



Car Parks

GLENEAGLES AVE

SCOTSCRAIG STREET

# BENEATH THE SURFACE /HIDDEN PLACE

Nicky Bird

In collaboration with:

Alexander Brown, Karen Hamilton, Drew Johnstone, Mary Kennedy, Jan McTaggart &  
George McTaggart, Anne Park, Martin Peter, Mark Scott and Lesley Weir

# The Brink of Erasure

Kirsten Lloyd, Curator, Stills

If you unfold the cover flaps of this book you will find a schematic map in which two sets of competing cartographies describe the same block of land in Ardler, Dundee. Overlaid on top of one another, they picture the area from a birds-eye perspective to give an immediate sense of the dramatic change in orientation, from the emphatically vertical to the horizontal, that occurred on this site over a ten-year period. Rendered in dark grey, the Gleneagles Court multi-story tower block has spread out into Gleneagles Avenue, a wide street lined on either side with individual buildings, their gardens replacing the communal playground. These drawings have been derived from the survey maps held in the collections at the National Library of Scotland and in local authority archives, material which formed a vital part of Nicky Bird's research process as she sought out sites that had physically registered the effects of economic change and regeneration. She went to places that had been erased, where apparently permanent buildings, roads and gardens had both been rubbed out and redefined by human activity, nature or a combination of the two. More specifically however, she went to ordinary, everyday homes and public spaces that had experienced this process of erasure within living memory: 1960s tower blocks, city suburbs and mining villages. Anyone could follow this exercise and wander with an outdated map to retrace the walkways of history, but Nicky Bird has gone beyond these two-dimensional renderings to work with the inner topographies of memory, collaborating with individuals from across four sites in Scotland to capture some of the emotional threads that interweave these physical sites,

threads that are often caught up in the gap between past and present.

During one of our first meetings to discuss the *Beneath the Surface/Hidden Place* project, Nicky Bird brought out two small photographs, one of boys swimming in a harbour in East Lothian back in the 1930s, the other, a document of how the same site stands today, filled in and transformed into grassland. Recent years have seen a resurgent interest in contemporary forms of storytelling in art, but it was the silence of the breach between these two apparently straightforward images that was so arresting. From this starting point, she went on to identify more sites, spending the next two years collaborating with local people from Doon Valley (East Ayrshire), Ardler (Dundee) and Foxbar (Paisley) to gather together family snaps and oral accounts, unearthing personal histories whose physical traces were similarly on the brink of erasure. Carefully placing vernacular images within new shots recording each site as it stands today, they projected these photographs beyond mere documentary evidence, pressing the past up against the present to achieve an oscillation perhaps best described as a kind of photographic haunting. The process of paring back and distilling archival research and personal testimonies into apparently simple montages enacted a visual excavation of each site to capture a sense of the erosion of these past realities.

The photographs included in this publication have been exhibited alongside selected research material at Stills, Edinburgh; Dundee's Ninewells Hospital and in the impressive galleries of The Dick Institute in Kilmarnock. Further site-specific installations

Nicky Bird:  
In Situ Test, Eastern Extension,  
Prestongrange, East Lothian, 2009



were presented in the Doon Valley Museum and at Prestongrange, East Lothian, where the photograph of the children swimming was transferred onto a large transparent screen and positioned at the location of the old harbour. All of these displays have elicited powerful responses amongst viewers, suggesting that the project has transcended local interests and geographical boundaries to convey something of an experience deeply imbued within our culture. Since *Beneath the Surface/Hidden Place* ended, new technologies have sought out ways to engage with the pervasive fascination that everyday histories hold. One such example is *Historypin*, software launched in 2010 which enables people to fasten old photographs and the stories behind them to Google's *Street View* maps. Another is *Walking Through Time*, an application developed by a team at Edinburgh College of Art which, when uploaded to a smart phone, operates as a 'historical satnav', orientating the user within the streets of the past. If Nicky Bird captured something of the *Zeitgeist* in resisting the separation of the past and revealing it to be in a complex relationship with the present, her methodology remains distinct. The depth of the relationships forged with her collaborators enabled her to mediate knowledge not available in archives and delve into otherwise hidden aspects of individuals' lives, many of whom are relatively young. Though the hand which has placed the image is absent, the precision of this placement, in what are often entirely unrecognisable sites, hints at what Rhona Warwick calls the 'iceberg of dialogues' buried beneath the surface.

## Processes & Practices

### Nicky Bird and Rhona Warwick in conversation

**RW:** Let's begin by talking about how your working process is initially engaged—it seems that often a found photograph is instrumental in igniting ideas for you. What is it about the formal qualities of this particular format that you are drawn to?

**NB:** It's the ways in which found or vernacular photographs—from high street portraits to family snaps—connect to hidden histories. Usually particular photographs trigger new work—for *Beneath the Surface* it was two family snaps of boys in a landscape that had since become an industrial archaeology site, on which I was working as a volunteer. These photographs have a relationship to a particular site that has been reused, abandoned, reclaimed, re-landscaped.

**RW:** It's interesting that you use vernacular photographs as a tool to unlock these 'hidden histories' particularly in relation to specific landscapes undergoing some shift in identity or function. Is this usually the beginning of your process or is there a stage before this, which is more gestational? For example, was the volunteer work you did on the archaeological project part of your methodology? I'm curious to know at what point your motivation to develop an idea derives from—is it the interplay between site and image or the impact that personal histories have on geography...?

**NB:** An important experience was a short residency at Prestongrange Museum in 2002, making a pinhole camera from the apertures of a brickwork kiln. I looked at the site, its evidence of a long-gone mining industry



and how local people, such as dog walkers, now used the site. Often these people had family connections to Prestongrange that the casual visitor would be unaware of. The Museum itself had collections of photographs—groups of unidentified miners alongside quite strange photographs of gas-masked rescue teams posing with makeshift dummies on stretchers. Quirky

Nicky Bird:  
Glassworks site, Area A, 2005,  
Eastern Extension, Prestongrange, 2005



Unidentified Photographer:  
Drying Green, Morrison's Haven, early 1930s

details such as these, and the fact that local people's personal histories had some connections to an apparently 'defunct' site interested me—the combination of stories and photographs seemed to animate a site that was on the edge of disappearing. Later I heard about plans to set up an industrial archaeology project at Prestongange. I felt I had 'unfinished business' there

so I thought that I'd give volunteering a go and it went from there.

**RW:** So could you explain a bit more about how this hands-on archaeology experience led to the onset of the *Beneath the Surface* project?

**NB:** We began working on what's left of a harbour known as Morrison's Haven—now reclaimed land. Dogwalkers of a certain age would pass by and ask what was going on. Then came their stories—about dads buying sweets for them on payday—about playing in the harbour—about a shipwreck now buried in the ground. People pointed to what would look like nothing but they were *reading* the landscape with both local knowledge and a set of memories I couldn't possibly share. I was looking at the present-day scene in which their reference points had gone. Later that season, the archaeological project asked people to bring in family photographs: John Yeoman was one of those people. As a boy he took a photo of his friends swimming in Morrison's Haven. He is also the boy with hand-on-hip standing alongside his brother. At the time John Yeoman came on location to point out where his picture was taken, the archaeologists were searching for a glass flue. Listening to somebody's living history, looking at a family snap in a place that is being dug up and investigated in a quite forensic way, made a deep impression on me. That's when I made the first photograph for the project.

**RW:** At this point you were just purely orientating yourself from the photographer's viewpoint and looking at

the now ‘blank’ contemporary landscape. How did you go about orientating yourself given the site was often so different from when the original photo was taken?

**NB:** I used parts of a building, and tried to remember what John had said, as well as looking back at his pictures. That’s why his photos are juxtaposed with mine in a past-present way as he wasn’t with me at the time of the new photography. Although the diptychs were a start, I needed to move beyond this — I was struck by the relationship between photography and archaeology but couldn’t articulate this beyond two questions: what if the person with their picture took me to the location? Was there a way that their knowledge could be more embedded into the photographic image? This started to break the past-present thing down a lot more.

**RW:** What is really interesting is the way that you have used the original photograph as a map to draw multiple narratives from the present landscape — especially the relationship between archaeology and photography. It reminds me of some of the Situationist strategies where maps of cities were appropriated and subverted to reveal often invisible urban cartographies such as spaces for reverie or play. That interests me because their methods of mapping attempted to express what being in a city *felt* like. There is a similar thing going on in your work in that you evoke an atmosphere on quite a visceral level, questioning the role of memory as a type of geography in itself. Did working directly with the people and their photographs influence the development of the montage process you used?



**NB:** It was very significant that this developed with Jan McTaggart. Despite being much younger than John Yeoman — being in her late 30s — she identified with the diptych. The demolition of miners’ houses seemed to connect to the demolition of another kind of social housing. Jan showed me her family photos and was willing to walk me around Foxbar where she grew up. When we did this, I felt Jan was initially quite disorientated. This was in part because she was trying to locate certain things that were no longer there, but also because she was drawing from a little girl’s memory of this landscape. Despite now being in re-named streets of Wimpey-style homes there was still

Foxbar Table Top: Redrawn maps 1992/2006;  
Jan McTaggart family photos 1978–1992;  
Nicky Bird location images 2007



Exhibition Installation View,  
Stills, Edinburgh, 2008

evidence of Jan's old tenement life. There was a point when Jan looked at a photo and became quite tactile with the ground, feeling for a remnant of a washing line, removing the turf. She was doing her own archaeology. Some of the 2007 pictures show this, with the camera being on a tripod so we could fix a viewpoint that was not just mine ... Working on the laptop later, I dropped the scanned version of Jan's snap into the location image, and adjusted the opacity—something happened on screen—the idea of the montages came at that point, which on one level, is quite simple. Jan had such a strong reaction to the montage that I knew that this was the working method.

**RW:** So this became a very collaborative experience at this point. In dealing with memory as a subject matter and collaborating with 'living subjects' in this way, did the role of nostalgia, or reminiscence as an instrumental method influence you in any way? For example where does memory and reminiscence reside in any of these photographs and how do you draw a distinction between that as a community building tool and the autonomy involved in the production of an artwork?

**NB:** Nostalgia is an ongoing preoccupation—I am aware I am working with it whether I like it or not. There is no point in denying nostalgia—the work has a nostalgic element, so the point is how to work with it. My approach to the present-day location is therefore formal—a formality definitely informed by using large format photography in earlier works. This is a way of 'holding' the nostalgia created by the family photograph. Reminiscence happened throughout the process starting from tea-and-biscuits chat to the photography. This reminiscence is very interesting and a social historian would think 'those are nuggets to be recorded and written about'. But that job of reminiscence belongs to—and is being done by—my collaborators. They are very aware of the importance of doing their own reminiscences. Doon Valley is interesting in this way where the collaborators work together as an informal history group and record their work. *Doing* reminiscence means an awareness of the reasons for this, with expectations that someone in the future will be listening and learning about the past. There is also the awareness that something is



going to be lost if you don't do it—so reminiscence may be a mix of nostalgia with impulses to preserve or give testimony. Artworks may emerge from this context, but they need to touch viewers not personally connected to the material. This is when memory moves from the specifics to 'jog' something at a more collective level. I think that's where the distinctions are potentially.

**RW:** You said something really interesting there about your aspirations in terms of how the image is read by a viewer. I personally had an almost uncanny experience of the *Beneath the Surface* montages ... almost like false memory syndrome! I thought for a brief moment that it was me in the montage, it felt very familiar ... but quite unsettling—questioning my own memory like that—a vertiginous experience! I wondered what that



**Clockwise from left:**

Unidentified Photographer:  
Ardler, Dundee, c. 1960s

Unidentified Photographer:  
Demolition of Hazelhead & Gleneagles Courts,  
Ardler, Dundee, c. 1990s

Nicky Bird:  
Ardler, Dundee, June 2007



John Yeoman:  
Morrison's Haven, East Lothian, c. 1937

experience was like for your collaborators — the people actually in the photograph. Do you feel a responsibility to your collaborators?

**NB:** This inevitably comes with working relationships that are built up through close collaboration, in which step by step, they are going on a process with an artist even if they don't consciously realise that at the begin-

ning. I certainly felt responsibility when the work was first exhibited at Stills, because as an artist, you know what it means to make work public to a wider audience, but what about the collaborator? Exhibition brings with it risks, such as the failure to communicate. I had experienced this when I showed the first montage image (made with Jan) to people in other places in Scotland where the project could have worked but it didn't take off. This was in contrast to my collaborators in Ardler and in Doon Valley where Jan's image seemed to speak to them.

**RW:** Have most of your collaborators in this project undergone regeneration within their area? How does this work explore the impact of regeneration on its community?

**NB:** My collaborators in Ardler are the clearest examples of what it means to go through regeneration. When I first went there I didn't know if the project would work in a place that was known for its multi-story buildings and also towards the end of its regeneration. I like to think that the project did work there because the last multi-story had just been demolished and my collaborators recognised that this was an end of an era, and that landmarks of childhood and teenage years were now only to be found in their family snaps and local archives. The montages make allusions to the impact of regeneration on a community, but other work going on in Ardler itself deals with this more directly and rightly so. Karen Hamilton is an interesting example, working in parallel with me, while at the same time involved with Ardler's reminiscence work.

**RW:** What is your own relationship to regeneration—have you been part of a community which has somehow experienced a rupture in some way?

**NB:** The project is not autobiographical in a literal sense, and as an outsider—to the area and the experience—there is the danger of being a sort of tourist. So I can't call on autobiographical experience as a way of dismissing any ambivalence or reservations some people may feel. After all, the kinds of housing that have been demolished, and the industries that have disappeared, are largely associated with working class communities, to which photography has a particularly fraught history. These montages evidence a particular relationship with a particular dialogue—in which my collaborator has given me permission to make aesthetic photographs of derelict, abandoned, or regenerated sites but in turn their contribution sets conditions which raise inseparable questions about the family snap, social identity and loss.

**RW:** So beneath the surface of your montages, there is this hidden iceberg of dialogues, both past and present, which have coalesced out of a democratic sensibility. The family snap is so benign and ubiquitous, yet it seems you and your collaborators invoke the ominous spectre of *tabula rasa* in very familiar territory...

**NB:** Yes, that's where viewers may find their own ghosts.



Nicky Bird:  
In Situ Site Specific Work, Morrison's Haven, 2010

## *Si Monumentum Requiris, Circumspice*: commemoration and loss at Lethanhill

Ray McKenzie

When the architect Sir John Vanbrugh was redesigning the landscape around Blenheim Palace in the early eighteenth century, he proposed to the Duchess of Marlborough that the ruins of Woodstock Manor, the hunting lodge used by Henry II to entertain his mistress Rosamund Clifford, should be preserved as a memorial. The Duchess dismissed the idea and had it torn down. Later, when it was suggested that an obelisk should be erected to mark the spot she rejected this as well, commenting that ‘if there were obelisks to be made of all our kings have done ... the country would be stuffed with very odd things’.

The vision conjured by her words of a landscape so choked with monuments to historical figures that there is scarcely room for the rest of us is not as far-fetched as it sounds: nor is it just the actions of monarchs and their concubines that are relevant to the issue. Much depends, of course, on our view of history—what we judge to be worth preserving and the form that preservation should take. But in his desire that a gesture of remembrance of some kind should be made, Vanbrugh was merely confirming the familiar understanding of landscape as what cultural geographers refer to as a ‘palimpsest’—a document upon which multiple histories have been inscribed, with each successive generation almost but never entirely erasing the evidence of the generations that went before. The creation of monuments, either by appropriating a landmark that is already there or inserting something new in its place, is merely an attempt to control the process of change that happens naturally with the passage of time itself.

Studied with enough care almost any landscape will yield evidence of this, but it works best when different

time-frames can be clearly distinguished, or when they have been subjected to a violent historical rupture. Few parts of Scotland illustrate this more vividly than the short section of the Doon Valley in Ayrshire that lies between the parish town of Dalmellington and the former mining village of Patna. This is a landscape that was first inhabited in neolithic times, played an active part in the turbulent political affairs of medieval Scotland, rose to economic prosperity with the exploitation of its coal and iron reserves in the nineteenth century and then suffered an equally dramatic reversal of fortunes in the general industrial decline that has blighted south-west Scotland in more recent times.

The trouble is that even a skeletal history like this is already taking us in the wrong direction. The whole point about a palimpsest is that the many historical moments it embodies are presented simultaneously, not in sequence: overlaid on each other, they not only occupy the same geographical space, but they are experienced together at one and the same time.

A glance at a map of the area will confirm the point. The most detailed Ordnance Survey maps available to the non-specialist are in the Explorer™ series, which represents the British landscape on a scale of 1:25,000, or 2½ inches to the mile. On sheet no. 327 the Doon is shown twisting gently between two ranges of low hills that together cover an area of roughly 25 square miles. This is a mere speck on the map of Scotland as a whole, but even so encompasses over forty historical landmarks that are identified as worthy of being recorded. Some of them are very ancient, such as the prehistoric cairns at Auchenroy Hill and Snabb, and the tumulus at Green

Hill. Of almost equal historical vintage is the Norman *motte*, or defensive mound, in Dalmellington itself, which has been there since the twelfth century but is now almost completely encircled by post-war council houses. All these, like the three ruined medieval castles (Laigh, Keirs and Dame Helan), are marked on the map in gothic script to signify their great antiquity, and to suggest that they belong to an historical era essentially disconnected from our own. Of more recent date, and distributed over the entire area, there are also four war memorials (at Dalmellington, Benquhat Hill, Lethanhill and Patna), and a multitude of now defunct industrial sites identified variously as ‘mines’ (× 2), ‘pits’ (2), ‘shafts’ (5), ‘quarries’ (5), ‘tips’ (10) and sections of dismantled railway (7). In the tiny village of Waterside, exactly midway between Patna and Dalmellington, the map also indicates a Heritage Centre, suggesting that the significance of the historical evidence scattered all around is both understood and valued by the local community.

For all the richness of the information provided by the Explorer map, there are, of course, aspects of the place and its history that cannot be fully appreciated except by confronting them at first hand. The map, as the Situationists were fond of reminding us, is not the territory. And an important clue to this can be found in the distribution of the four war memorials. At Patna and Dalmellington they are where you would expect them to be — on sites adjacent to a populous built-up area. But the other two are much more remotely situated on the side of the fells rising to the north of the river — one at Lethanhill, which is almost a mile from



the nearest metalled road, the other at Benquhat Hill, which can only be reached by an arduous trek on foot.

To visit either site today is to experience a mordant sense of isolation that clings to these modest but dignified tributes to the victims of war. But it also quickly becomes clear that they are isolated only because the context in which they were originally erected — and



**Clockwise from left:**

War Memorial, Lethanhill, East Ayrshire

War Memorial, Patna, East Ayrshire

Ruined house, Lethanhill, East Ayrshire

Photos: Ray McKenzie

from which they derived their true meaning—has itself undergone change. If they seem now to belong more to the landscape than to any human community it is because the communities that erected them have disappeared. Although it is not visible except at close range, the monument at Lethanhill rises in front of a rectangular enclosure on which a church used to stand.

Nothing remains of the building except its partially buried foundations, but at least the archaeological evidence is there to be seen. The erasure of the secular buildings that once stood nearby—the school, the store, the rows of cottages—appears to have been more complete, so that only a tiny network of rectangles drawn on the map remains as a reminder of the community of some 700 souls that was created by the Dalmellington Iron Company in the 1840s, thrived for more than a century and was then evacuated and left to the elements in 1966. Like Benquhat, Lethanhill is a ‘lost village’.

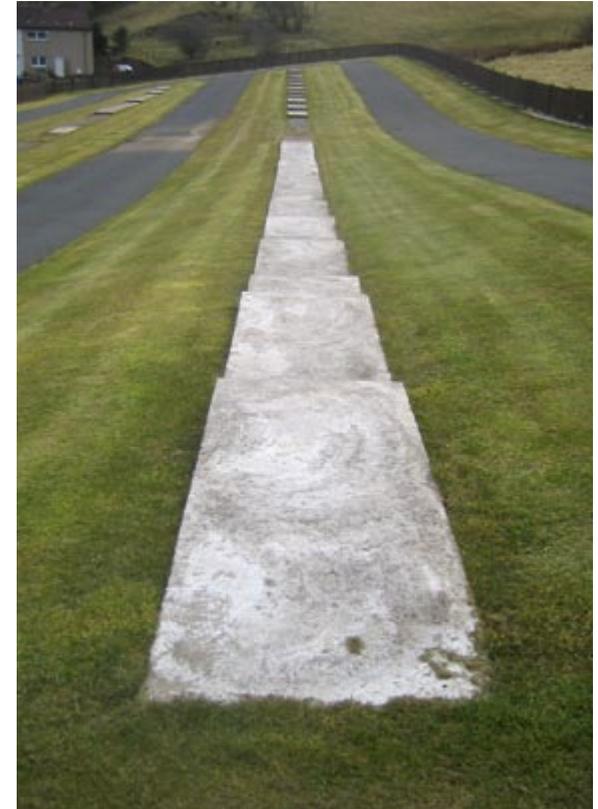
But we know already from the remains of the pre-historic and medieval cultures we have encountered elsewhere that the evidence of history is not so easily disposed of. About 100 yards east of the war memorial at Lethanhill there is now a large stretch of forestry—a mass of closely planted conifers enclosed by a barbed-wire fence and presenting an unnaturally dense wall of dark green foliage. Approached from the memorial itself it appears not only uninviting but physically impenetrable—the perfect cover for a fugitive or a guilty secret. For those who are prepared to take their chances with the barbed wire, however, there is a surprising discovery to be made. Only a matter of yards inside the fence it is possible to make out, once the eyes have adjusted to the darkness, another mass of ruined masonry, smaller than the church, and this time sharing its location with the conifers growing with no regard for what was once a distinction between interior and exterior space. It clearly used to be a house. And it turns out that it is not alone. Beyond it is another ruin, identical in size and shape, and beyond that another, and

then another, each one a variation on the same theme of domestic ruination, until one realises with astonishment that this is in fact a terrace—an entire *street* of abandoned dwellings threading its way through the merciless encroachment of the trees.

The sense of loss engendered by the spectacle is almost overwhelming. These tiny stone enclosures that were once family homes have none of the historical significance of Woodstock Manor, and it is unlikely that the lives of their former inhabitants will ever figure as prominently in the pages of our history books as Henry II and Rosamund Clifford. And yet as one ponders the possibility that it was on this street that the soldiers named on the nearby war memorial—Private Denis Nugent, for example, who lost his life in the Great War, or Corporal William J. Finlay, who perished in the conflict of 1939–45—were born and brought up, and might have played as boys, the depth of the human tragedy that is represented by these mournful remnants of vanished domesticity becomes apparent. Here, surely, is an intimation of the true democracy of death.

When I visited Lethanhill in March this year, I felt it was appropriate to conclude the trip by climbing the steep hill that rises behind the graveyard at Patna and on which the war memorial belonging to that community stands. Heavily vandalised and poorly maintained, it is a melancholy sight today, but the climb is worth the effort for the spectacular view it provides of the surrounding landscape. From here the memorial at Lethanhill can be picked out by the naked eye as a tiny white line scored on the dark green of the trees behind it. To the east, the panorama opens onto the wide sweep

of the undulating moorlands, beneath which are all the pits and shafts and quarries so dispassionately recorded on the OS map, and beyond that, as the horizon fades into the mist, there is a glimpse of Dalmellington five miles away. Knowing what I did about the sheer density of human and historical association that was bound up with the stretch of landscape that unfolded at my feet, and with the name of Corporal Nugent still very much in my mind, I could not help recalling the celebrated dedication to John Vanbrugh's contemporary, Sir Christopher Wren, on the pavement of St Paul's cathedral: *Si monumentum requiris, circumspice*—'If you seek his monument, look around you'. But there was one final discovery to be made. On the edge of the graveyard below, it is possible, even from this elevation, to make out a curious series of white slabs laid out in strictly uniform rows. These were placed there after a controversial decision by the local council to prepare the way for the gravestones that will be erected in that part of the cemetery in years to come. Memorials are all, by definition, a meditation on loss, but here that loss is already being projected into the future. At Patna, no less than at Lethanhill, they have clearly learnt to live with death.





Nicky Bird & Drew Johnstone: Craigmark, Dalmellington  
Murphy's Pigeon Loft, 1924/Craigmark, 2008

Doon Valley, East Ayrshire





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Nicky Bird & Drew Johnstone: Burnton, Dalmellington  
59 Burnton, 1929-30? / 2008

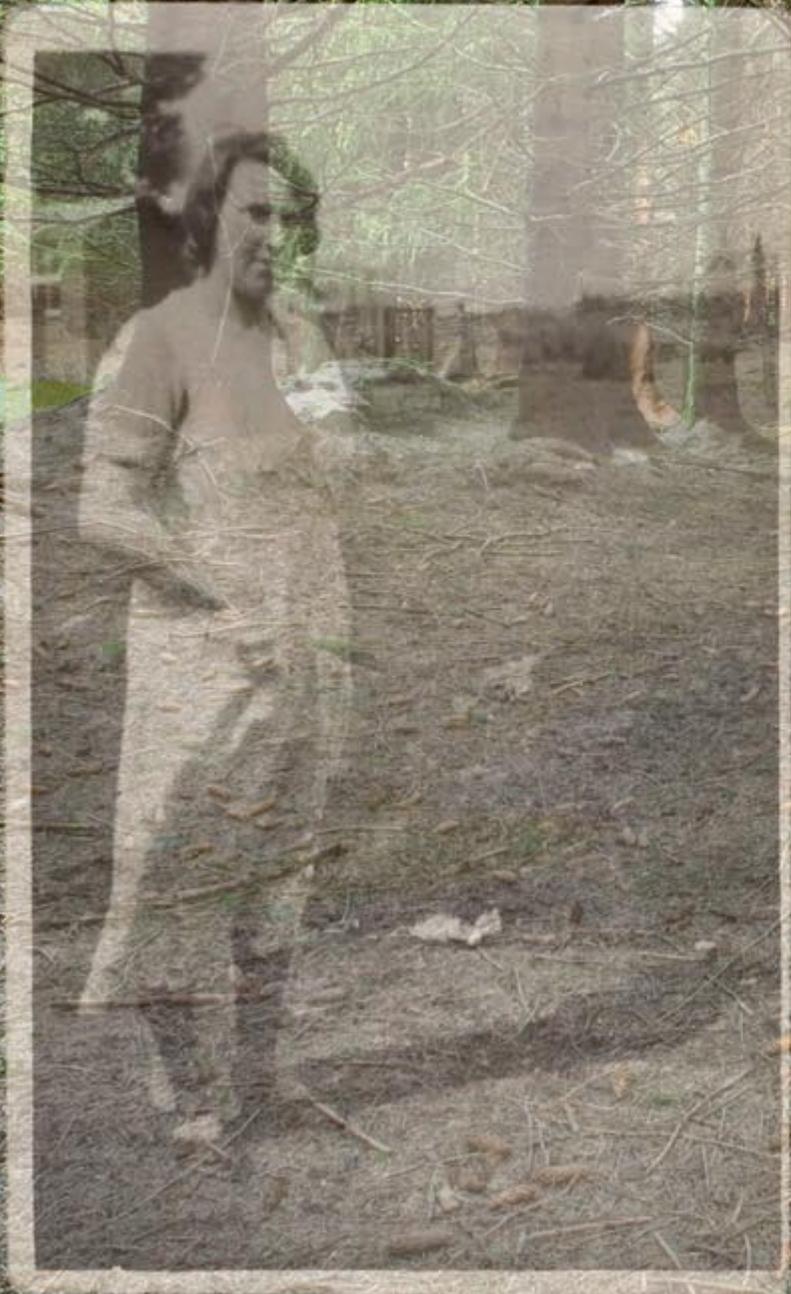












Nicky Bird & Mary Kennedy: Lethanhill, Dunaskin  
Middle Pad, 1930s? / Lethanhill, 2008

Mary, Drew and Anne are all members of our local history group. They joined the group to pass on their memories, knowledge and experience. Mary comes from Lethanhill, one of the 'lost villages' as we call them locally. When Drew was a child in Burnton it was a very different place from what you see now.

Anne, now retired, was our Librarian for a number of years. She has a great deal of local knowledge and a very good memory and is always willing to share information and memories. Anne is also good at making us laugh with some of her 'little stories or poems'.

Drew began his working life down the pits and later on was in the army for a couple of years, I presume doing his stint of national service. That of course would be after WWII as miners were a reserved occupation and not allowed to join up during the war. He comes from a very large family and all the family have done very well for themselves.

I know only a little about Mary, she's a very private person. She worked for 12 years with the Royal Observer Corps. After her two girls went to school she worked in the local Jersey-Kapwood factory making underwear and nightclothes for Marks & Spencer. The main reason it was opened was due to most of the mines closing down and the men having no work. It was cheaper to pay women at the time so hence the factory. It was a strange village then, men with no jobs and women going out to work, the men took it hard while the women found a little bit of independence. For me (an incomer, brought up in town and city) it was interesting to watch.

*Elaine Mackie, Doon Valley Museum, East Ayrshire*

Nicky Bird & Lesley Weir: Ardler, Dundee  
Multi Park, 1977-78? / Scotsraig Road, 2007

Ardler, Dundee



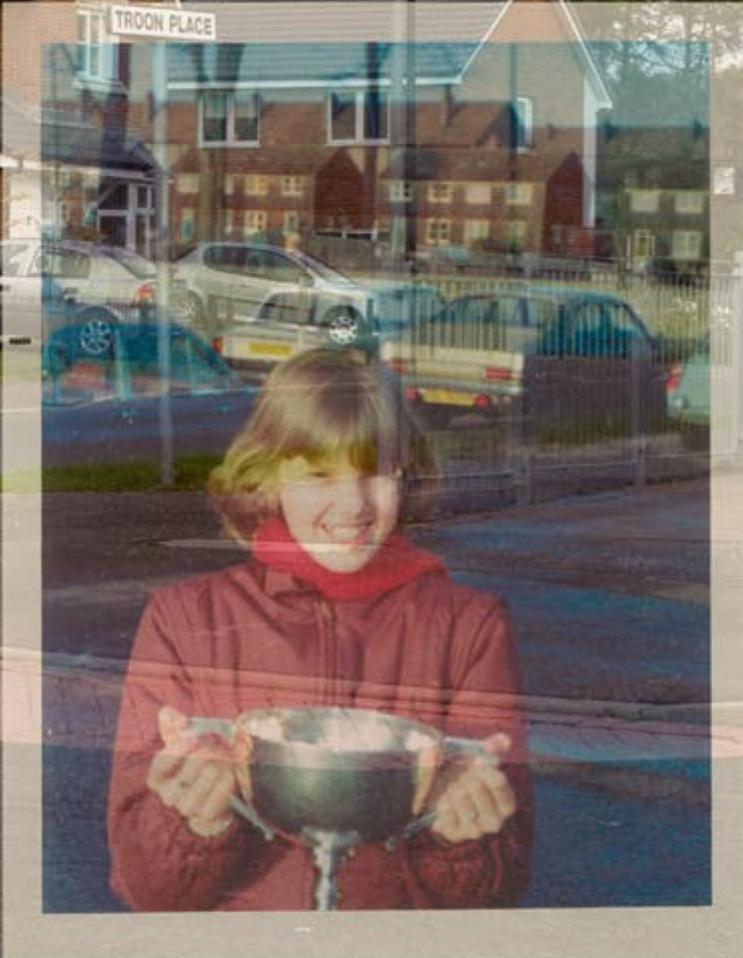


Nicky Bird & Mark Scott: Ardler, Dundee  
The 'Fieldy', Summer 1973?/Turnberry Avenue, Summer 2007

Nicky Bird & Karen Hamilton: Ardler, Dundee  
Car Park beside Hazelhead Court December 1982 /Corner of Scotsraig Street &  
Gleneagles Avenue, September 2007



TROON PLACE





Nicky Bird & Lesley Weir: Ardler, Dundee  
On The Fielde, 1982/Turnberry Avenue, 2007

Nicky Bird & Lesley Weir: Ardler, Dundee  
Telephone Box, Turnberry Avenue, 1982-3?/Turnberry Avenue, 2007





3





Nicky Bird & Jan McTaggart: Foxbar, Paisley  
Front-garden, 3 Annan Drive, 1978?/Springvale Drive, 2007

Foxbar, Paisley





Nicky Bird & Jan McTaggart: Foxbar, Paisley  
Back-garden, 3 Annan Drive, 1979?/Springvale Drive, 2007

'Know Yourself' is inscribed over the temple of Apollo at Delphi, where most of the ruins that survive today date from the sixth century BC.

Contrast this with my own experience: the council flat where I grew up—only built in the second half of the twentieth century and didn't survive past the early 1990s. So how could I know myself when the place where I was formed doesn't exist anymore? No houses, no schools, no streets.

The extraordinary and ordinary stories of my first eighteen years could be just that. Stories. With no tangible evidence other than a few family photos I have always, oddly, felt that it could easily have been a dream.

Then the evidence I craved came in the form of this project. When I first met Nicky Bird, she described a process of contemporary archaeology. She had uncovered photographs from other areas which had undergone such comprehensive regeneration that they had become unrecognisable. She somehow knew that by weaving together old family snaps with new photographs it would be possible to create a palpable record of places that had once existed and that the memories were real.

It had been over fifteen years since I had last set foot in Foxbar. Nicky's support made the site visits with my Dad, George, a stirring yet not upsetting experience. She layered the resulting photographs under our family snaps and we discussed them at length over lunches and cups of tea.

These images became part of an exhibition at Stills. The opening event proved that I'm not alone in losing and rediscovering my history. There are lots of people like me and this project has meant that I've met some of them.

The enduring legacy is the artworks in this book. At last I have something I can point to and tell my children, 'that's where mummy grew up'.

*Jan McTaggart*





## Beneath The Surface/Hidden Place

Stills, Edinburgh, 10 May–6 July 2008  
(Far left, image 1)

Ninewells Hospital, Dundee, 27 February–27 August 2009  
(top row, images 2 & 3)

Dick Institute, Kilmarnock, 26 September–9 December 2009  
(middle row, image 4)

Doon Valley Museum, Dalmellington, 26 September 2009–1 October 2010  
(middle row, image 5)

Memory Map (Detail), Edition of 1000, Ardlar, 2009  
(bottom row, image 6)

Site Specific Works, Prestongrange Museum & Morrison's Haven, 2010  
(bottom row, images 7 & 8)

## A Short List of (Re)Sources

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For Graham

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A stylized map of a neighborhood is overlaid on a light-colored wood-grain background. The map consists of various geometric shapes representing streets and blocks. Two street names are clearly visible: "SCOTSCRAIG COURT" and "Gleneagles Court".

SCOTSCRAIG COURT

Gleneagles  
Court

