a sea and might yet become so again. It retains that sense of primitive, threatening power, for all it is a managed place, an emblem of our earthly if deluded dominion. Over the centuries, it has attracted many utopians and dreamers, ritual acts and mysterious narratives over its thousand years of history, and the millennia of its immemorial prehistory. As it has come close to our own time, it has become an antidote and an alternative to the gravitational pull of the city and the age of the mechanical, and now the digital. The Industrial Revolution's resultant denuding of the country's economic power, a dynamic which prompted Jefferies' fantastical reverse trajectory. But some resisted that pull, in sometimes extreme ways.

In 1871, an illiterate farm labourer's daughter from Suffolk, Mary Ann Girling, arrived in sleepy Hordle, a New Forest village, bringing with her one hundred and sixty followers to whom she had promised eternal life if only they did as she instructed. They were to live together, like the apostles, giving up all their money and belongings to the sect – the Children of God, as they called themselves.

Parents would live separate lives and abstain from sex. Children would be separated from parents and cared for communally. Women wore their hair in loose ringlets and wore bloomers, trouser-like garments that shocked their Victorian peers. Men too wore their hair long, under 'wide awake' hats. They lived by barter and the Word of God, and threw strange shapes when they walked the streets of Lymington. They resembled some seventeenth century sect of civil war radicals, the Levellers or the Diggers reborn in an industrial era.

Most extreme and sensational of all were their whirling dancing rites, during which the women were said to undress themselves until they were dancing in the nude; spinning themselves into a frenzy and falling in a comatose state on the floor, out of which they would awake, said Mary Ann Girling, having died and been reborn into immortal life. It was an almost pagan antidote to an age of mass production. If the Pre-Raphaelites and Ruskin were looking back to medieval values, then Mrs Girling was evoking more bizarre irruptions, of St Vitus' Dance, mass hysteria, darker pagan rituals, and even the Dance of Death, in her unearthly promise of eternity.



Still from The Interactive Forest

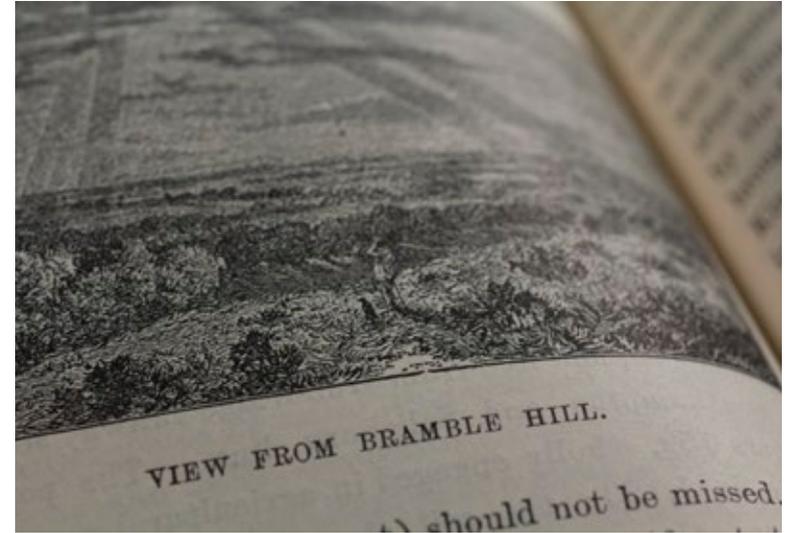
Evicted from Hordle Grange on Vaggs Lane, the New Forest Shakers, as they had become known, ended up living in bare wooden huts on an encampment nearby, a strange cross between a village hamlet and a concentration camp; a processing plant for immortality. And there, in those bare huts, many of their number – mostly young women – succumbed to consumption even as Mary Ann Girling's mission became more and more extreme, with their 'Mother' at one point emerging from her hut with her eyes blindfolded, muttering in tongues and displaying bleeding stigmata on her hands and feet. She might as well have been Kurtz in the heart of the dark jungle as a self-proclaimed female Christ in a shirtwaist and curls.



There was a sense of sacrifice to this forest drama, a presentiment and a revival of all the deluded gods of the forest, of pagan rites in the middle of the Industrial Revolution, auguries of apocalypse and ladders of bombs, of skyclad covens and New Age travellers rehearsing and recycling their own myths, breaking new ground in ancient turf, only for the forest to become one extended stockbroker belt, pricing out the untidy past and its bohemians and heretics, in favour of gravel drives, security systems, and Shaker kitchens from Chelsea.

Bare-face capitalism would soon take over from idealistic communism, seeping into the sylvan groves; the levelling, banal forces of incoming wealth would flatten the eccentric and the mystic alike, felling the forest of the imagination. (Strangely enough, the mechanical processes which drew its labour to the cities and denuded the forest of life has seen a paradoxical return of digital labour to the same countryside, via the new helots of the era of the internet).

In Search of a Vista – Circumnavigating Red Shoot



In Search of a Vista – Overlooking Long Beech Inclosure

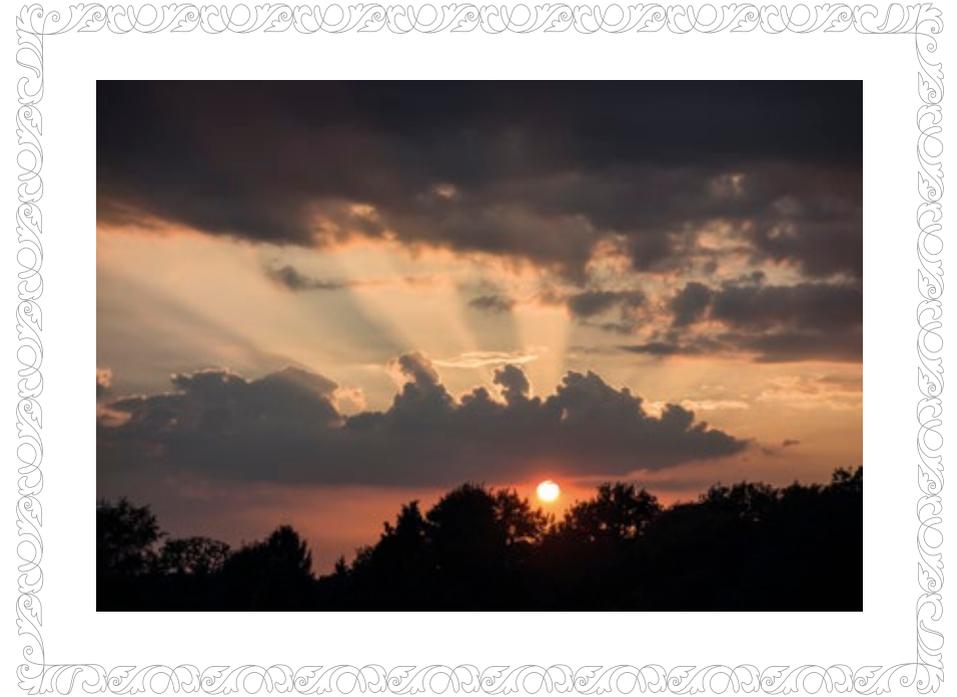
Bramble Hill from Guide to the New Forest – W.H.Rogers

All these futures, seen and unseen, possible and impossible, seemed to spin around with Mary Ann's futile, whirling, doomed New Forest Shakers, trembling in advance of the Armageddon to come. When, inevitably, she died, and joined her followers in the local churchyard, the remaining faithful gathered round her grave, instructing the sexton that he was wasting his time filling it in, as their leader would rise from the dead in three days, as if out of the woods, reborn.

Just a few field from where these scenes were played out, rose a giant concrete tower, casting its uncanny shadow over the proceedings. It was constructed, from 1879 to 1881, by a wealthy retired barrister, Andrew Peterson, who'd returned from his practise in Calcutta with a fortune in fees and fired up with mystical notions of the new science (or was it an art?) of spiritualism – even then being practised by the Queen-Empress, and declared by her Prime Minister, William Gladstone, to be the most important advance of the nineteenth century.

As Peterson's tower, composed of Portland cement and shingle from Milford's beach, shoved into wooden forms with no reinforcements, rose out of the Hampshire earth (to precise architectural plans vouchsafed to its creator by the spirit of Sir Christopher Wren from beyond the grave), it was to be a temple to this futuristic religion. Each of its twelve chambers, set one on top of the other, were to be dedicated to a different aspect of the new belief: clairvoyance, clairaudience, spirit writing, spirit photography, séance, etc.

Peterson even envisaged a series of these towers, marching across the countryside, like spiritualist pylons; indeed, at least two smaller versions may still be found in the area. At the top of the two-hundred-foot-high tower, Peterson proposed fixing the first outdoor electric light, a beacon to shine out like across the country, advertising this wonderful new message for the world. Unfortunately, he was forbidden from doing so by the Coastguard, on account that nearby shipping might mistake it for a lighthouse.





Still from The Forest Seasons - October

Peterson's concrete campaign faltered, and history moved on. His own interment, in 1906, after his cremation in the new facility at Brookwood, would take the form of his ashes in a casket placed in a chamber in the floor of his miraculous structure like some latter-day emperor. It was another eccentric consignment to counterpoint that of Mary Ann Girling; and echoed the last resting place of another forest inhabitant and spiritualist pioneer, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, who had lived at Minstead, and who set his favourite book, *The White Company*, in the New Forest during the Hundred Years' War. Indeed, the writer's choice of his forest home was made for him by his spirit guide, Pheneas, who approved of a site where the natural vibrations were 'more unspoiled... than anywhere in England'.

Conan Doyle was certainly attuned to such phenomena. He believed implicitly in faeries, having seen the photographic evidence of them in a Yorkshire glen at Cottingly, and pursued the spiritualist cause even as he created the world's most famous cocaine-addicted detective. After many attempts to contact those who had gone over to the Other Side – which some spiritualists called the Summerland – Sir Arthur achieved his own final translation. He now lies in Minstead's churchyard, after being disinterred from his original burial site in Sussex, where he had insisted on his body being put in the ground vertically upright, as if to be more ready for his own resurrection.

Victorian psychedelia invaded the forest in strange, subtle, and sublime ways. In the church of St Michael and All Angels in Lyndhurst, another burial marks that tendency – that of Alice Liddell, the original Alice in Wonderland. Within, the church's interior is a pre-Raphaelite wonder ('the tracery does unauthorized things', declares the dour Germanic voice of architectural historian, Nikolaus Pevsner), with a dreamy fresco of wise and foolish virgins by Lord Leighton, and carved wooden pillars and leafy beams and life-sized angels that reach into the roof like extended, fantastical versions of the trees of the forest itself. Forest and building merged one into the other; Christianity and paganism, too, just as old churches themselves were sited on more ancient holy places, marked by immemorial yews.

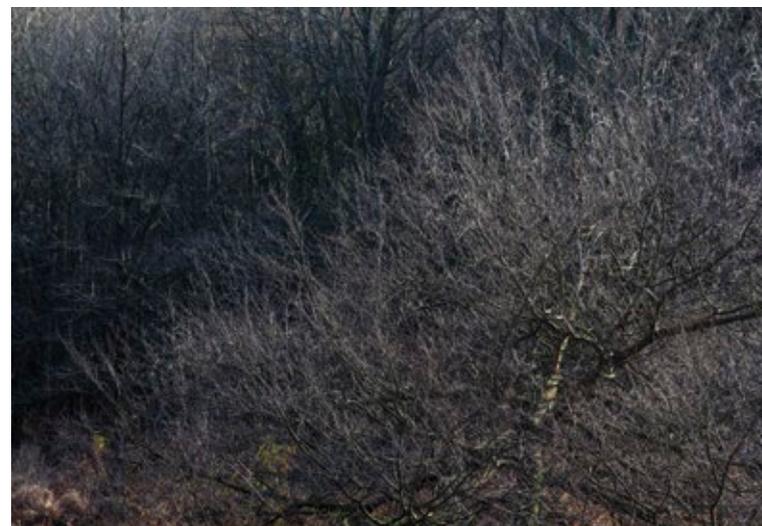
Meanwhile, Julia Margaret Cameron, whose amniotic sepia photographs of Victorian worthies, made under the aqueous light of her Isle of Wight greenhouse, turned those respectable bearded figures into Arthurian myths. Along with goose-winged infants as venal serapha, she donated a gallery of her images to the waiting room of Brockenhurst railway station, recreating it as a personal bohemian chapel of otherness, almost cinematic in its fantastical reach. One might not be surprised to see a few forest faeries peering out of Mrs Cameron's uncanny and evanescent silver nitrate icons. Although nowadays they hang, in reproduction, in a glass case overlooking the anodyne booking hall and its ticket-spewing machines, ghostly wraiths looming out of the forest ether, with the tousled beards of Darwin and Tennyson echoing that of Brusher Mills the snake-catcher who lived close by, and who charmed reptiles from the woods to feed to exotic fauna in London Zoo.

That sense of refuge and asylum, eccentricity and strangeness, so entirely opposed to our conventional conception of that century, stretched into the twentieth. At its beginning, Ernest Westlake, a self-confirmed neo-pagan, proposed (long before George Monbiot) to recreate Neolithic Britain in an extraordinary game park stocked with Stone Age era fauna, although the magnificence of his ambition is now somewhat undermined by the name of the place he chose for his pagan theme park; Sandy Balls. Meanwhile, close by, the utopian radical Auberon Herbert, third son of the third Earl of Carnarvon – the first man to ride a bicycle around the forest, and a moral and financial supporter of Mrs Girling and her Shakers - built his own compound deep in the forest outside Ringwood, named Old House.

Hidden by the trees, its owner added to his hideaway incrementally, 'a bed-sitting room, and then, bit by bit, as the humour took him... a room here or a room there until the crazy pile was completed'. He liked to sleep in a different room each night, and even built his own, more modest observatory tower, painted red, each of its three storeys containing a bed, enabling its tenant to take his forest rest where ever he liked.



Herbert was a resister, a non-conformist, for all his aristocratic background. He had opposed a Victorian attempt to do away with the place altogether, when the proposed 1871 Treasury bill for the Disafforestation of the New Forest sought to remove its very meaning; as if the relentless onward march of progress and the Industrial Revolution, of empire and capital, could not allow this anachronism, so close (and yet so far) from the nation's capital, to stand in its way. But Herbert and his fellow liberals – such as William Cowper - got their way, and in 1877, the New Forest Act enshrined the wilderness for posterity. At least, that was the intention. But in the dawn of the new century, Herbert saw a warning in the army manoeuvres he witnessed being carried out in the forest, and duly protested to The Times: 'How the British Army Captured the New Forest'. Herbert watched the trees swarming with troops, 'as in a splendid diorama', fearing strange new alliances to come, and 'a perilous way...'



Still from The Forest Seasons - November



Antiquarian Map of the New Forest



In Search of a Vista – Towards Puckpits Inclosure



After Herbert's death in 1906, his Old House had an even stranger function scheduled: as a proposed home to a new sect of spiritualists and New Age thinkers, the Theosophists, with whom his daughter Nan had become inextricably involved. Newspaper reports anticipating this latest alien invasion described Herbert's mysterious abode still standing as he had left it, as if he'd only just walked out of the room and into the trees. Surrounded by caravans on rusty trestles, and odd outbuildings with crumbling walls, the interior of the house had been left untouched.

Every table and shelf was laden with 'ordinary, valueless pieces of flint, taken from the gravel pits to be found in the forest...arranged on the expensive porcelain among prodigious tomes and even under glass-cases just as if they were so many precious gems. Books and flints, flints and books. They have invaded every room in the house, including the music-room, the bed-rooms, and the observation tower'.

From there the visitor could 'look over the multitudinous arms of the forest, or, with a turn, down to the sea where the Isle of Wight lies glittering like an emerald placed on a silver dish'. Close by, Herbert's grave itself lay 'beneath the shadow of the crazy house, within a little clearing surrounded by tall elms and poplars', not unlike Mary Ann's resting place. Part museum, part junk yard, this was to be the site for a new utopia, re-imported to England from California. But in the event, and doubtless to the relief of the neighbours, the Theosophists failed to make their transition. Instead of the love and peace they offered, war came instead.

With the advent of Armageddon, the forest was changed forever. Its timber was felled to supply props for trenches on the Western Front, assimilating nature once more into the maw of industrial warfare. As a result of the attendant shortages of wood that the Forestry Commission was formed, to ensure that a future conflict should not catch Britain unawares. And so serried ranks of uniform conifers marched across the heath land, awaiting their own sacrifice, much as William Rufus had been slain and sacrificed a millennium and a half before in order to propitiate pagan gods. At Brockenhurst, tattooed Maoris, who had their own creation myths about the ancient forests of their temperate homeland, would lie in the local churchyard, imported from the other side of the world to fight the war to end all wars.

During the Second World War, as New Forest covens gathered, sky-clad, at the coast to repel the Nazi invasion, hundreds if not thousands of night-time refugees from the Southampton blitz fled the town each evening to take shelter under its trees, as if they might protect them from the Luftwaffe's bombs which fell 'in ladders from the sky'. They joined and merged with the forest's other itinerant inhabitants, the gypsies and travellers whom the artist, Sven Berlin – himself a practitioner of the dark arts – recorded during his own stay in the arboreal wastes.

Many had been living there for years. In 1927, the Forestry Commission had addressed the problem of the hundreds of people who were living wild in the forest. Its final solution was to confine them to compounds, where, like native Americans on reservations, they could be corralled within a forest in which they had once roamed at will. Forbidden from erecting any permanent structures, these social rejects were issued with six-month licences which could be revoked instantly should their behaviour displease the Commission. Their compounds were, in effect, arboreal concentration camps. 'Although nobody so far has proposed to liquidate these nomads after the Hitler style, is it possible that, in his own country, John Bunyan's people have been sentenced to a lingering death?' asked Augustus John

By the 1930s, the population of the seven compounds had reached nearly one thousand, swollen by the effects of the Depression. In 1949, there were still about five hundred living this way when Arthur Lloyd wrote a report for the Picture Post, illustrated by the photographer, Bert Hardy. The grainy pictures, taken in the aftermath of war, evince a sense of forlorn romance about these lost people living under canvas rags or 'slums under trees', as the Post saw them.



Still from The Forest Seasons - February

In the New Forest, tucked away from the bird-watcher and the week-ending stockbroker, hundreds of poor folk live in compounds, under Stone Age conditions. Some call them gypsies, some call them dirty, some call them thieves. Most of them are none of these things. Many are decent people, with a strong wish for a better life, and a struggle before them to overcome prejudice.

These were insular communities, 'in-bred' and withdrawn from the world. At one compound, Shave Green, near Minstead, Berlin came to live with the forest-dwellers, painting them as they 'moved in their green underwater world of summer, moving like drowned men...' But soon these landbound drowned would be re-housed in faceless council estates, assimilated into the rest of humanity, the memory of their free forest days far behind them.

In their place came the modern forest, a much changed place, for all that it looks the same. Just as the cells of a human body are entirely replaced every seven years, so this empty, numinous place is filled and emptied with its stories, reinvented in its own image, or in the reflecting, narcissistic image of the humans who have shaped it through its history.

Yet they cannot succeed, any more than they can turn back the tide on the beach. One day Richard Jefferies' vision will be made manifest. The gravel lanes and tarmac roads will disappear, just as the train tracks have done. Co-op's shops will collapse, the multifunctional cables rot in the earth; the neural networks we have sought to impose and embed will no longer function, and the ivy and boar will run wild over dual carriageways. Pylons will falter, and substations short-circuit. The refinery will run dry, and slowly but surely, the natural world will resume its rightful place.



Julian Konczak is a filmmaker and artist, originally from London with the New Forest being his adopted home for the past 25 years. He is Senior Lecturer and Research Cluster Leader in Interactive Media at Southampton Solent University; he has exhibited at international festivals, galleries and television. Landscape has inspired a number of works with his previous Forest based interactive artwork "Birth and Decay" selected for the prestigious SIGGRAPH art gallery and subsequent USA tour. Recent video installations have focused on glitch culture and physical computing (TELENESIA) and computational narrative (J9). An active researcher in contemporary fine art and digital interactive technologies, he curates HIDRAZONE. Further information at zerok.tv

Dr Philip Hoare was born and brought up in Southampton, where he still lives. His books include Spike Island: The Memory of a Military Hospital, on Netley, England's Lost Eden: Adventures in a Victorian Utopia, about the New Forest Shakers, and Leviathan Or, The Whale, which won the BBC Samuel Johnson Prize, 2009. His new book, The Sea Inside, was 'Book of the Week' in the Guardian, The Times, and the Mail on Sunday. He is Senior Lecturer in Creative Writing at the University of Southampton. His work for the BBC includes Travels with Pevsner: Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, Arena: The Hunt for Moby-Dick, and Philip Hoare's Guide to Whales. He is also co-curator of the Moby-Dick Big Read - mobydickbigread.com. @philipwhale

Natalia Data (birth name Kulabukhova) is a classically trained techno DJ originally from Siberia who arrived in Southampton via the underground music scene in New York City. Her debut vinyl was released by London based Juke Box In The Sky. This was remixed by SCSI 9, Ercolino and Rhythm Code and received support from James Zabiela, John Aquaviva, James Holden and Dj Linus. Most recently a collaboration with Ed Lee led to music being released by Endemic Digital, Sounds of Juan and Bonzai Records. She has DJed in many European clubs, presented the Ministry of Sound Radio show 'Qaraj' and performed at UK festivals, such as Glade, Glastonbury and Bestival. Natalia is a Lecturer in Electronic Music and Live performance at Southampton Solent University.

Thanks to

Hilary Marshall New Forest Visitors Centre, Richard Reeves of Christopher Tower New Forest Reference Library, Jayne Alberty of the Forestry Commission

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