THE INNOCENCE OF RURAL REMAINS?



Thanks to Cornelius, Matthew and Troels for some very astute comment on the recent BBC item about the decline of the English countryside and its transformation into a cultural or heritage playgound – [Link]

Key points for me

– the remains of the past are wrapped up in relationships between city and "countryside" (a great reminder from Cornelius about zoos and their implication in all this)

– these relationships are often far from innocent (Matthew is spot on about the way cosy nostalgia for a lost rural past can slip into exclusive and even racist senses of identity and belonging – blood and soil).

There has been a flowering of landscape studies in archaeology – partly coming out of the desire to take a regional perspective in understanding archaeological sites – setting them in context – but I am convinced also that some of the enthusiasm for recapturing the experience of lost landscapes is connected with this particular English nostalgia for a rural past.

We went to see a showing of the 1938 Warner Bros technicolor extravaganza "Adventures of Robin Hood" on the big screen at the Stanford Theatre last week – an extraordinary Hollywood evocation of an English tale and capturing so much of this

very particular nostalgia. (“How Green Was My Valley” also comes to mind.)



The filming of Sherwood was done at Bidwell Park, Chico, Northern California, and, with the remarkable technicolor print, just perfectly captures on camera a certain English landscape sensibility. There is a very serious matter here about the connection of past-present relationships with certain aestheitc sensibilities – how people like picturesque landscapes, for example, or how Sherwood greenery is represented.