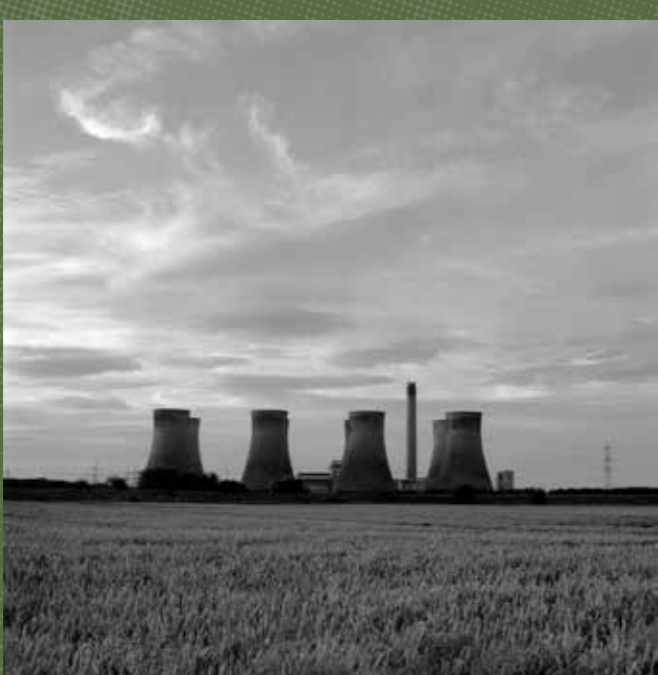




Generating Power



In 1947, electricity generation and provision in Britain was nationalised and a decade later, the Central Electricity Generating Board (CEGB) was established through the 1957 Electricity Act. This Act regulated the activities of the Board and included a so-called 'Amenity Clause', that defined its dual statutory duties. Firstly, to develop and maintain an efficient, coordinated

and economical system of electricity supply, and secondly to consider any effect which their proposals would have on the natural beauty of the countryside and on the flora and fauna. The Board put huge emphasis on the creation of landscapes around their power stations, both coal-fired and nuclear, to fulfil its duties towards the public.

Brenda Colvin became a foremost authority in the design of coal-fired power station landscapes. Her approach led to the creation of complex, multifunctional spaces that satisfied not just the needs of the power industry, but also the communities who lived and worked around them, by creating spaces for leisure, education and amenity.

Megawatt Landscapes

DRAKELOW & RUGELEY, TRENT VALLEY

1. Drakelow nature reserve – managed by the Sherburne Wildlife Trust. © Luca Caspary-Klor, 2021
2. Ibid.
3. Drakelow site plan with the extended nature trail as a nature reserve. © MERL, AR COL.
4. Colvin's before and after images of Rugeley power station from her Landscape Report. © MERL, AR COL.
5. Ibid.
6. Children learning about trees at Rugeley nature reserve. © CEEGB.
7. Design sketch from Colvin's site notebook, May 1964. © MERL, AR COL.

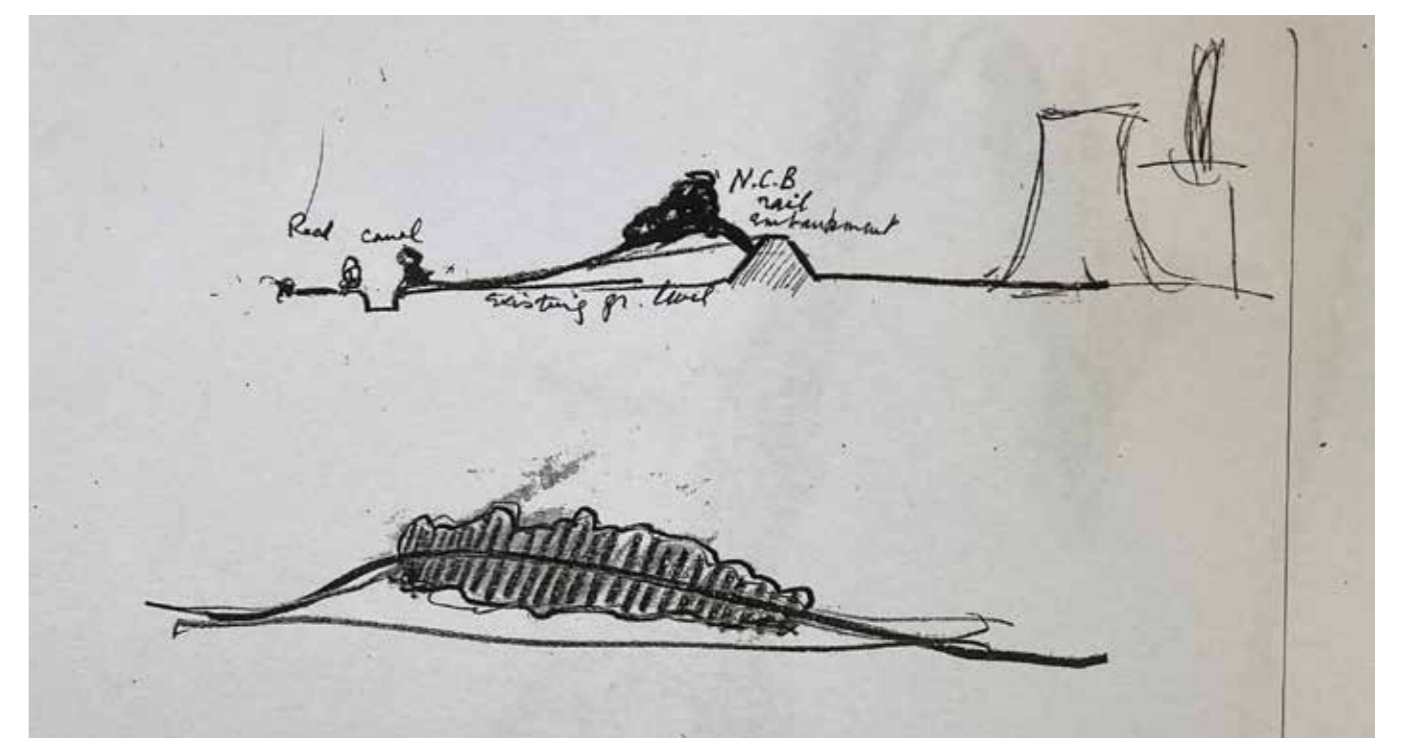
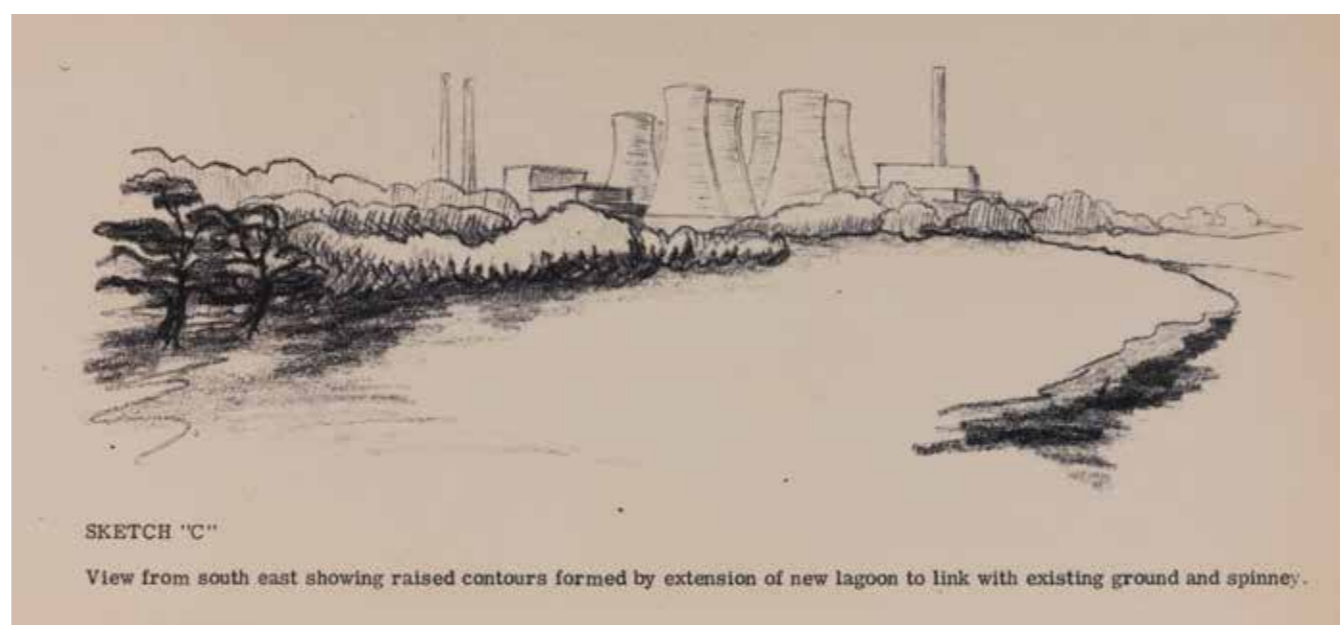
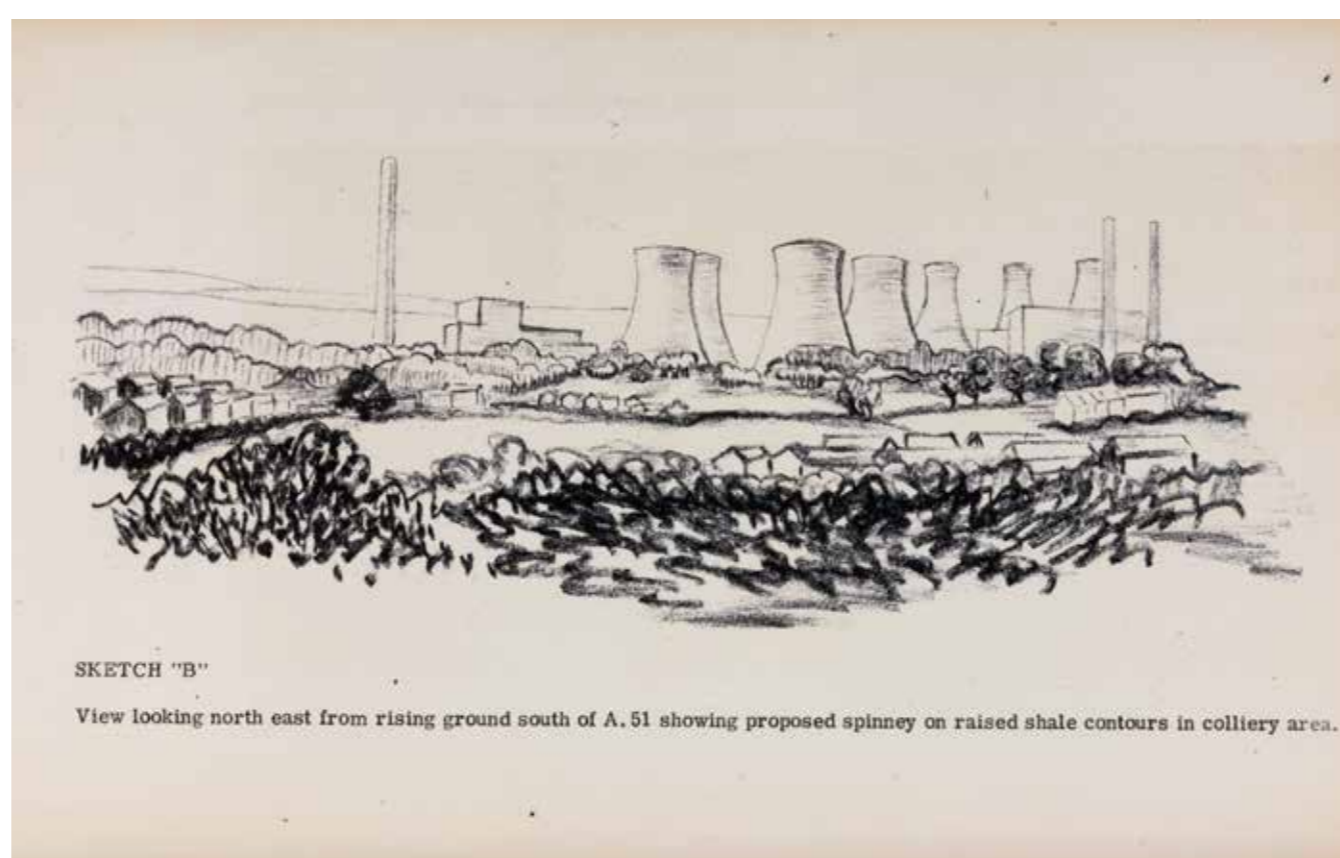
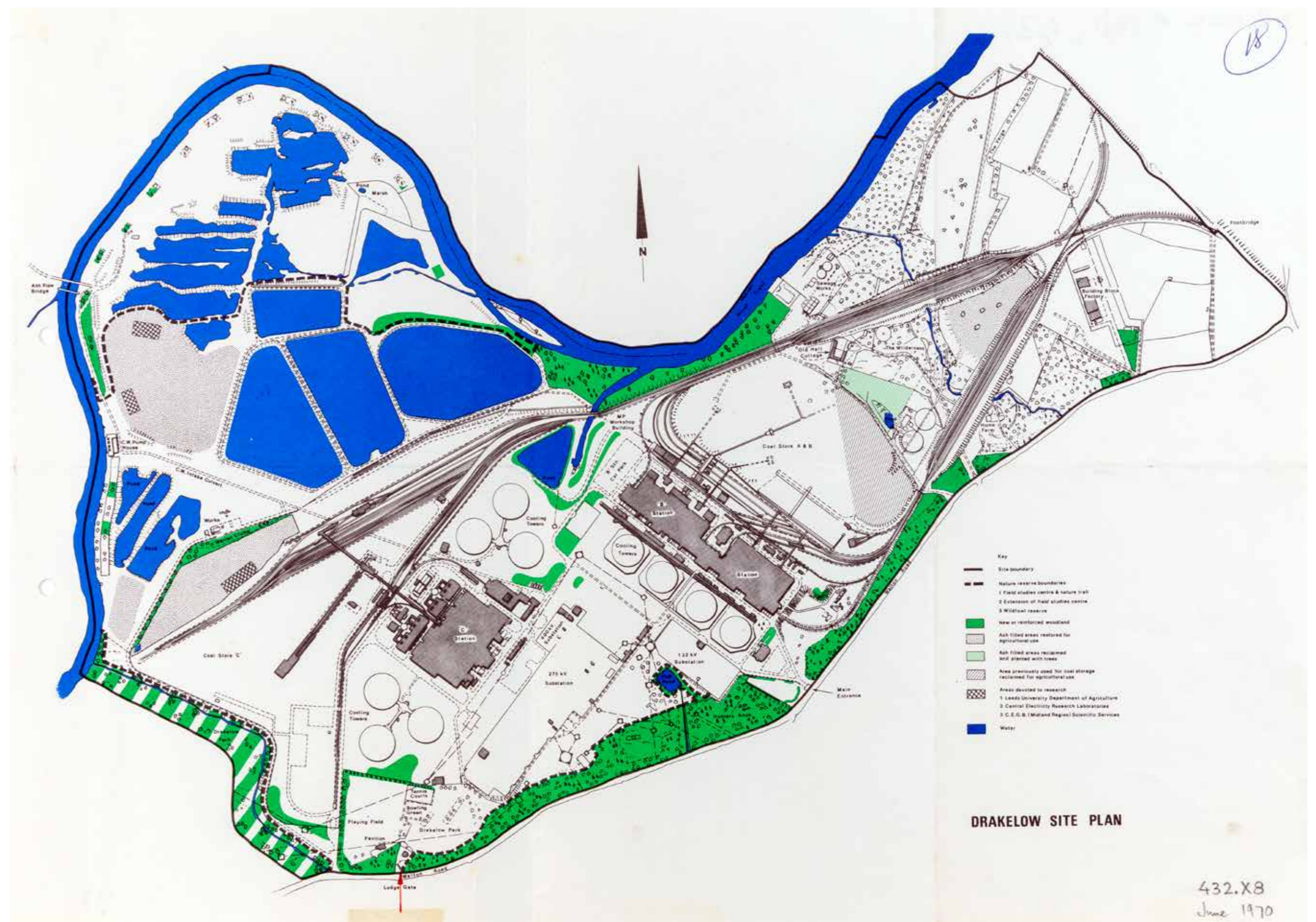
In 1959, when Brenda Colvin was invited to design the landscapes around Drakelow C power station, part of the so called 'Megawatt Valley' along the lower River Trent, she was joining the project that created the biggest concentration of electricity generating plants anywhere in Europe. When she started to work on the masterplan, the A and B stations were already designed and sited, and Drakelow C was on the drawing board. In her report, Colvin stressed the importance of thinking holistically and included the whole complex in the proposal 'in relation to surrounding landscape'.

Her design decisions aimed to create a 'fine landscape for the future', a 'landscape restored to esteem, with the additional buildings making it an outstanding feature of the locality in a distinguished setting'. The site on the River Trent meant that certain areas were affected by flooding and had high water tables. Colvin considered these carefully both in relation to the aesthetic opportunities the views of the cooling towers and the water provided, and, in terms of possibilities for wildlife.

In 1965 a series of Conferences titled 'Man and Environment' were organised in the wake of the environmental movement, that highlighted the fragile nature of ecosystems and man's impact on the natural world. The conference pointed out an imminent need for sites to create field study centres to promote environmental studies for schools, and Drakelow was chosen as the first site to test these opportunities. In July 1967 the first nature trail in an operational industrial site in Europe opened here, through the areas of woodland designed by Colvin to screen the station. The three-quarters-of-a-mile-long nature trail had all species labelled and spots identified where aspects of natural life were marked.

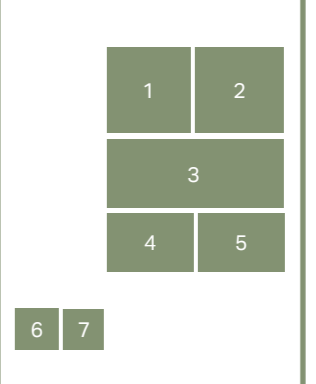
In 1969, a few years after the successful opening of the nature reserve, Colvin together with ornithologist Peter Scott, promoted the creation of a wildfowl reserve to extend the existing nature trail. In 1970 the original nature trail was extended with an area running down to the riverbank, designed by Colvin's business partner Hal Moggridge. The nature trail and the wildfowl reserve at Drakelow achieved much publicity and acclaim, including a Countryside Award in 1970 especially for its ecological focus and excellence. The scheme soon became an example to follow throughout the country, and the Board in collaboration with County Councils, educational authorities and local ornithologists' and naturalists' societies, have sponsored a variety of conservation schemes, in both sites of substations and power stations.

One of these new schemes was around Rugeley power station, that was also designed by Colvin in the 1960s and 1970s. Beyond the nature trail, Rugeley's landscape also provided opportunities for the workers of the power station. To serve the communities working at and around power stations was another key concern of Colvin's landscape designs and the CEEGB's sports and social club a used the lake for sailing and angling. During the design process, Colvin visualised her ideas for screening through before and after images, following in the footsteps of eminent landscape designer Humphrey Repton, who used this presentation technique in his Red Books.



Energy and Amenity

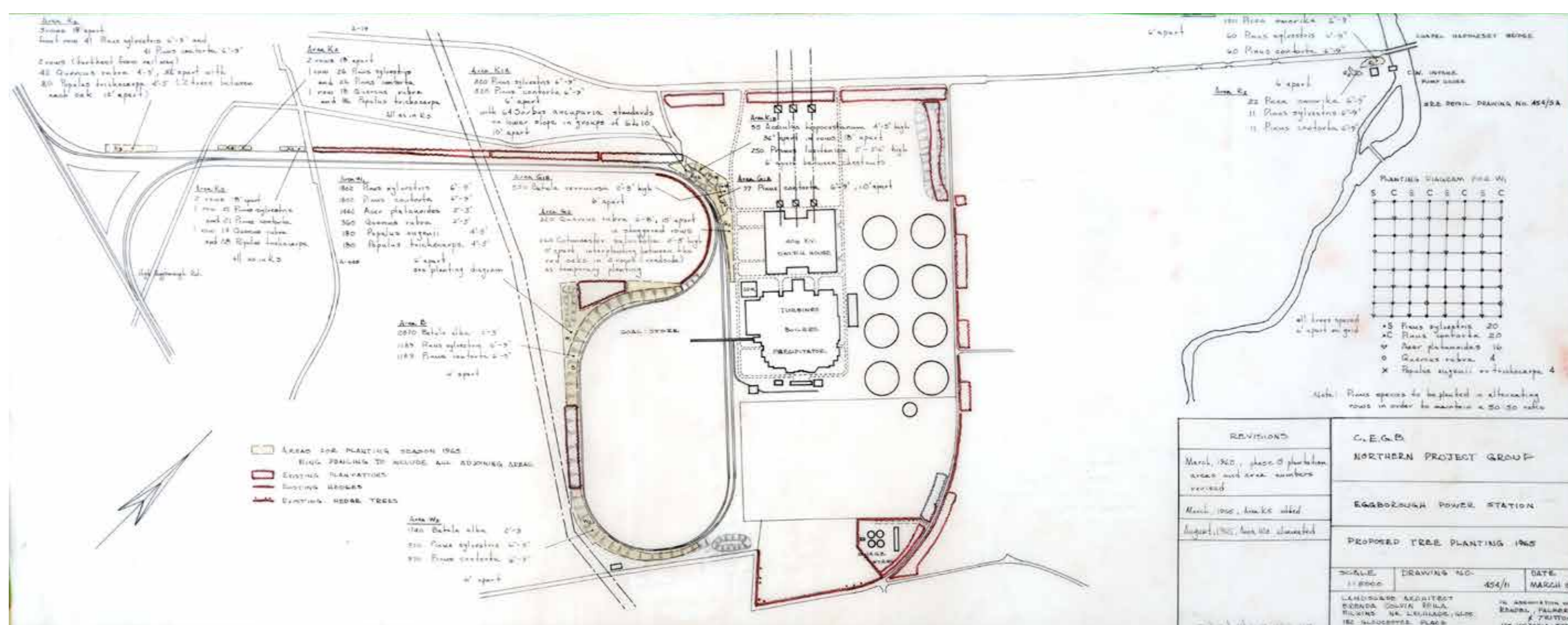
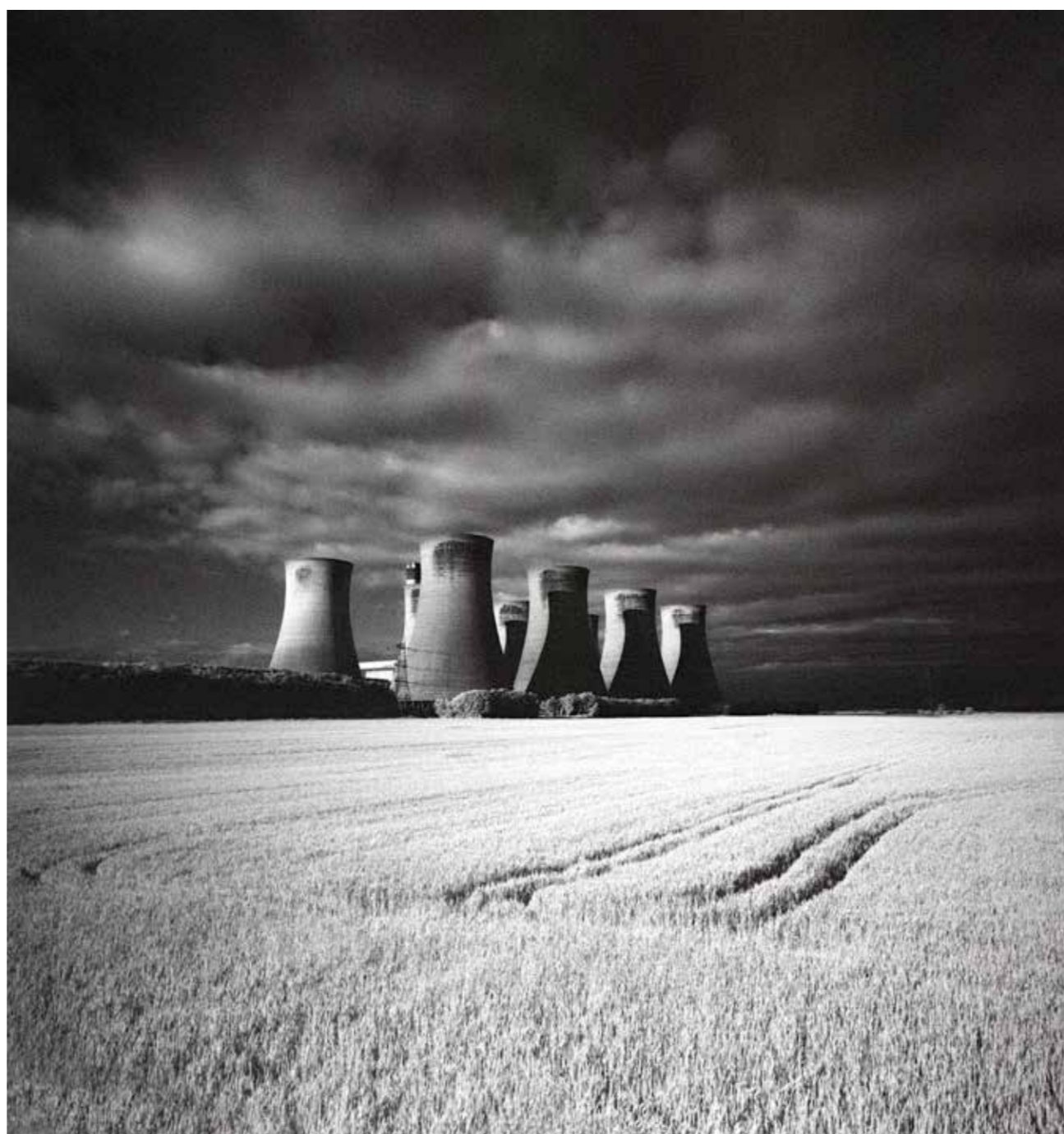
EGGBOROUGH, YORKSHIRE

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1. Eggborough in 2021 © Michael England
 2. Ibid
 3. Proposed tree planting plan by Brenda Colvin, © MERL, AR COL
 4. Eggborough in the 1970s, © Hal Moggridge
 5. Ibid
 6. Cottam in 2022, © Michael England
 7. Letter to Colvin on the Booths' headed paper, © MERL, AR COL

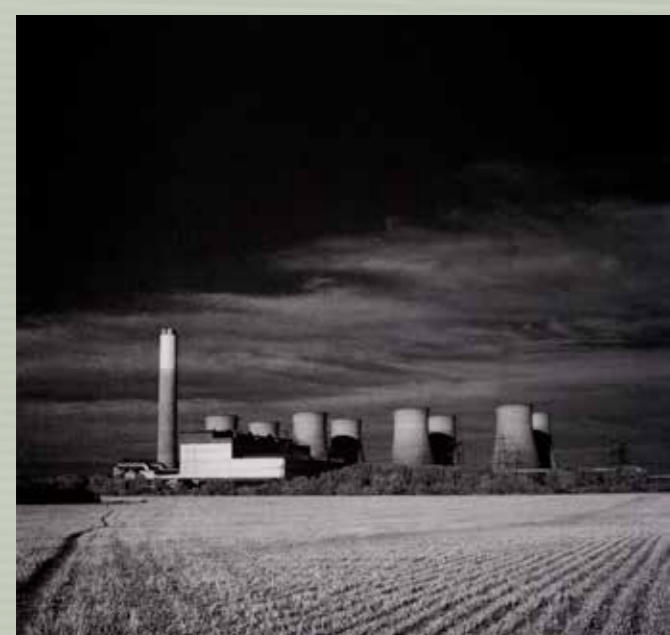
While the landscape of Drakelow created opportunities for conservation and involving the public in learning about the natural world, the landscape of Eggborough power station in Yorkshire created a variety of spaces for leisure and recreational opportunities. The landscape was designed by Brenda Colvin in 1962, by which time she had acquired a wealth of experience in this typology. In her first report she identified enough space for two football pitches, a rugby pitch, bowling greens, a hockey field, tennis court and a cricket pitch.

More than a decade later, when her practice finished working on the project, Hal Moggridge, her business partner reported that after a few years 'the life brought back to the site by vegetation created a setting which came to life also in human terms. Outdoor recreations were introduced, such as market gardening, practice golf and cricket. Thus, a simple landscape design concept has become, through good landscape management, the source for enrichment through human use'.

The wide variety of amenities in Eggborough led to a continuously evolving set of recreational uses that were soon extended to include members of the local community, such as the Eggborough Football team. The sports facilities were changing according to the needs of the employees, including the creation of an area for playing squash, that was not part of the original plan. Open days welcoming communities offered additional attractions, such as model trains and traction engines.



PATRICIA BOOTH



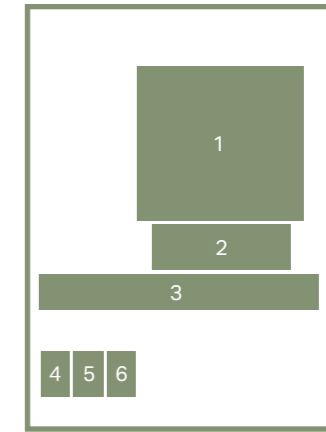
Patricia Booth studied and gained a degree in horticulture and joined the Landscape Institute in the early 1950s. She taught at the University of Reading, as well as being in practice with her husband Kenneth Booth. Their practice designed the landscapes of Ironbridge and Cottam power stations, and together with Brenda Colvin, they were also

involved in the design of the landscapes at Aldershot Military Town. Archival records show that Patricia was an active member of the landscape architecture profession, being involved in making strategic decisions in meetings including a series of discussions about the long-term maintenance of industrial sites, held between the CEBG and its landscape

consultants. However, Kenneth's name is much better known than Patricia's and many projects are often attributed solely to him, that is not uncommon in the case of husband and wife partnerships. This project aims to find out more about Patricia and other women professionals and we would welcome any leads or information.

An Accumulative Method

GALE COMMON, YORKSHIRE

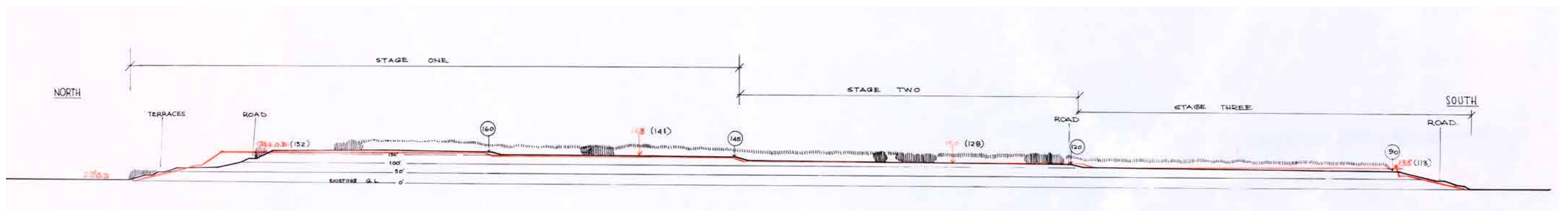
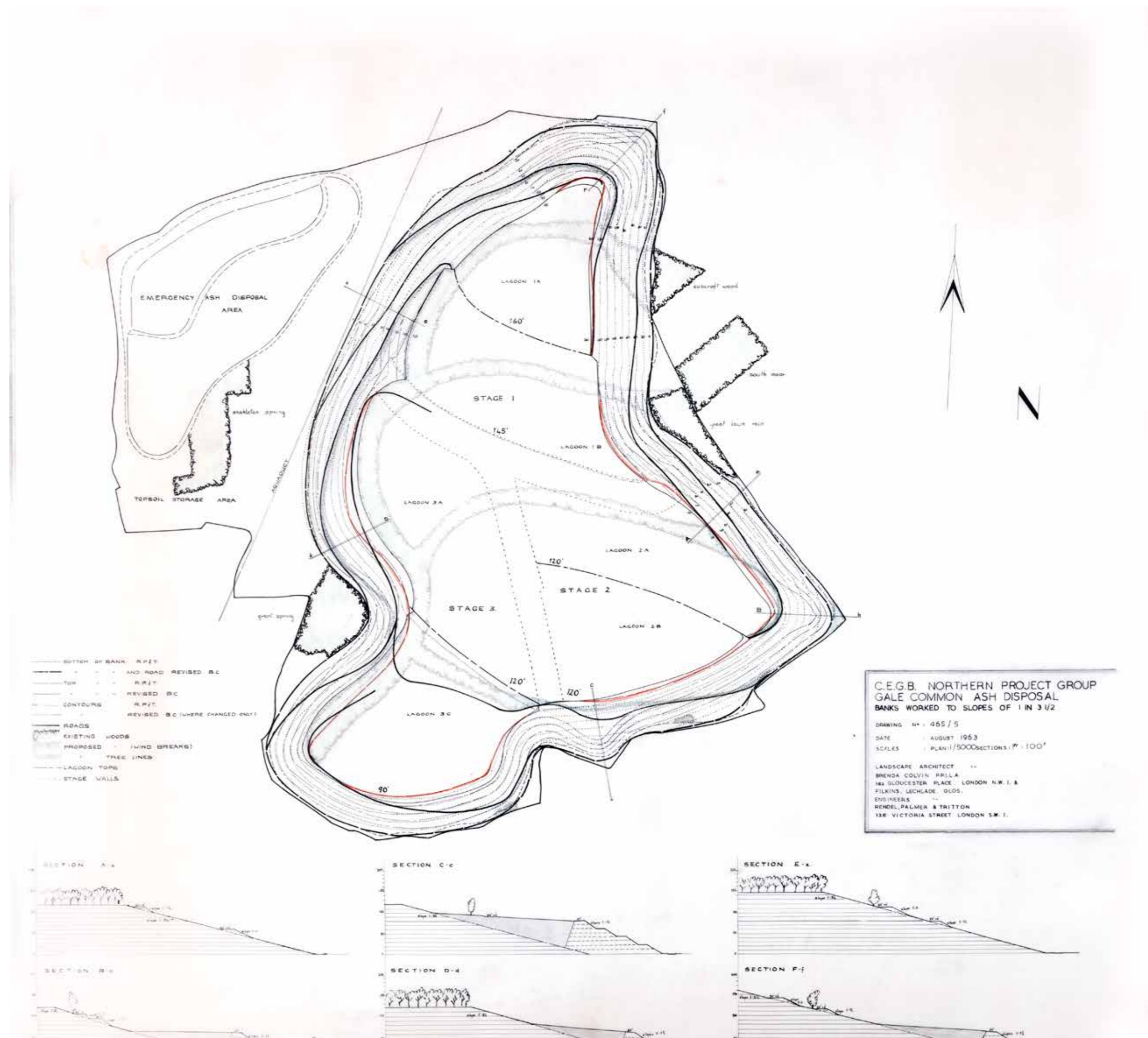


1. Gale Common ash disposal scheme plan and sections, © M&R, A&C&L.
2. Gale Common, © Michael England, 2022.
3. Gale Common ash disposal scheme full section © M&R, A&C&L.
4. Fairbrother's *New Lives, New Landscapes*, Architectural Press, 1970.
5. Nan Fairbrother's portrait from the cover of *New Lives, New Landscapes*.
6. Fairbrother's *The Nature of Landscape Design*, Architectural Press, 1974.

Gale Common was the largest ash disposal scheme of its type in the UK, and the longest continuous job in the Colvin & Moggridge office. The artificial landform functioned as an ash and waste disposal facility for nearby Eggborough and Ferrybridge power stations. It is 63 m (207ft) high and 2 km (1.25 miles) long, rising from a near-level plain of sandy soil.

Brenda Colvin was commissioned in 1962 by the C.E.G.B. She submitted her first design in 1963 and refined it in 1967. Over the following decades and led by her partner Hal Moggridge, the design was modified to 'suit changing aspirations and needs, though it was always true to the original concept'. While the main landform idea was maintained, the original proposal for arable fields, sheltered by long belts of trees, on top of the hill was changed to unimproved grassland, more suitable for nature conservation, with a number of broken-up woodland blocks.

Instead of being an agricultural economy, the hill became an area for nature conservation with 'agriculture being a maintenance method.' As Hal Moggridge described, the hill is result of 'an accumulative method of design which, like a country town or medieval cathedral, evolves from what has gone before, adds to it, refines it, and eschews the idea that every act of skilled design has to be a novelty'. The office worked on the hill until 2003, during which a 'depressing grey' waste disposal site became 'a rich assortment of living green foliage.'



NAN FAIRBROTHER



Nan Fairbrother (1913-1971) studied English at the University of London. She wrote several books, her first describing her life living in the countryside during WW2, titled *Children in the House* (1954). Her interest in landscape resulted in her student membership of the Institute of Landscape Architects from the late 1960s, and her ground-breaking books included *Men and Gardens* (1956), and most importantly *New Lives New Landscapes* (1970), published during

the first European Conservation Year. The book described the changing landscapes of Britain, but it was far from a nostalgic book of a lost idyll. She saw the development of industry – including reservoirs and power stations – as part of the development of the country. Fairbrother claimed that landscape 'is not a static background which we inhabit, but the interaction of a society and the habitat it lives in, and if either man or the habitat changes then so inevitably

must the resulting landscape'. Her simple equation could not state it any more clearly: 'Habitat + Man = Landscape'. Her work analysed the state of Britain's varied landscapes against the backdrop of a changing society, discussing the harm that man had caused to the landscape, but it also offered a vision for the future. Gale Common's changing and constantly adapting design exemplifies Fairbrother's idea about effective, responsive landscape design.