



The
University
Of
Sheffield.

The Making of the Man of the Trees

A biographical interrogation of the early life of
Richard St. Barbe Baker (1889-1982)

By Camilla Jane Allen

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

The University of Sheffield
Faculty of Social Sciences
Department of Landscape Architecture

Submission date: August 2020

Word count: 102,726

Contents

List of Figures	i
Abstract	v
Foreword	vii
A Distinguished Name	ix
1. Introduction	1
<i>A life in brief</i>	3
<i>Baker's place in history</i>	10
<i>Shadows in the forest</i>	13
<i>The first biography</i>	15
<i>The primacy of source</i>	19
<i>The University of Saskatchewan Archives and Special Collections</i>	20
2. Literature Review	24
<i>Faith in ecology</i>	25
<i>The ecological age and environmental history</i>	27
<i>Narratives in (and of) environmental history</i>	31
<i>Aldo Leopold's Land Ethic</i>	33
<i>Rachel Carson</i>	37
<i>Sir Albert Howard</i>	41
<i>Approaching Baker's narrative</i>	51
3. Methodology	54
<i>Developing themes and questions</i>	56
<i>Timetable</i>	57
<i>Corroborating, critiquing and expanding Baker's narrative</i>	59
<i>Limitations</i>	62
4. Child of the Trees	64
<i>Child of God</i>	66
<i>The Tin Tabernacle</i>	69
<i>Child of the Trees</i>	72

	<i>West End</i>	75
	<i>Awaiting Salvation</i>	78
5.	The ‘Call’	82
	<i>Canada</i>	86
	<i>Interlude</i>	89
	<i>Spiritual Communion</i>	91
	<i>‘Basic’ training</i>	96
6.	Reinvention on the Prairie	101
	<i>The Colony Overseas</i>	104
	<i>Departure</i>	109
	<i>The Provincial Archive</i>	112
	<i>Lessons from the Crees</i>	116
	<i>Crossing and re-crossing the Atlantic</i>	121
7.	An Army in the East End	124
	<i>Mission work in East London</i>	126
	<i>Charles Booth: Statistics and Social Reform</i>	130
	<i>William Booth: Strategy and Salvation</i>	133
	<i>The Reverend Watts-Ditchfield in Bethnal Green</i>	138
	<i>Watts-Ditchfield as teacher and leader</i>	140
	<i>Watts-Ditchfield’s influence upon Baker</i>	143
	<i>Baden-Powell and the Boy Scouts</i>	145
8.	Man at War	150
	<i>Outbreak</i>	151
	<i>Baker’s War</i>	155
	<i>The War at Home</i>	157
	<i>Cataclysm</i>	163
	<i>A Second Breakdown</i>	171
9.	Reconstructing the World	176
	<i>A new network: Percy Alden</i>	185
	<i>The British Institute of Social Service</i>	188

<i>The Rainbow Circle</i>	191
<i>Christopher Addison</i>	197
<i>The Ministry of Reconstruction</i>	200
10. Men of the Trees	204
<i>A case for forestry</i>	208
<i>The School of Forestry and Archives of the Cambridge Forestry Society</i>	215
<i>Baker's studies at Cambridge</i>	223
<i>Caravan Vision</i>	226
<i>The graduation of the men of the trees</i>	230
11. Discussion and Conclusion	234
<i>Reconstructing the Man of the Trees</i>	238
<i>Practical faith and practical horticulture</i>	241
<i>Baker's place in the narrative</i>	244
Bibliography	248
<i>Archives Consulted</i>	248
<i>Books and Articles</i>	248

List of Figures

- 1 Portrait of Richard St. Barbe Baker, c. 1945.
- 2 ‘Study by Howard Coster after the Author’s return from Palestine,’ c.1929.
- 3 ‘If you are a tree lover you are eligible for membership’, c.1929.
- 4 ‘The Author’ I Planted Trees, 1945.
- 5 One of four untitled portraits of Baker, taken between c.1960 and c.1980.
- 6 One of four untitled portraits of Baker, taken between c.1960 and c.1980.
- 7 One of four untitled portraits of Baker, taken between c.1960 and c.1980.
- 8 One of four untitled portraits of Baker, taken between c.1960 and c.1980.
- 9 Richard St. Barbe Baker in later life, c.1980.
- 10 The Baker family posing outside of The Firs, c.1900.
- 11 The young Richard Edward St. Barbe Baker, c.1890.
- 12 Baker’s youngest siblings, Thomas and Fanny, outside The Firs, c.1910.
- 13 Anne Purrott, Baker’s maternal grandmother, no date.
- 14 Charlotte Sophie Baker, c.1920.
- 15 John Richard St. Barbe Baker, c.1920.
- 16 The West End Mission Hall, no date.
- 17 John and Charlotte Baker in the Mission Hall, c.1900.
- 18 Baker standing in the Mission Hall, c.1900.
- 19 The Village of West End in 1870 (map).
- 20 Detailed map of West End showing the Baker family home, 1880.
- 21 Detailed map of West End showing the Baker family home, 1900.
- 22 Detailed map of West End showing the Baker family home, 1950.
- 23 Detailed map of West End showing the Baker family home, 1960.
- 24 ‘The Firs’ Postcard signed by Charlotte Baker, no date.
- 25 The folio of family papers, 1889.
- 26 Objects from box 48: Baker’s clip-on sunglasses, 2018.
- 27 Objects from box 48: A slightly damaged name badge, 2018.
- 28 Objects from box 48: A CBE medal, 2018.
- 29 Objects from box 48: Baker’s cufflinks, 2018.

- 30 Letter from John Richard St. Barbe Baker to his son, c.1916.
- 31 Letter from Charlotte Baker to her son, 1944.
- 32 A family miscellany, no date.
- 33 The interior of the Mission, 2018.
- 34 The Mission Hall's hymn board, 2018.
- 35 A sign for Bakers West End Nurseries, 2018.
- 36 Barbe Baker Avenue, 2018.
- 37 Baker's memorial grove in West End, 2018.
- 38 Commemorative plaque, West End, 2018.
- 39 Plantation conifers in Telegraph Woods, 2018.
- 40 A coppice stool, Telegraph Woods, 2018.
- 41 Logging in Telegraph Woods, c.1920.
- 42 Extraction in Telegraph Woods, c.1920.
- 43 The Broad and Narrow Way, 1866.
- 44 In Darkest England and the Way Out, 1890.
- 45 Map of Township Number 34, Range 6, West of the Third Meridian, 1885.
- 46 Baker's application for entry for a homestead, 1912.
- 47 Baker's declaration of abandonment, 1912.
- 48 The site of Baker's homestead, 2016.
- 49 Pasque flowers, 2016.
- 50 Signs of beaver activity, Beaver Creek, 2016.
- 51 The Dominion Land Survey, 2016.
- 52 Commemorative frieze, University of Saskatchewan, 2016.
- 53 Baker's grave in Woodlawn Cemetery, 2016.
- 54 The last tree Baker planted, 2016.
- 55 Archdeacon Dewdney, Bishop Lloyd, Revs. Norris and Hill and others, Emmanuel College, 1908.
- 56 Emmanuel College, c.1900.
- 57 Baker and his regiment, c.1916.
- 58 Baker on a horse, c.1916.
- 59 Baker and his regiment, c.1916.

- 60 Baker smoking a pipe, c.1930.
- 61 Delivering a Serval cat to London Zoo, 1923.
- 62 Alumni of the Cambridge School of Forestry, 1926.
- 63 Film reels in the archives, 2016.
- 64 A statue commemorating the founding of Saskatoon, 2016.
- 65 A film tin, 2016.
- 66 The folders of biographical material in the St. Barbe Baker Papers, 2016.
- 67 Baker's business cards, 2016.
- 68 Baker showing his photographs at a Men of the Trees exhibition, c.1930.
- 69 Baker and two men, c.1923.
- 70 Baker and two attendees of a Men of the Trees exhibition, c.1930.
- 71 Baker promoting the Men of the Trees, c.1960.
- 72 The first Men of the Trees Summer School, 1938.
- 73 'The cat that looked at a king', 1923.
- 74 Ching, Baker's Serval cat on a lead in London, 1923.
- 75 Ching, possibly taken on the journey from Kenya to London, 1923.
- 76 Moulin Studio coloured lantern slides, no date.
- 77 Baker's lantern slides of tree photos and poems, no date.
- 78 Baker's hand-coloured lantern slides taken in Kenya and Nigeria, c.1924.
- 79 Lantern slide showing a tree nursery in Kenya, c.1922.
- 80 Lantern slide showing the bracelet worn by the Watu wa Miti, c.1922
- 81 Lantern slide, a bamboo grove, no date.
- 82 Tree planting, no date.
- 83 'Sunset from the village', no date.
- 84 Lantern slides featuring trees and landscapes, no date.
- 85 Lantern slides featuring trees, no date.
- 86 Lantern slides featuring trees and landscapes (mostly black and white), no date.
- 87 Lantern slides featuring trees and landscapes (mostly colour), no date.
- 88 Collage of Baker in later life, 2018.
- 89 Collage of Baker's formative years, 2018.
- 90 Collage featuring Baker's family, 2018.

- 91 Baker posing with a tree and dedication poem, c.1970.
- 92 Baker and a group of children, c.1970.
- 93 Baker receiving a medal from the RHS, c.1970.
- 94 Baker retracing Cobbett's Rural Rides, c.1970.
- 95 Baker receiving the M.R.L. Freshel Award, 1966.
- 96 A contact sheet from Christopher Chapman's unfinished film about Baker.
- 97 A second contact sheet from Chapman's unfinished film about Baker, c.1980.
- 98 A late portrait of Richard St. Barbe Baker c.1980.

Abstract

In 1920, Richard St. Barbe Baker had completed his diploma in Forestry at Cambridge University and embarked on a new career which was to take him first to East Africa as Assistant Conservator of Forests, and later around the world as the Man of the Trees. This transformation was made possible by the innovative work he undertook in the British colony instigating community tree-planting efforts, as well as his ability to shape his life's experience to demonstrate that such a transformation had been inevitable: he had been brought up around trees, had an early spiritual revelation which left him in love with nature, and had dedicated his life to the service of both humanity and the environment.

This was the message that he repeated in many of his published works which, over the years, gained authority, yet have never been subject to scrutiny. As a result, his legacy is easily overlooked and misunderstood. His long life meant that his connection to events and figures in history defies easy categorisation, and the first thirty years alone encompassed a Victorian evangelical childhood, emigration to Canada in his late teens, work in the home missions of the East End, service in the Army during the First World War, participation in post-war reconstruction, and joining the ranks of foresters who were trained in the aftermath of the conflict to work in Britain and overseas, vanguards of a world-changing discipline.

The assumption up until now has been that Baker's autobiographies represent an accurate and truthful account of his life. However, this study has sought to demonstrate that Baker's account of the first thirty years of his life is much more complex and ambiguous, with his published accounts made of both fiction and fact. In doing so, the Man of the Trees has been reconstructed from the archives that he left behind him and takes a different form: more vulnerable, more enterprising, and more elusive than his accessible public persona might suggest. As a result, Baker's ability to reconcile practical faith and practical silviculture are more clearly situated within the canon of ecological thinkers, and his place within the pantheon of environmental history is reaffirmed.

Foreword

My supervisor, Dr Jan Woudstra, first introduced me to Richard St. Barbe Baker in the early summer of 2012. The suggestion to research his life was made following a conversation about values, spirituality and conservation after which Dr Woudstra made the astute observation that my interest in the topic could be explored and expressed through a study of Baker's work. For that, I am indebted. The intervening years have been challenging, exciting, and rewarding. Writing my thesis on Baker has opened the door to a world that had been out of reach and has allowed me to travel the world in pursuit of Baker's story. Throughout the process, Dr Woudstra has been a thoughtful and challenging guide through what have been difficult times. Furthermore, I would like to thank Professor Martin Conboy for his patience and insight, especially through some difficult times.

I remember the emotion I felt when first reading Baker's most impassioned calls for a world free of hunger and conflict, brought about through cooperation in the act of planting and protecting trees. I observed my own cynicism at such heartfelt utopianism, and yet a feeling of grief that such a world felt unattainable. Over the years in which I have been researching Baker's life and work, I have sought to understand this conflation better, the desire for optimism and proactivity in the face of seemingly insurmountable challenges. Other anniversaries and events have overshadowed the development of this manuscript, not least the end of the First World War and the emergence of the novel coronavirus. These have led to widespread calls for an ecological revolution in line with F.D. Roosevelt's New Deal during the Great Depression, as well as the creation of an army to create a green future from the broken norms of the world we occupied just a brief time ago. I think that Baker, remembered for his militaristic approach to conservation, would have had something to add to the debate.

My family and friends have encouraged, humoured, and supported me throughout, and for that, I am grateful. I am especially appreciative of those who have read rough drafts, attended talks, and patiently listened, as well as the kind people who extended their hospitality to me over the last six years and offered insight into my mission to better understand Richard St. Barbe Baker. I am thankful for the generosity of time, insight and friendship that have been afforded me, and I hope that this study in some way does that justice. Sadly, my mother and grandmother were not able to see this through to completion. They were two extraordinary women whose courage and spirit lit up my life and I miss them terribly. However, I hope that their compassion and wisdom is in some way evident in what follows.

A Distinguished Name

A small cream-coloured sewing card held in the St. Barbe Baker Papers has the name 'R E St B Baker, Edward' stitched into its surface. The text along the top holds all the given names and surname, the line below the name by which a little boy in Hampshire was known to his family: Edward. This was Richard Edward St. Barbe Baker (1889-1982), son of John Richard St. Barbe Baker and his wife Charlotte, born on the 9th October 1889. It is not clear who made the card, as there is no name or date, but the object proclaims loudly that this belonged to a child called Edward. It is a tactile and semiotic artefact, part of the miscellany of childhood, now preserved in an archive in the centre of Canada at the University of Saskatchewan. To hold an object such as this is to be taken back to the universal experiences of infancy when we start to learn our name and the names of people and things around us. For Baker, the cadence and dignity of his full name was something he was to draw upon for the rest of his long life.

The search for meaning and insight from sources that constitute the ephemeral and enduring is at the heart of this work that seeks to understand the evolution of a boy called Edward into the man, Captain Baker, and covers his life up until 1920. The events happened long before Baker was anointed as a saint of the environmental movement and became known to many as St. Barbe and remembered as the Man of the Trees. Throughout this study he is referred to as Baker, however, this can cause confusion as he is often mistakenly thought to have had the surname St. Barbe Baker. His friends and acquaintances affectionately called him St. Barbe, as an officer in the army and in the colonial forestry service he was Captain Baker, his books were published under the name Richard St. Barbe Baker but are catalogued under Baker in the majority of cases, as are his papers that are held at the University of Saskatchewan.

These shifts of name and persona were no accident, evolving alongside the persona that Baker created and perpetuated. There is no doubt that Baker was his surname, and St. Barbe one of his given names, but 'St. Barbe' – with its holy associations – held great agency. The name gave gravitas, status, and authority to what he considered his life's work, a single-minded campaign to bring about an understanding that human existence relied almost entirely on the existence of trees. For the purposes of this study, Baker is the most appropriate form, whilst occasionally identified by his first name when discussing his father, John Richard St. Barbe Baker, and his brothers, James Scott and Thomas Guillaume St. Barbe Baker.



Fig. 1

Portrait of Richard St. Barbe Baker c. 1930

University of Saskatchewan (UoS), R. St. Barbe Baker Papers, fonds MG 71 M/1.

'With his soft voice and faraway look in his eyes, one might mistake him at first for, perhaps, a dreamy scoutmaster. But his gentle exterior hides a restless vitality, and the single-mindedness - though not the violence - of a fanatic. At sixty-five he runs up and down stairs like a boy.'

'Profile - Man of the Trees', *The Observer*, 30 Jan 1955, p.3.

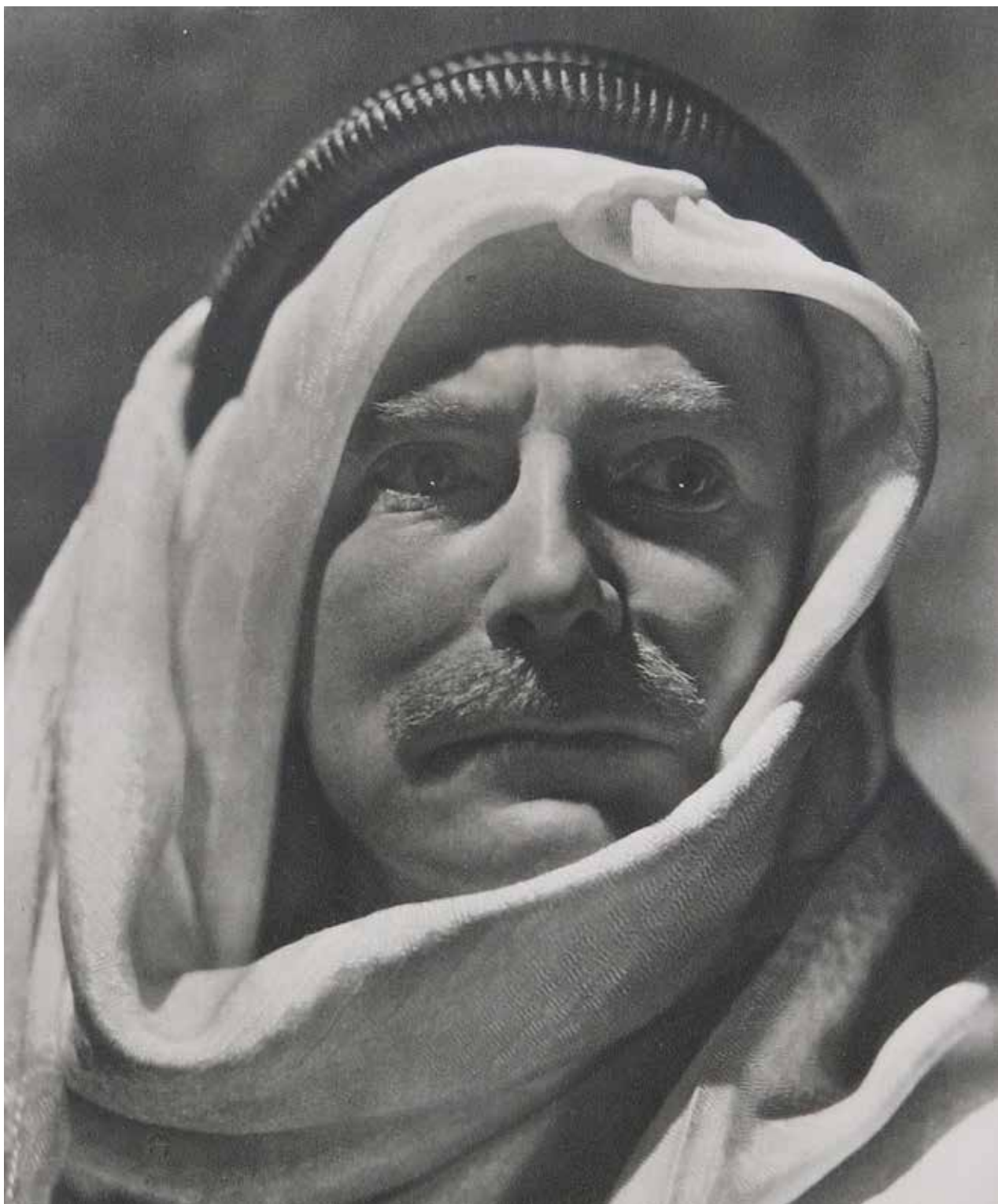


Fig. 2

'Study by Howard Coster after the Author's return from Palestine' c.1929

Howard Coster, UoS, fonds MG 71 M/1.

This photo was used by Baker to convey the internationalism of his experience. Taken in 1929 by the photographer Howard Coster, who made his reputation as a 'photographer of men', it visually connected Baker with another of Coster's subjects who had also gained fame in the Middle East, T.E. Lawrence, who had also had his story publicised by the American broadcaster Lowell Thomas. Baker used this portrait as the frontispiece in *Dance of the Trees*, his 1956 book, dedicated 'to young people everywhere.'

RICHARD ST. BARBE BAKER

Founder of "The Men of the Trees," a world Society of Tree Lovers whose aim is to create a tree-sense in every citizen and to encourage all to plant, protect and love trees everywhere.

*Annual Subscription one dollar, including Tree Badge.
Life Membership twenty dollars.*

IF YOU ARE A TREE LOVER YOU ARE ELIGIBLE FOR MEMBERSHIP.

*Apply:—Hon. Secretary, The Men of the Trees,
Hotel Irving, Gramercy Park,
New York.*

In Palestine The Men of the Trees are reclaiming the desert and waste places. Twenty million trees already planted.

Richard St. Barbe Baker is author of "MEN OF THE TREES."

Publisher: Lincoln Mac Veagh, The Dial Press, New York.

Described by Lowell Thomas, in his introduction "Thrilling, full of strange lore, strange lands and the primitive people of the tropic forests." It contains a wonderful character sketch of the great Field Marshal Viscount Allenby, who is on the Council of The Men of the Trees.

Mr. St. Barbe Baker is also responsible for the TREE LOVERS CALENDAR published each October for the following year. One dollar, from The Men of the Trees, Calendar Secretary, 54, Upper Cheyne Row, London, S.W.3.

New Lecture: "TREE MAGIC"

Illustrated with beautiful coloured slides from original photographs.

Lecture Management:—

W. COLSTON LEIGH,

321, FIFTH AVENUE,

NEW YORK.

BAHARA RECLAMATION PROGRAMME
1930-1931

Fig. 3

'If you are a tree lover you are eligible for membership' c.1930

Richard. St. Barbe Baker, UoS, fonds MG 71 M/1.

Baker was adept at publicity, as this leaflet for his tour of the United States indicates. In one swift move he was able to solicit membership of The Men of the Trees, publicise his first book *The Brotherhood of the Trees*, promote the news of his tree planting activities in Palestine, as well as announcing his availability as a lecturer on the subject of 'tree magic.'

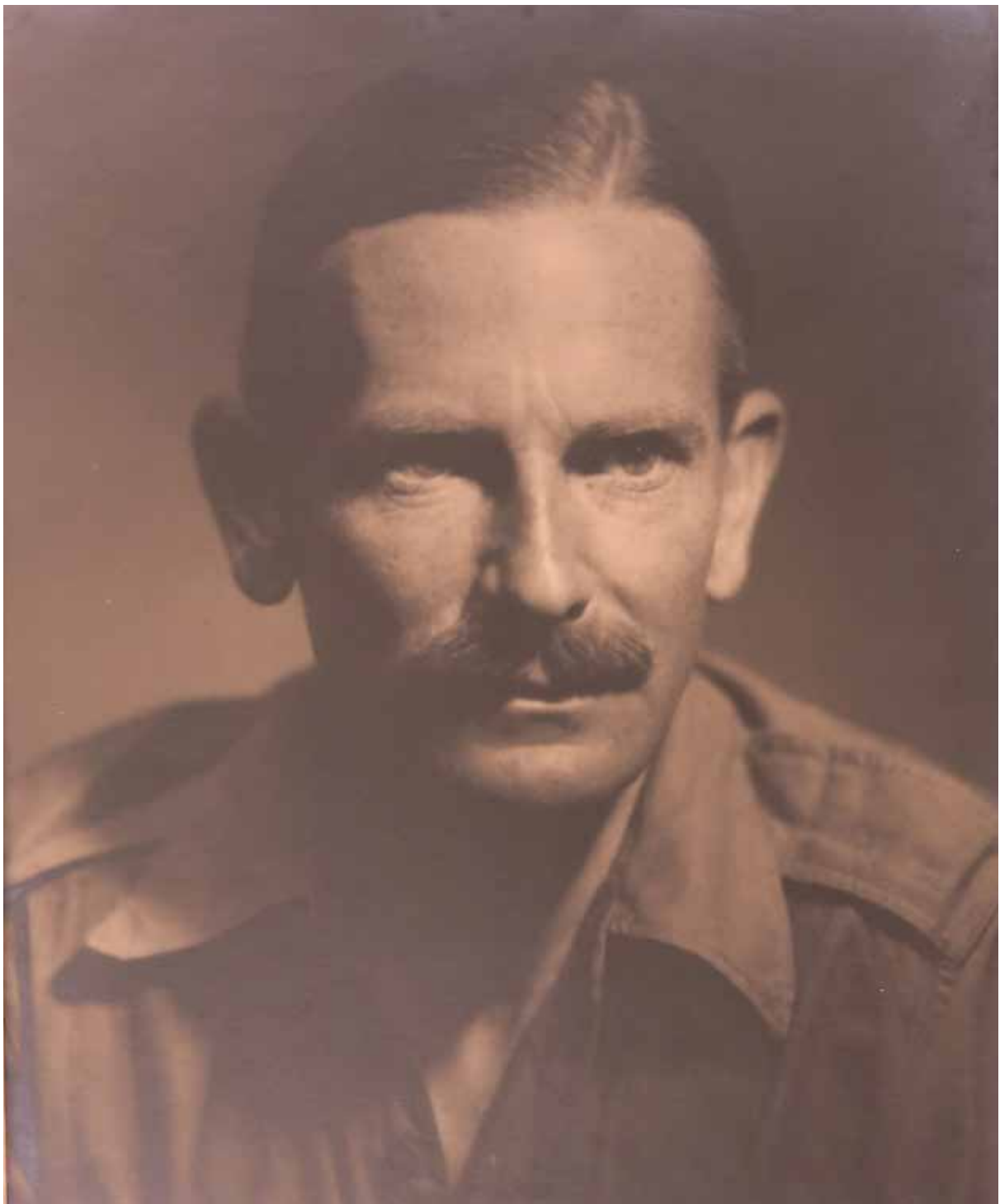
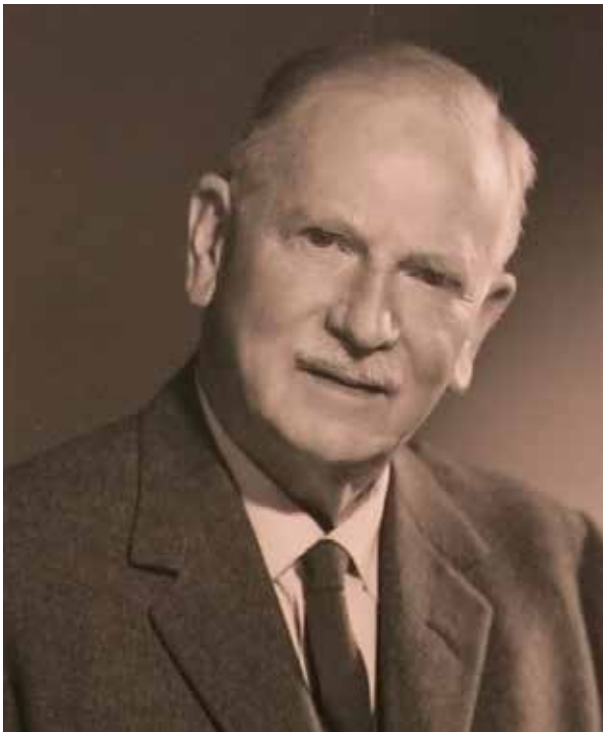


Fig. 4

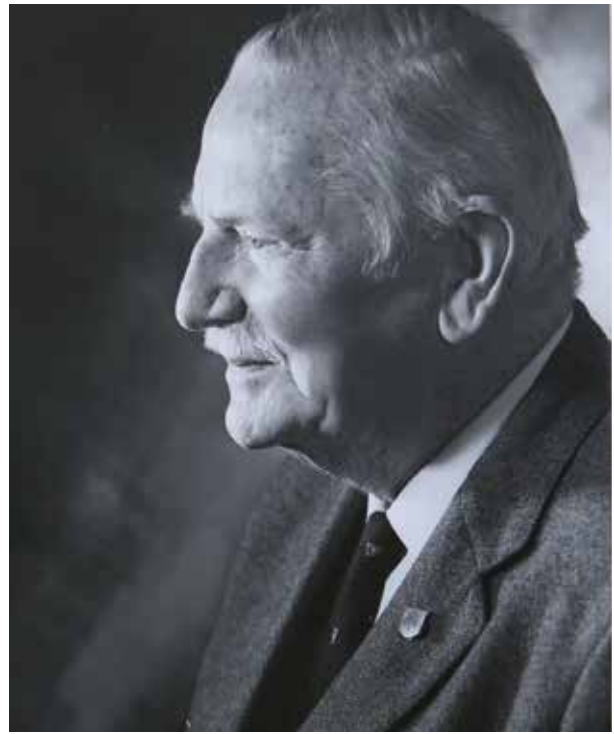
'The Author' c.1930

Howard Coster. UoS, fonds MG 71 M/1.

The National Portrait Gallery holds a number of portraits of Baker, the majority taken by Howard Coster. There is a disparity in dates, as the NPG lists most as having been taken in 1932, whereas it is more likely that a large tranche were taken upon Baker's return from Palestine in 1929 and which presented the opportunity for Baker to try out different characters, such as this stern colonial officer with his purposeful gaze rather than the romantic explorer in Arab headdress featured in fig. 2.



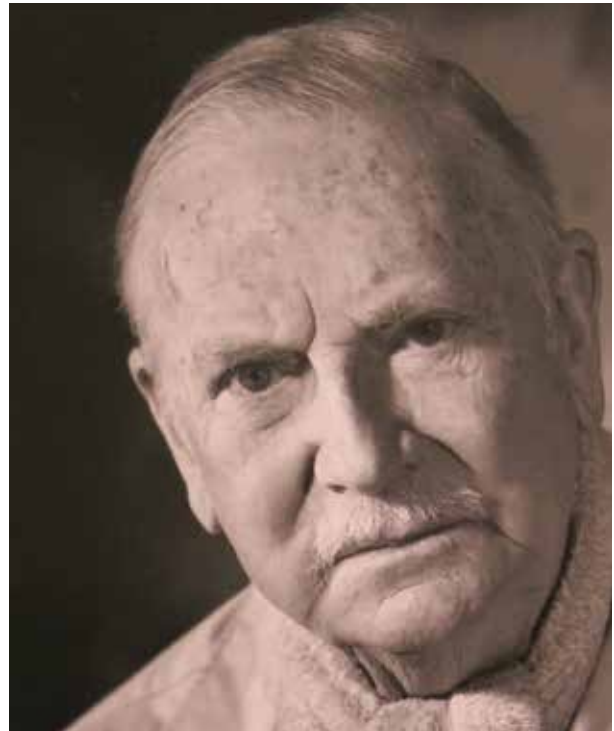
5



6



8



7

Fig. 5, 6, 7, 8

Four portraits of Baker, c.1960 and c.1980

UoS, fonds MG 71 M/1.

Four of the portraits held within the R. St. Barbe Baker Papers at the University of Saskatchewan taken in the latter three decades of his life and presumably sent out to accompany any press that Baker secured. The photo, top right, was taken by Godfrey Argent (no date). The photo bottom right, was taken by Ian Anderson, Taunton (no date), and is annotated on the back with its reproduction ratio.

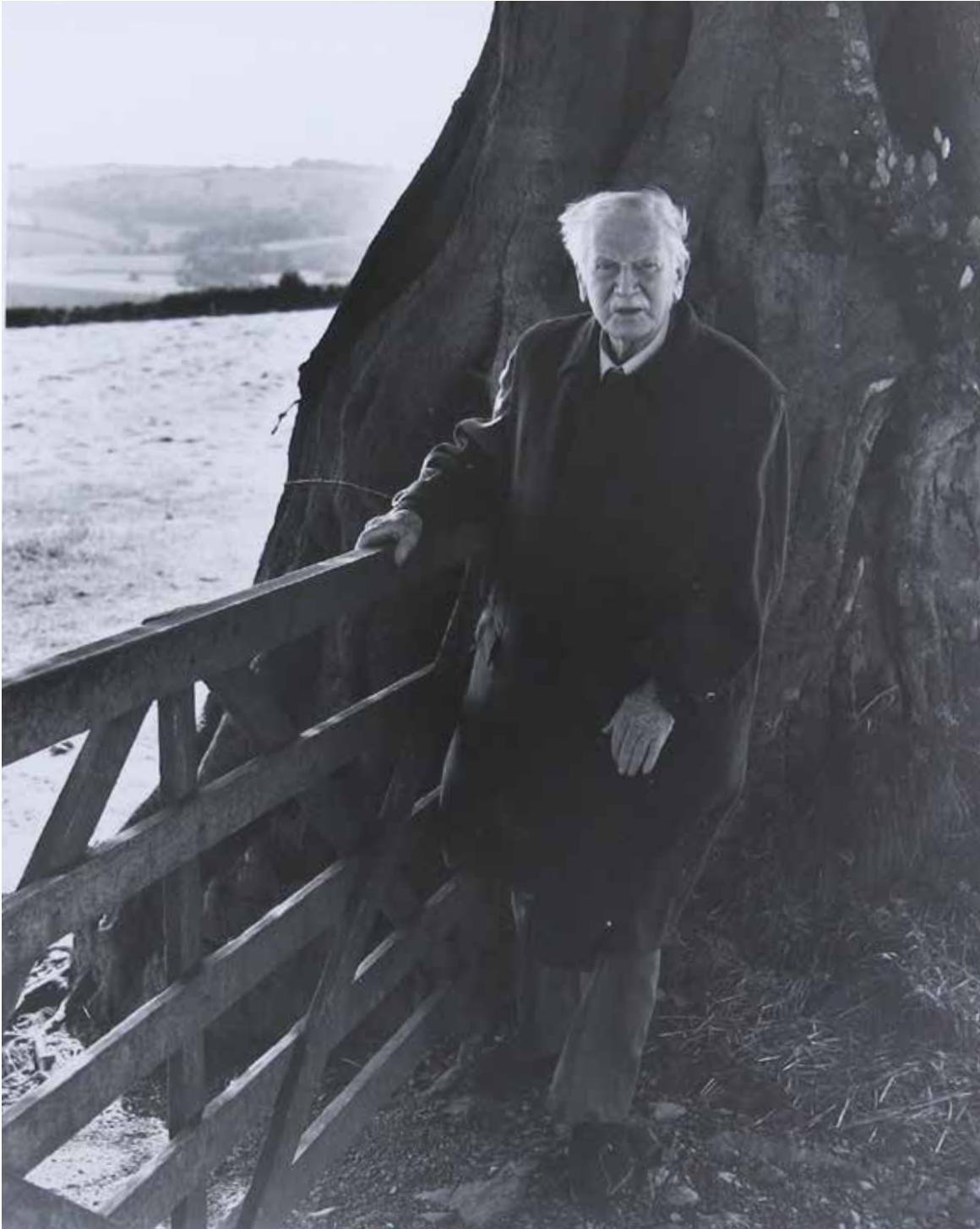


Fig. 9

Richard St. Barbe Baker in later life c.1980

UoS, fonds MG 71 M/1.

It is fair to say that Baker outlived his personas, and by the end of his life he had evolved into an elder statesman of conservation. The dust jacket of Baker's second autobiography, *My Life, My Trees*, described the book 'as a remarkable story of a man who has dedicated his life to a great cause, and by his example and tireless energy has awakened the conscience of the world.' This unattributed and undated photo appears to have been taken in the South of England on one of Baker's round the world trips.



10



11



13



12

Fig. 10, 11, 12, 13

The Baker family c.1900

UoS, fonds MG 71 M/1.

These four photos show, clockwise from top left, the Baker family posing outside The Firs c.1900, with Richard standing in the centre between his parents. The photo of a baby is the only individual infant in the collection and is likely to be Richard, or Edward, as he was known. The two youngest children, Thomas and Fanny, had their portrait taken together, and the last photo is of Charlotte Baker's mother, Anne Purrott. The photo of the family was reproduced in *My Life, My Trees* and credited to E.V. Tanner, who appears to have taken the images of the interior of the Mission Hall (images 16 & 17) on the same day.



Fig. 14

Charlotte Sophie Baker c.1920

UoS, fonds MG 71 M/2 1-27.

Charlotte Baker was remembered by her eldest son as a keen horsewoman and a fine pianist. Her influence upon Baker is obvious in his love of horses, but there are other points at which her advice shaped her eldest son's path in life, not least that she counselled him that a career in forestry might allow him, through 'helping heal the scars of the earth' also help his fellow men.

Richard St. Barbe Baker, *Dance of the Trees*, (London: Oldbourne Press 1956) p.30.



Fig. 15

John Richard St. Barbe Baker c.1920

UoS, fonds MG 71 M/2 1-27.

Baker's father, John Richard St. Barbe Baker, comes to live in both Baker's autobiographies but also through the number of surviving letters that are held within the R. St. Barbe Baker Papers. His family's declining fortune meant that he was unable to commit himself to his evangelical work and instead had to turn his hobby into a profession. Baker was always clear in the pride that he had in his father's enterprising style, although financial worries underpin many of the decisions that the Baker family had to make as the children grew up.



16



18



17

Fig. 16, 17, 18

The exterior and interior of the West End Mission Hall c.1900

c.1900. UoS, fonds MG 71 M/2 1-27.

Around the same time that the Baker family's portrait was taken outside of the family home, a number of photos were taken of Richard and his parents inside the Hall, although in quite different settings. The photo of Baker's parents shows them presiding over an empty hall, Charlotte at the organ and John in the pulpit. Richard features in a number of photos that appear to show a fête or sale of some kind, and he appears a rather solemn child in comparison to his cheerful youngest brother (fig. 12).

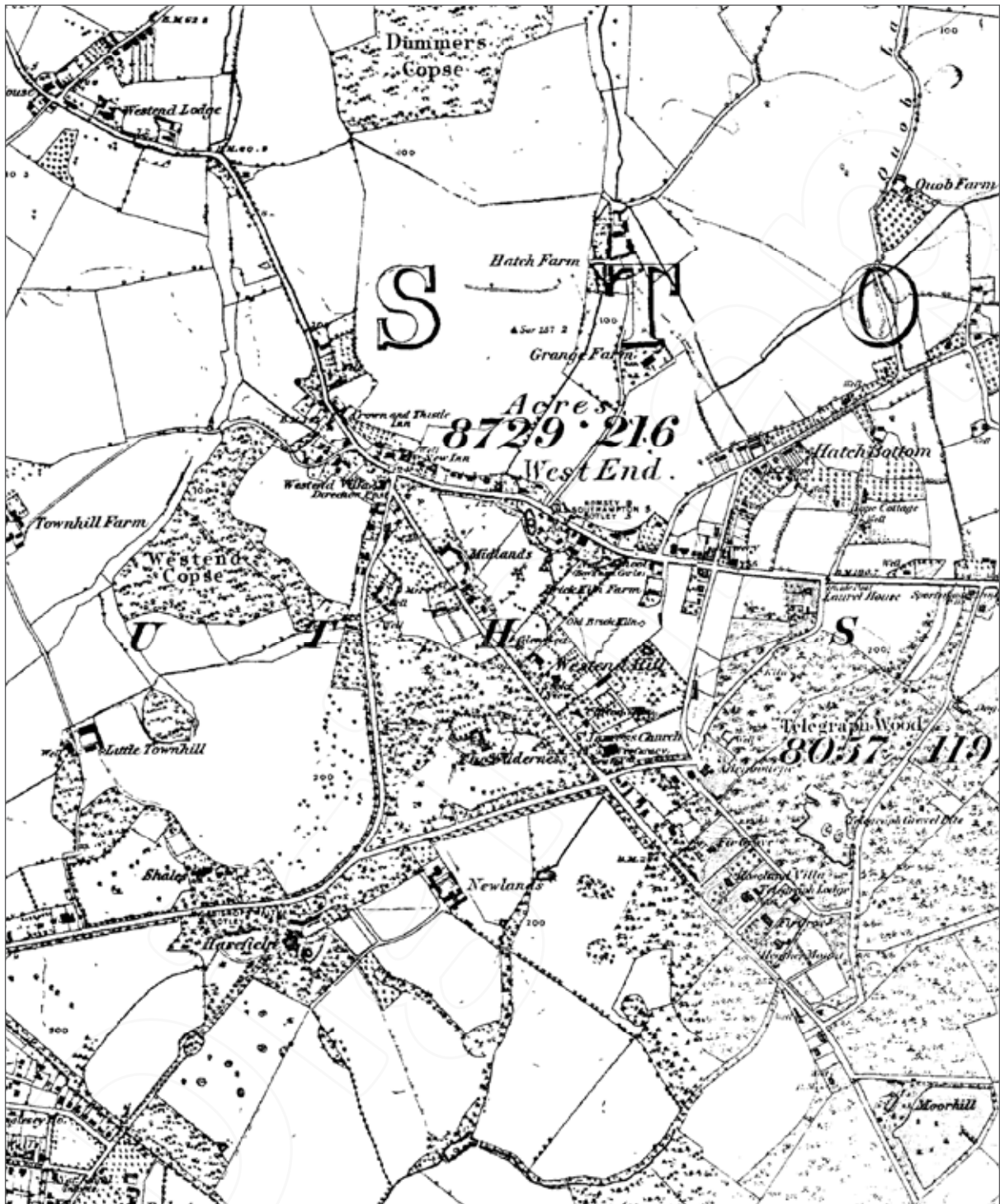
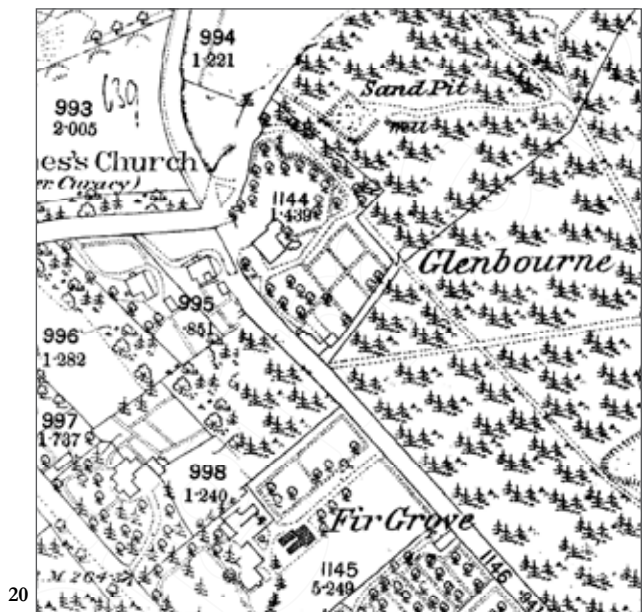


Fig. 19
The Village of West End in 1870
 Ordnance Survey Landmark Information Group, 2020.

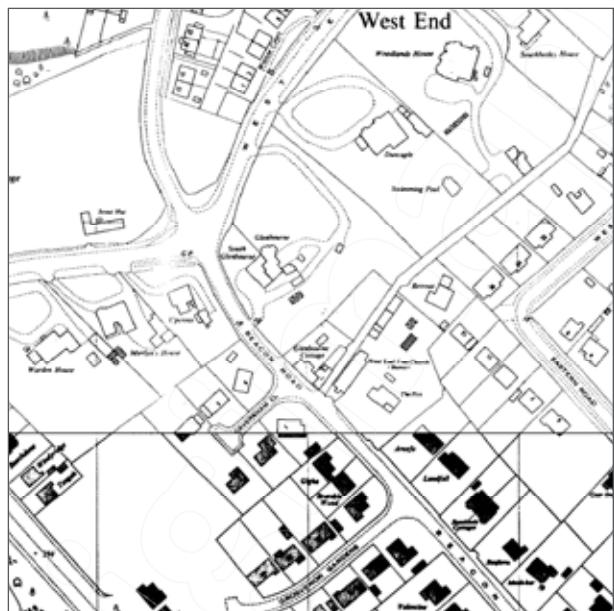
This map was made twenty years before Baker's birth, and shows the wooded surroundings of West End. Firgrove House, which preceded The Firs, stands just south of the junction that the Church of St James sits upon. Telegraph Woods is marked, as are the signs of industry within the woodland: a well, gravel pit and kiln.



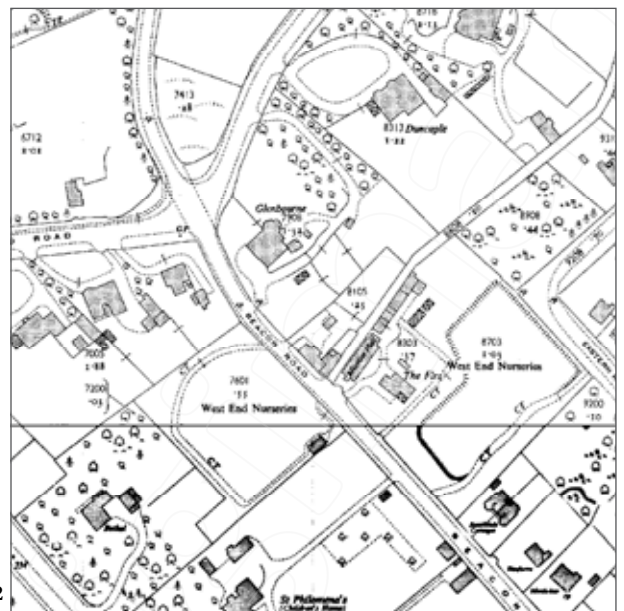
20



21



23



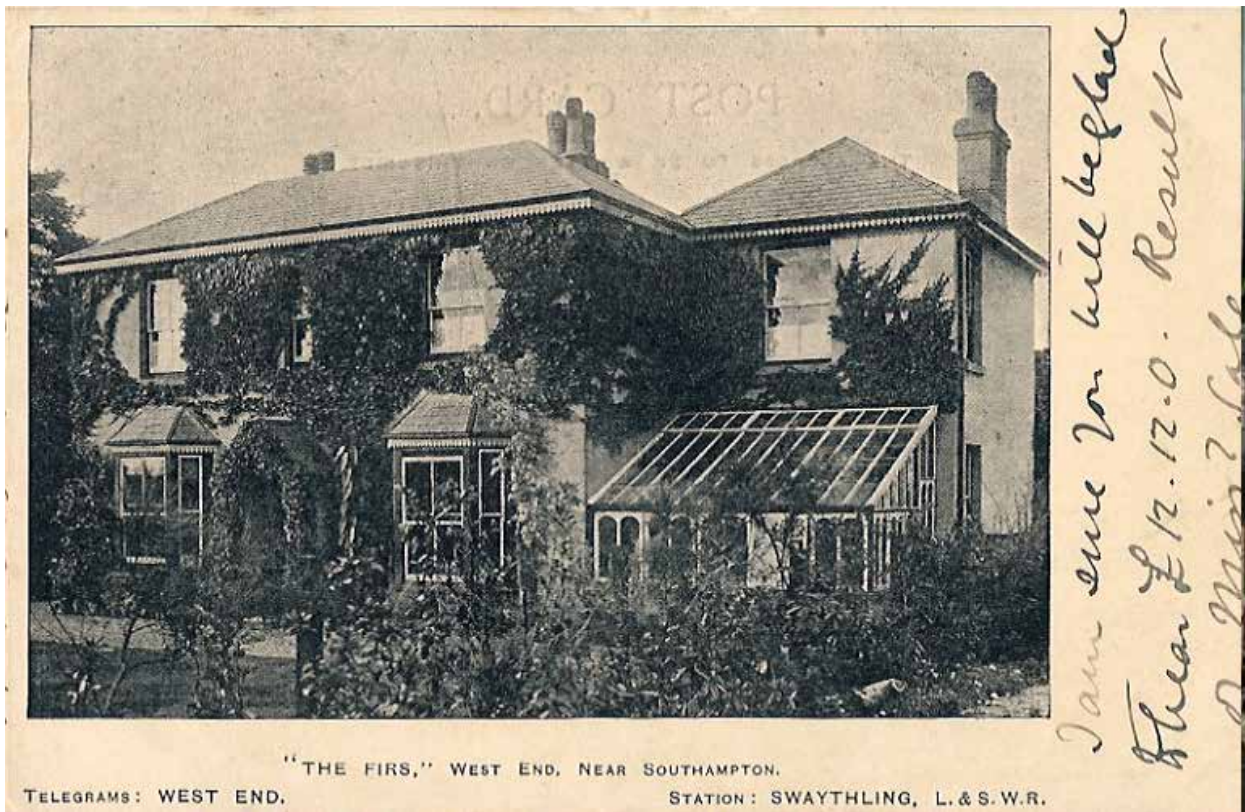
22

Fig. 20, 21, 22, 23

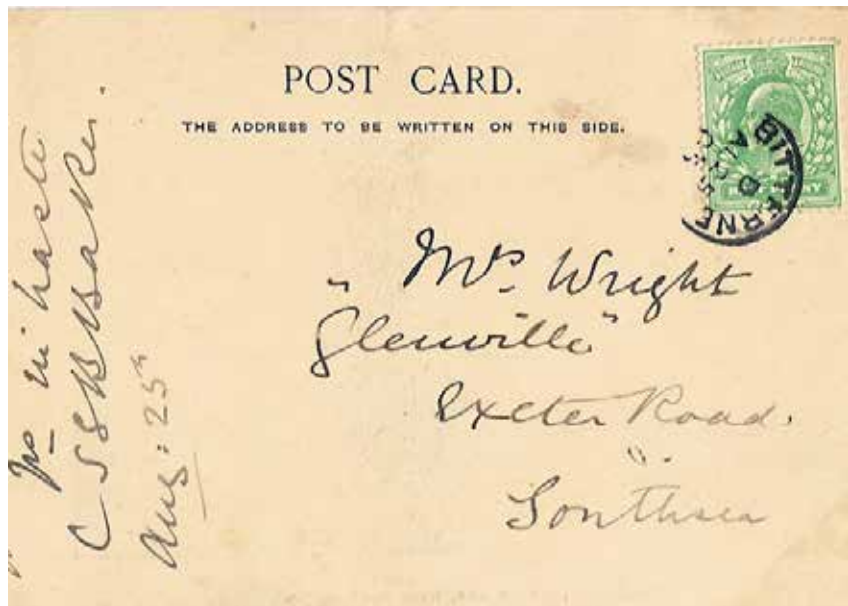
The Village of West End, clockwise from top left, in 1880, 1900, 1950 and 1960

Ordnance Survey Landmark Information Group, 2020.

These detailed maps show the development of the village of West End immediately around the Baker family residence. It appears that a large villa, Glenbourne, was subdivided and when John Richard St. Barbe Baker left Fir Grove he bought a parcel of land which allowed him to build The Firs and the Mission Hall. Over the years the plots get smaller and smaller, with the scale of the nursery in 1950 greatly reduced by the number of new houses built by 1960.



front



back

Fig. 24
'The Firs,' West End, Near Southampton no date
 West End Historical Society

A postcard from The Firs with a message about a successful sale, signed 'in haste' by Charlotte Baker. The family's green fingers were evident in the verdent garden and creepers climbing the house's walls.

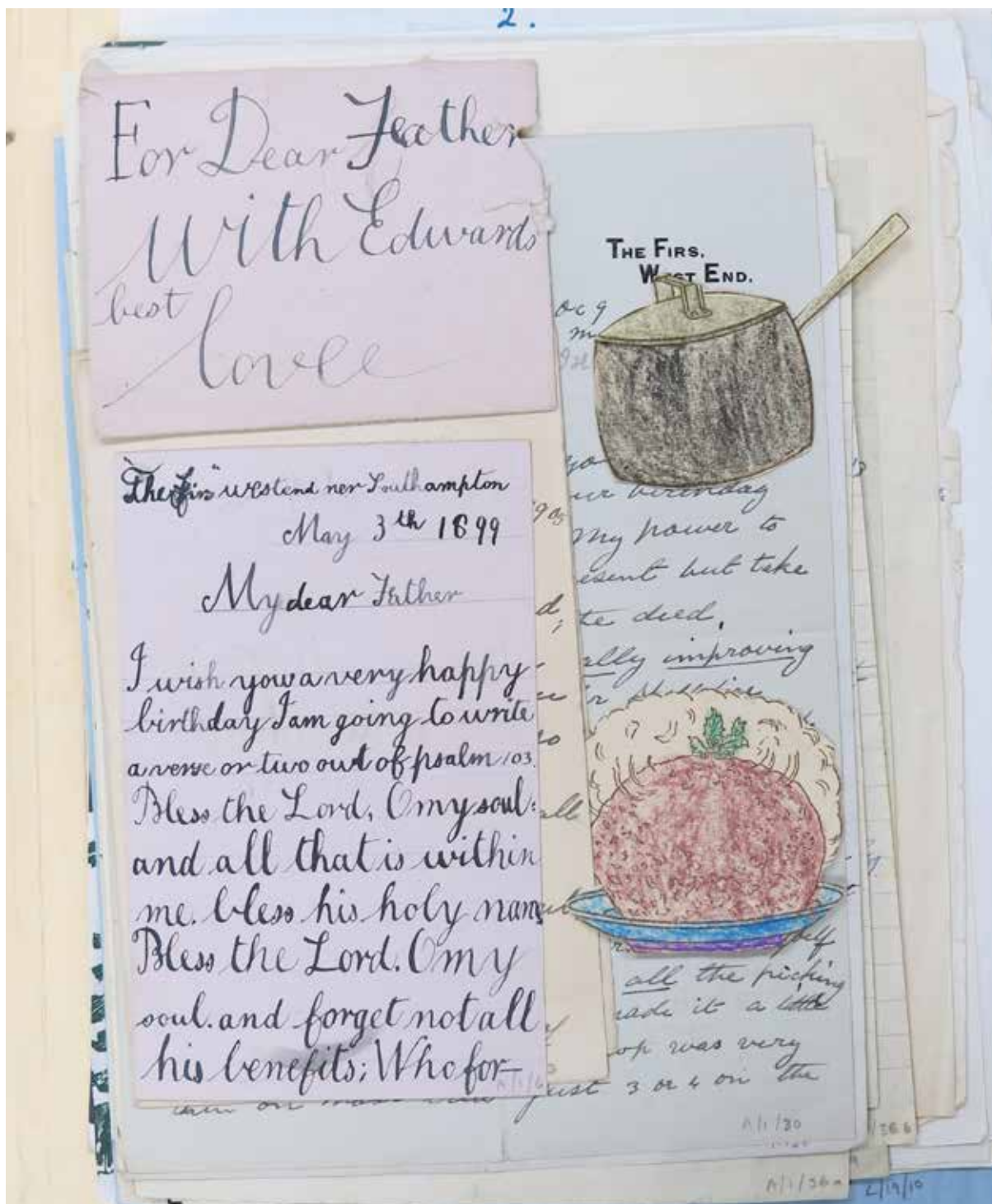


Fig. 25

The folio of family papers 1889

UoS, fonds B.1.1. 'Family Correspondence 1886-1979'.

The insight gained through reading the Baker family's correspondence between 1886 and 1979 was balanced by an awareness of how much is missing. Unsurprisingly, there is very little that pertains to Baker's siblings, and the collection appears to have been shaped by John Richard St. Barbe Baker's desire to save mementos from his eldest son's childhood, as well as select pieces of correspondence. One of the first items in the folder is a birthday letter from Richard, which accompanied a pen wiper and a birthday pudding, along with a saucepan to cook it in.



26



27



29



28

Fig. 26, 27, 28, 29

Objects from Box 48

UoS, fonds P. Artefacts.

*Having approached the R. St. Barbe Baker Papers in the same order as the finding aid, (what is a finding aid) one of the last boxes to be studied contained a large collection of objects of meaning to Baker. There was no warning, however, that in what had first appeared to be mostly a collection of ephemera - an archery forearm guard, watercolour paints to colour his lantern slides, samples of wood, tree plaques, clip-on sunglasses and his cufflinks - would also contain a C.B.E. medal, as well as the Royal Order of Vasa, a Swedish order of chivalry awarded to individuals who had made a contribution to the fields of agriculture, mining or commerce. The C.B.E. (Commander of the British Empire) is confusing, as Baker was awarded an O.B.E., as announced in *The London Gazette* in 1979 for his services to forestry.*

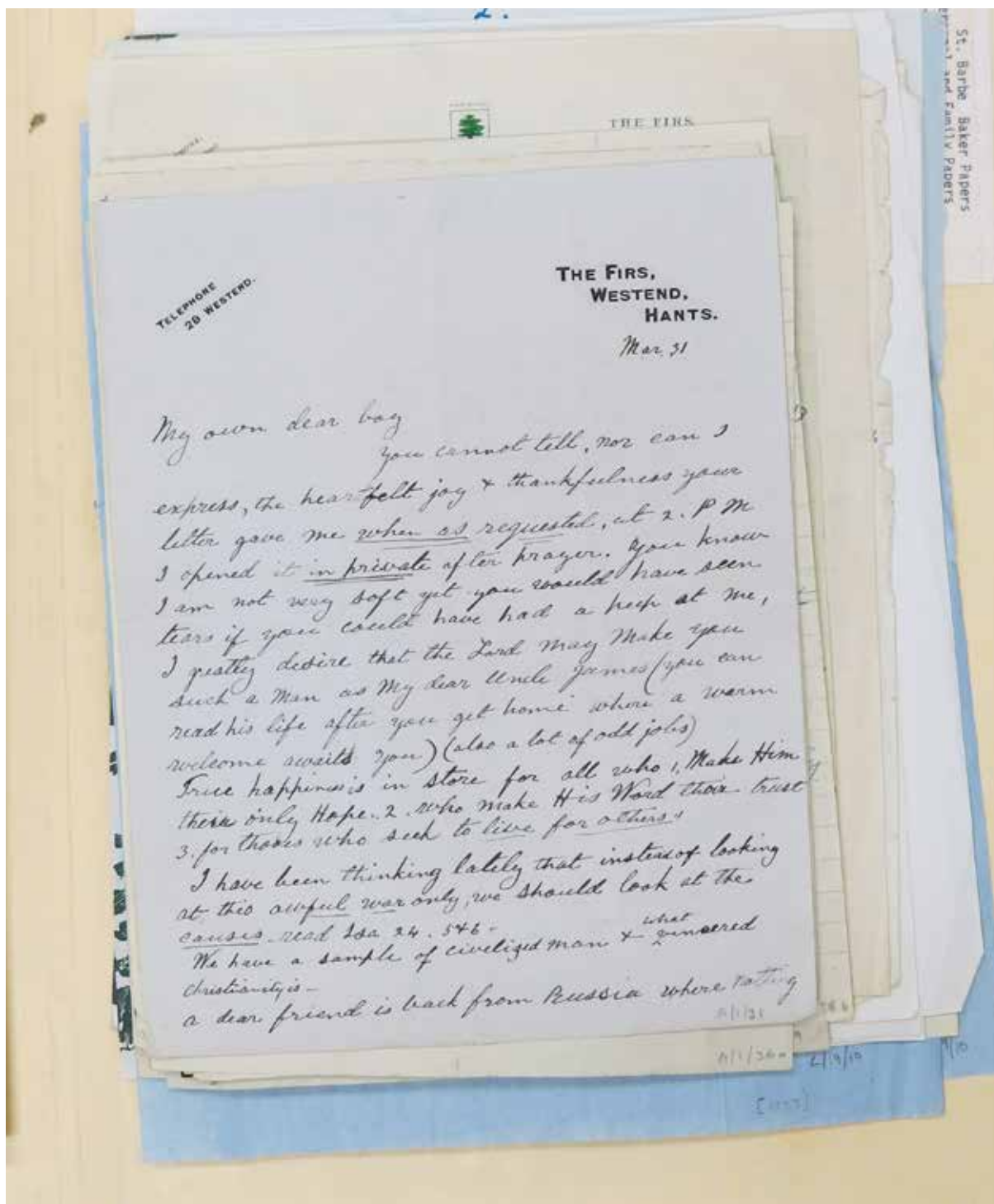


Fig. 30

Letter from John Richard St. Barbe Baker c.1916

UoS, fonds B.1.1. 'Family Correspondence 1886-1979'.

The intimacy of family correspondence can be lost when reproducing their words but not their handwriting. This letter, written during the First World War conveys some of the worry that Baker's father felt for the safety of his oldest son, and the line 'you know I am not very soft, yet you would have seen tears if you could have had a peep at me' speaks volumes about the strength of affection closeted by Edwardian emotional restraint.

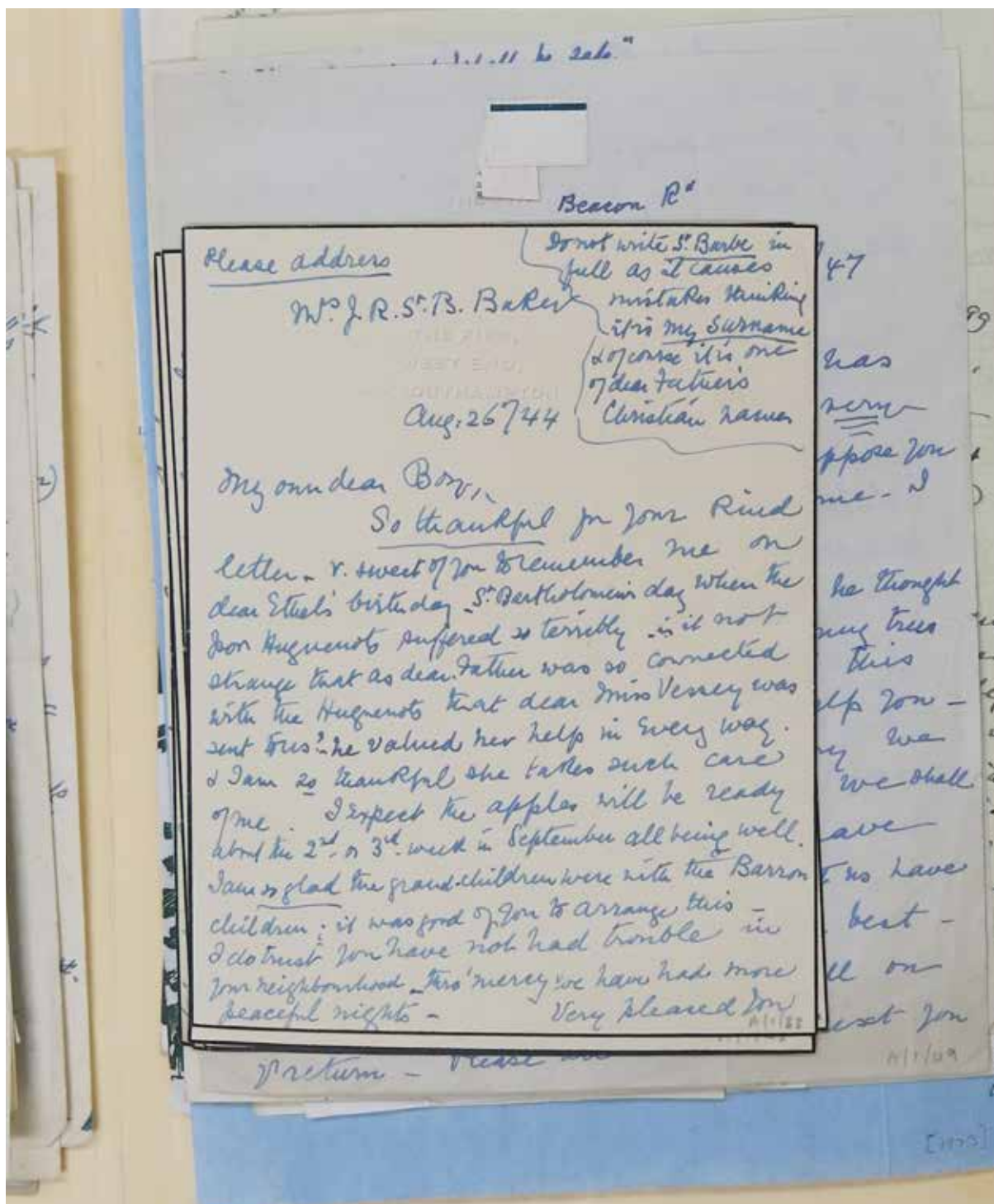


Fig. 31

Letter from Charlotte Baker 1944

UoS, fonds B.1.1. 'Family Correspondence 1886-1979'.

Much as the portraits of Baker's parents sit together, it is also rewarding to look at their letters side-by-side. Both address Baker as 'My own dear boy', and there is a corresponding use of underlining for emphasis. However, Charlotte Baker's letters have an idiosyncrasy all her own, not least the more conversational assertion written at the top of the page that her son should not write St. Barbe as one of her names on any post, one of the clues which helped mark the research into this part of Baker's name and identity.



Fig. 32

A family miscellany

UoS, fonds B.X1.7. 'Misc. Family Papers 1890-c.1950'.

Alongside the family correspondence is a folder of miscellaneous papers, a number of which pertain to Baker's infancy and childhood. It is the folder in which the strange 'True Tales' from Hyères sit, as well as a note written by Charlotte on Edward's behalf (presumably with kisses added by Baker himself). The sewing card, as well as the drawings of Baker's grandmother, brother, and their cat, provide a different means of engaging with life at The Firs.



33



35



34

Fig. 33, 34, 35

The Mission Hall and The Firs today

Camilla Allen, 2018.

The Mission Hall is currently used by a Baptist congregation, and I was able to visit when I went to West End in 2018 on my guided tour by local historian Peter Sillence. The wood-clad walls of the hall give off an evocative scent, and although now lit by electric lights, there were enough artifacts on the walls to know that many things had not changed since John and Charlotte Baker's day. In the garden of The Firs is one of the nursery business signs which happen to have the same insignia as the Men of the Trees.



36



38



29

37

Fig. 36, 37, 38

Commemoration in West End

Camilla Allen, 2018.

The Mission Hall is now called the Barbe Baker Hall, and unsurprisingly ‘St.’ was dropped from the name of the road which was dedicated to Baker. The commemorative tablet (bottom left) is situated about half a mile away from a grove which was planted in Baker’s memory, but which has no signage to indicate the fact. West End’s museum has a small number of objects in its collection which relate to Baker and his family, including their centuries-old Bible. Visiting West End forced me to think about commemoration and the rituals of remembering, of which tree planting is a key action, yet which also dissipates somewhat as the trees grow and memories fade.



39



40

Fig. 39, 40

Telegraph Woods

Camilla Allen, 2018.

Telegraph Woods represented both a sylvan idyll and a place of industry in Baker's accounts, he described them in *I Planted Trees* as feeling extensive when he was a boy, 'mysterious and rather awe-inspiring.' From his nurse's cottage on the edge of the forest (still standing) he could 'peer into the dark woods of "dreamy gloomy friendly trees"'. The woods are still owned by Queens College, Oxford, and plantation forestry and coppice work are both evident.

Richard St. Barbe Baker, *I Planted Trees* (Lutterworth: London, 1970), p.10.



41



42

Fig. 41, 42

Telegraph Woods c.1920

West End Historical Society.

The local history society's photos of Telegraph Woods in the 1920s demonstrate the scale of industry that took place there, offering employment to local men. Further research remains to be done on the Baker family's property and business interests in West End. The quiet and solitary adventures that Baker described seem often at odds with the working life of the woodland, echoing Rackham's maxim that the wood that pays is the wood that stays.



Fig. 43

The Broad and Narrow Way, 1866

English edition of an 1866 Dutch issue. 1883 Colour lithograph. British Museum.

Seeing *The Broad and Narrow Way* on the wall of the back room of the Mission Hall in West End in 2018 connected an anecdote in a letter written by Ursula Samandari after Baker's death with the spiritual and moral environment that he grew up within. I had searched in vain for a Victorian engraving featuring a man beating a donkey, and here it was - just about the welcome sign - the image that had so tortured Baker as a child.



Fig 44
In Darkest England and the Way Out, 1890
 Colour lithograph. 'Supplement to the Review of Reviews, 1890'

The Salvation Army's scheme to redress the social issues afflicting England in which survivors are being pulled from the sea by members of the Salvation Army and guided to an English utopia with solutions for all society's problems.

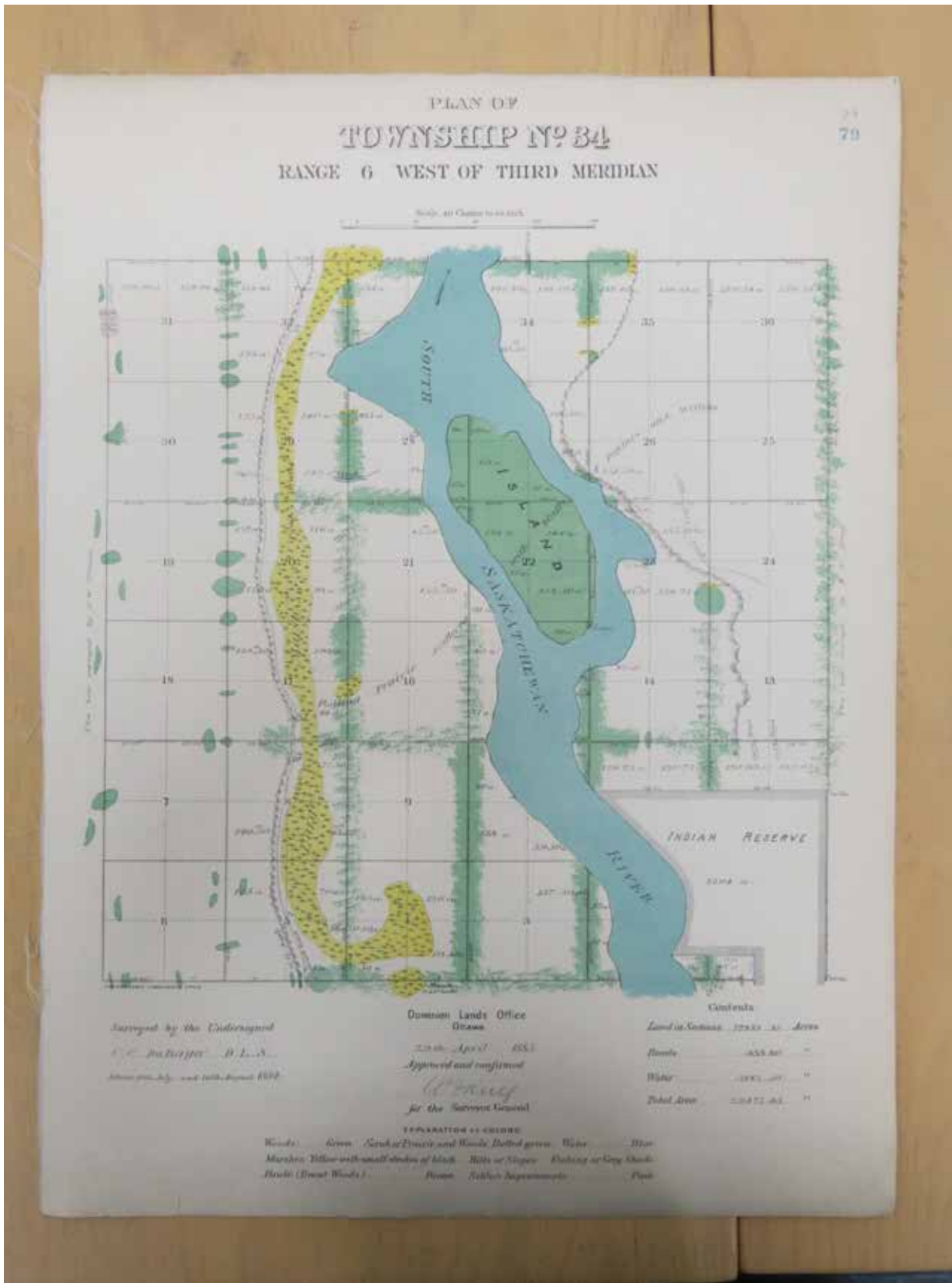


Fig. 45

Map of Township Number 34, Range 6, West of the Third Meridian

Surveyed by C.C. DuBerger, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan (PAS). 1885. Department of Interior. 2134848.

The parcel of land that Baker applied for was northwest of section 25 in township number 34. It was relatively high ground above the Saskatchewan River, with poplar and willow trees labelled on the map.

FORM NO. 1
11000-10-0-11

Form A. No. 21624 **2762915**

Application for Entry for a Homestead, a Pre-emption or a Purchased Homestead.

St. Berbe Baker
of Saskatoon, Sask. do hereby apply for an Entry for a Homestead under the provisions of Section _____ in that behalf of the Dominion Lands Act, for the NW Quarter Section of Section number 23 in Township 34 Range 6W of the 57 Meridian.

(2) I am a British subject.
I am a citizen of _____, as the case may be, but I declare that it is my intention to become a British subject under the laws of Canada.

Saskatoon
14 35 N District. Sig. R. E. St. Berbe Baker

NOTE:—Strike out paragraph 1 of applicant if not a British subject.
Strike out paragraph 2 of applicant if a British subject.

NOTE:—The statistical information called for below will be obtained and filed in by Agent when granting entry.

Member in family including widows, giving their ages	SEX	Age	Country of Birth	Sub-division of Country of Birth	Last Place of Residence	Previous Occupation
<u>1</u>		<u>22</u>	<u>England</u>	<u>Hampshire</u>	<u>Saskatoon Sask.</u>	<u>Student</u>

DOMINION LANDS OFFICE
GASKATOON, SASK.
REC 2010
Exp. 2011
BY [Signature]

ENTRY GRANTED
AUG 23 1912
Checked by _____

Fig. 46
Application for Entry for a Homestead
 PAS, 1912. Department of Interior. 2134848.

Finding Baker's application for his homestead in the Provincial Archives meant having a tangible piece of evidence around which I could reconstruct Baker's account of his time in Canada. At times his accounts seemed rich and authoritative enough to take at face value, but when extended and stretched the verisimilitude of the incidents and stories frayed.

2964869 Form 213 A
3,000,000

DECLARATION OF ABANDONMENT.

In the Matter of the N.W. ~~25~~ of Section 25
 Township 34 Range 6 West of the 3rd Meridian.

I, Richard Edward St-Barbe Baker
 of Saskatoon Province of Saskatchewan
 do solemnly declare:—

That I made entry for the above-mentioned land as a homestead
 at the Dominion Lands Office at Saskatoon on
 the 23rd day of Aug. 1912
 and I now ask to have said entry cancelled for the following reasons, namely:

(1) (See Note opposite) My city occupation prevents
my further performing
required duties

(2) (State which system and extent of work done, and if not an agricultural, what performed.) None

(3) (Give description of work done, and if not an agricultural, what performed.) None

(4) (Give date if intention to receive the same land.) It is my intention
to receive & would like
authority to do so

That I have not received, directly or indirectly, nor have I been promised, nor do I expect to receive any consideration of any kind for allowing said entry to be cancelled.

And I make this solemn declaration conscientiously believing it to be true, and knowing that it is of the same force and effect as if made under oath and by virtue of the Canada Evidence Act.

Declared before me at Saskatoon
 in the Province of Saskatchewan Signature R.E.S. Barbe Baker
 this 5th day of July Address Emmanuel Colleg
 A.D. 1913 Saskatoon
Sask.

Senior Assistant (If also here, giving title.)

NOTE.—This Declaration must be sent to the Agent of Dominion Lands for the District in which the land is situated, and has no force or effect until received by such Agent.

Fig. 47

Declaration of Abandonment

PAS, 1912. Department of Interior. 2134848.

The declaration of abandonment, when taken alongside the other applications and abandonments of the same plot stood out in contrast with Baker's gung-ho account of homesteading. Much of the best land had already been taken by earlier settlers and the sandy land next to the river was unlikely ever to be productive.



Fig. 48, 49, 50

Saskatoon, Canada

Camilla Allen, 2016.

Visiting Saskatchewan in the spring of 2016 gave me a small insight into the place and landscape that Baker had called home when he lived there in his early twenties. Fig. 46 shows the site of his homestead, bleached grass no longer covered by snow. On a nature reserve some of the prairie flora was visible, with Pasque flowers emerging. I also had the opportunity to visit Beaver Creek where the descendants of Baker's neighbours are still gnawing trees to make their dams.



Fig. 51

The Dominion Land Survey

Camilla Allen, 2016.

On the flight from Winnipeg to Saskatoon I was struck by the sight of a grid extending over the icy landscape. The monumental effort to mark and claim the land was something I needed to understand as part of the history of the Canadian prairie, which is also part of Baker's story.



52



54



53

Fig. 52, 53, 54

Baker's mark on Saskatoon, Canada

Camilla Allen, 2016.

Baker is remembered in a tile frieze commemorating the students from the University of Saskatchewan who served in the First World War., with K.E.H. standing for King Edward's Horse, his first regiment. He is buried at Woodlawn Cemetery in Saskatoon near a twin-stemmed tree and close to the Saskatchewan River. The Aspen was the last tree that Baker planted on Earth Day in 1982, shortly before he died.



Fig. 55

Archdeacon Dewdney, Bishop Lloyd, Revs. Norris and Hill and others, Emmanuel College, 1908

William John James. SPA, R-A4563.

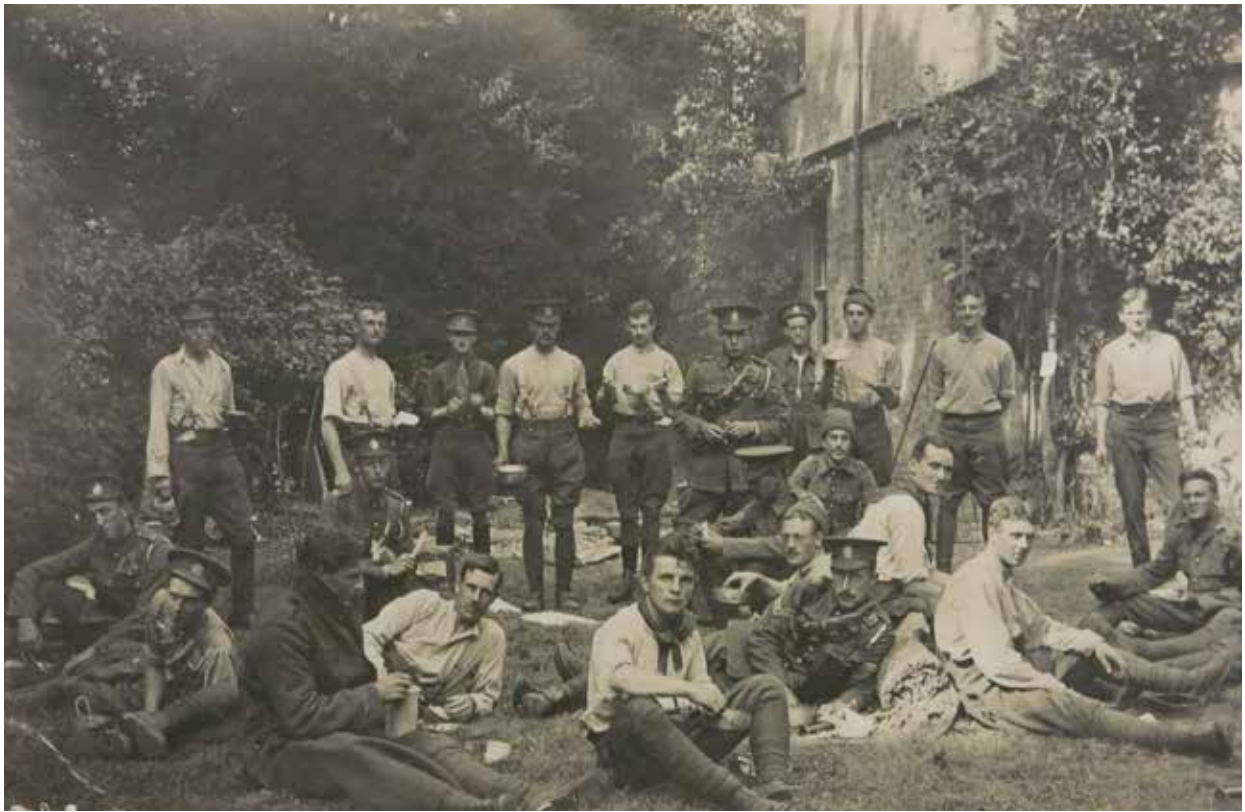


Fig. 56

Emmanuel College, shows students outdoors, c.1900

William John James SPA, R-A4666.

Two photos from the Saskatchewan Provincial Archives which show the men involved in the establishment of Emmanuel College, as well as one of its first cohorts.



57



59



58

Fig. 57, 58, 59

Baker's War

UoS, Fonds K. M2, 1914-18.

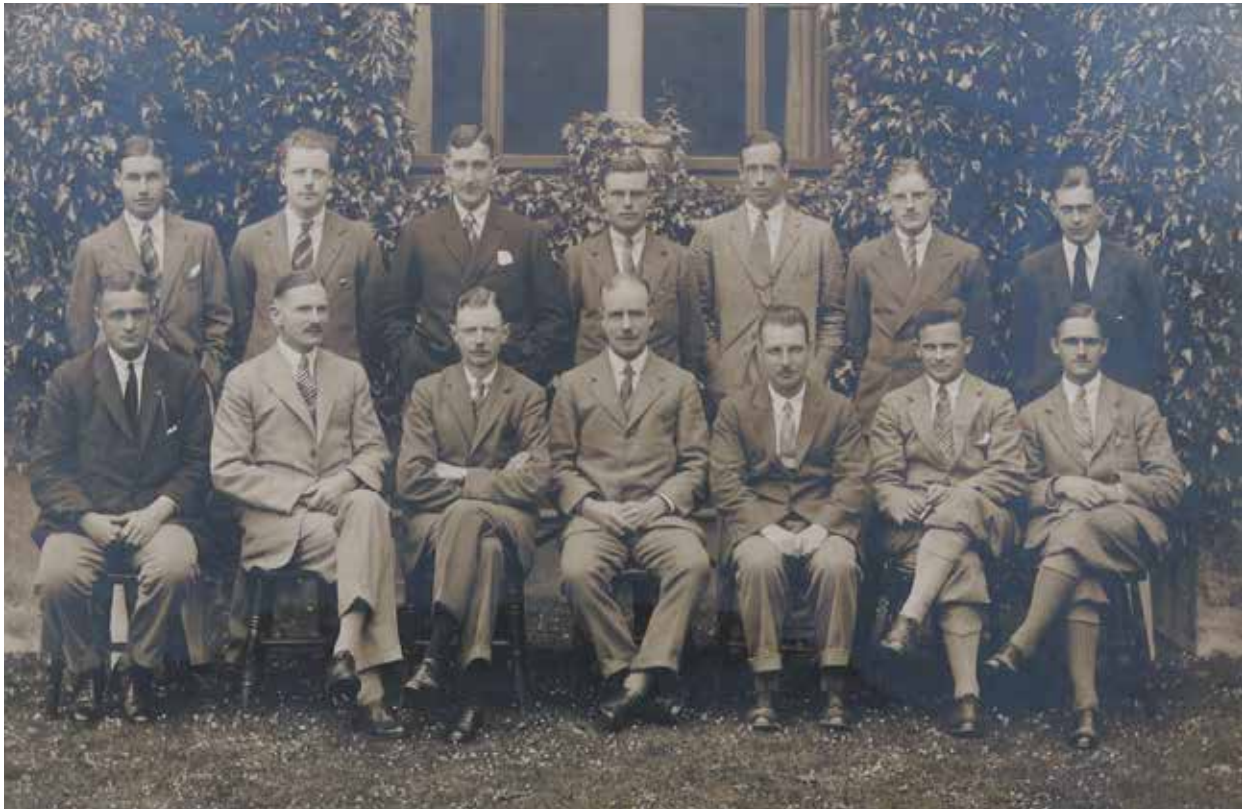
These are the only photos of Baker taken whilst he was serving in the army. Baker is standing on the far left in both of the group shots which appear to have been taken on the same day. The photos are also unusual as they are the only ones in which he is clean-shaven, yet to grow his signature moustache.



60



61



62

Fig. 60, 61, 62

Man About Town

UoS, Fonds K. M3, 1926-29.

Many of the photographs of Baker are portraits, and so all the images which show him at work or with other people act as a reminder of the other stories and experience which could inform our understanding of him. Clockwise from top left, these show Baker inspecting a woodland, presenting his Serval cat to members of the Boy Scout Brigade, and with his fellow alumni of the Cambridge School of Forestry in 1926.



Fig. 63, 64, 65, 66

Research in Saskatchewan

Camilla Allen, 2016.

The experience of visiting Saskatchewan brought home to me the necessity to do justice to the landscape and environment. Being in such a new town, in a land where the marks of settlement were still raw, is something that left a profound mark upon Baker and something that deserves further enquiry so as to situate him more firmly within the pantheon of Saskatoon's notable residents.

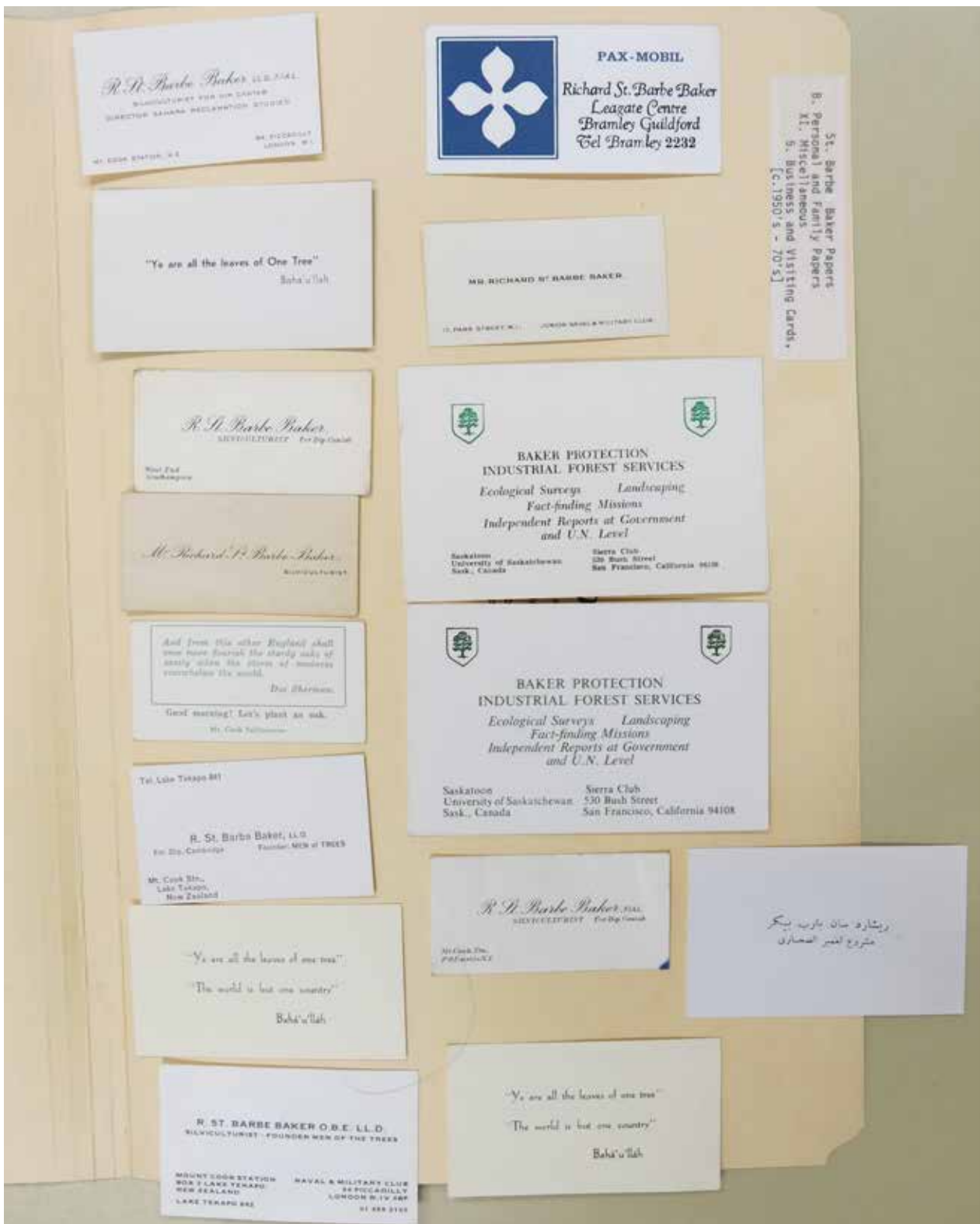


Fig. 67

Baker's Business Cards

UoS, Fonds B, XI, 5.

A selection of Baker's business cards, some of which have been turned over to show the quotations or messages that were printed on the back. Ever the networker, these demonstrate the administrative help he was able to rely upon, with numerous organisations happy to take his post.



Fig. 68, 69, 70, 71

The Man of the Trees at work

UoS, Fonds K, M/3.

Frustratingly, many of the photos in the archive are not annotated, although some do have the photographic studio's stamp on them. Of these images, fig. 67 appears to be by Howard Coster, although there is no date and no indication of who the other two men are although it might be linked to the contribution made to the discussion of the Devonshire Declaration in 1923. Fig. 68 was taken by the London News Agency and appears to show Baker at one of the Men of the Trees photographic exhibitions in which he invited people to submit 'portraits of trees'. Fig. 66 is almost certainly the same event, whilst fig. 69 shows Baker at an event publicising the Men of the Trees.



Fig. 72

The first Men of the Trees Summer School, 1938

UoS, Fonds K, M/3.

The crowd that Baker attracted to the first Men of the Trees Summer School was rather at odds with the practical sounding organisation. From the beginning, the majority of members were women, and it would be rewarding to see an annotated version of the photo to understand who was in attendance.



73



75



74

Fig. 73, 74, 75

An African cat in London, 1923

UoS, Fonds K, M/3

On one of his return trips from Africa Baker brought an African Serval Cat back with him from Kenya. It appears that at first he cut a rather eccentric or dashing figure, taking the cat named Ching around London on a lead. The *Dundee Evening Telegraph* reported on a case at Westminster County Court in which a horse trainer was bitten by the cat, resulting in an 'expensive bite' as Baker was asked to pay £35 in damages and £35 in costs. Following this, it appears that Baker decided that the cat would be better accommodated in London Zoo.

Dundee Evening Telegraph, 12 November 1923, p.6.



Fig. 76

Baker's collection of Moulin Studio photos of the Coast Redwoods

Camilla Allen, 2016. UoS, Fonds O.

There are themes evident in Baker's collection of lantern slides, some of which he had taken himself and some of which he had purchased from places like the Moulin Studios in San Francisco who took a number of evocative photographs of the coast Redwoods in California which Baker would have used in his lectures.



Fig. 77

Baker's lantern slides of tree photos and poems

Camilla Allen, 2016. UoS, Fonds O.

Baker's lantern slides offer a means of reconstructing his lectures, with this selection of slides demonstrating the way in which he deployed poetry, images and information.



78



80



79

Fig. 78, 79, 80

Baker's hand-coloured lantern slides taken in Kenya and Nigeria

Camilla Allen, 2016. UoS, Fonds O.

Baker's literary legacy is a predominantly monochrome affair, and so this small collection of hand-coloured slides from his time in Kenya and Nigeria are unique artifacts. The images show some of the events of Baker's time in Africa - his car, buttress roots, a dramatic landscape - as well as a photograph of one of the bracelets which members of the Watu wa Miti were given and one of the tree nurseries that Baker set up.



81



83



82

Fig. 81, 82, 83

Baker's lantern slides

Camilla Allen, 2016. UoS, Fonds O.

Fig. 77 is a dramatic image of a stand of Bamboo, a key plant species in Baker's territory in Kenya., 78. appears to show Boy Scouts planting pine trees, and 79 is titled 'sunset from the village' possibly taken in the Holy Land.



84



85

Fig. 84, 85 (overleaf 86, 87)

Baker's lantern slides

Camilla Allen, 2016. UoS, Fonds O.

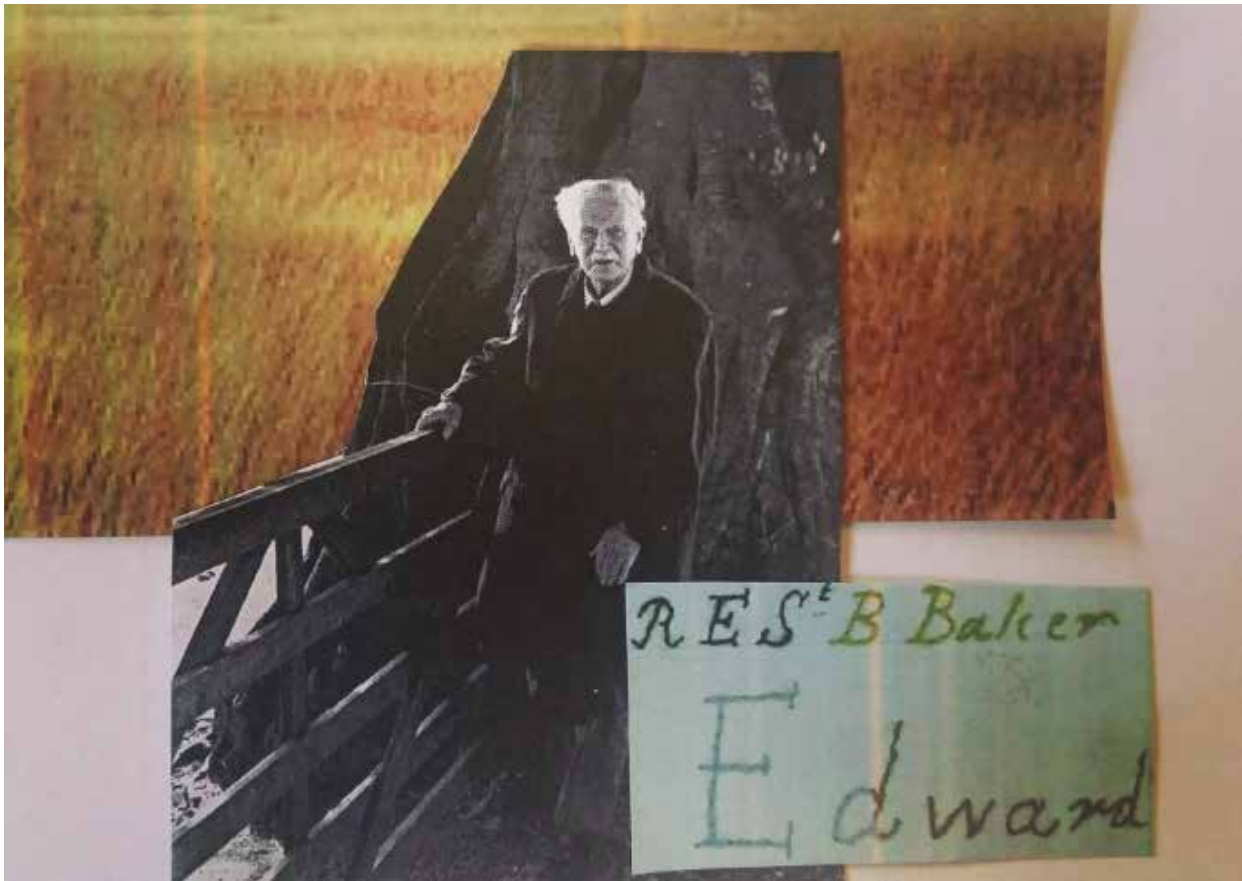
Tree aesthetics define Baker's collection of slides and by drawing his audience in with beautiful and charming photographs of trees. This selection of unmarked and damaged slides are still reflective of the beautiful textures and images found in the archive in Saskatoon.



86



87



88



90



89

Fig. 88, 89, 90

A visual methodology

Camilla Allen, 2018.

An internal review in the Department of Landscape Architecture prompted me to think more deeply about my methodology. Having first studied illustration, and used collage as a tool whilst doing my MA, I wanted to return to that form to explore how I had come to reconstruct Baker's biography from the source material I had engaged with whilst writing my thesis. Although the majority of the sources were texts, there were key images which had shaped my understanding of Baker's life and the way in which events and people informed the direction that he took in the first thirty years of his life.



Fig. 91

A portrait of Baker from the Christopher Chapman Collection, c.1970

UoS, Christopher Chapman fonds, MG 513.

Alongside the R. St. Barbe Baker Papers at the University of Saskatchewan's Special Collection and Archives there are other important fonds, one of which relates to the Richard St. Barbe Baker Foundation who held a conference after his death in Canada and which is not accessible from the UK. Another significant cache which does not obviously pertain to Baker is a collection of photos, correspondence, film stills and more, collected by the Canadian film maker Christopher Chapman.



92



93



95



94

Fig. 92, 93, 94, 95

The Man of the Trees in the Christopher Chapman Collection

UoS, Fonds, MG 513.

Christopher Chapman (1927-2015) was a Canadian film maker whose most well-known work was *A Place to Stand* (1967) pioneered split-screen technology which allowed two or more moving images to be shown simultaneously which was subsequently used in *The Thomas Crown Affair*. Chapman developed a film on Baker which necessitated a great deal of research, the archive of which makes up the majority of the Christopher Chapman Collection and which holds material from 1930 to 2007, with the majority from the period 1977-1983.

One key body of material are a number of photos that Baker supplied to give a sense of the projects and activities he had been involved with over the decades. The unfinished film represents a unique opportunity to understand the man that Baker became. Above are photographs from the collection: Baker with a group of children, being awarded a RHS medal for lifelong service, embarking on a ride to commemorate William Cobbett, and being presented with the 1966 M.R.L Freshel Prize for the book most likely to advance the cause of humanitarianism.

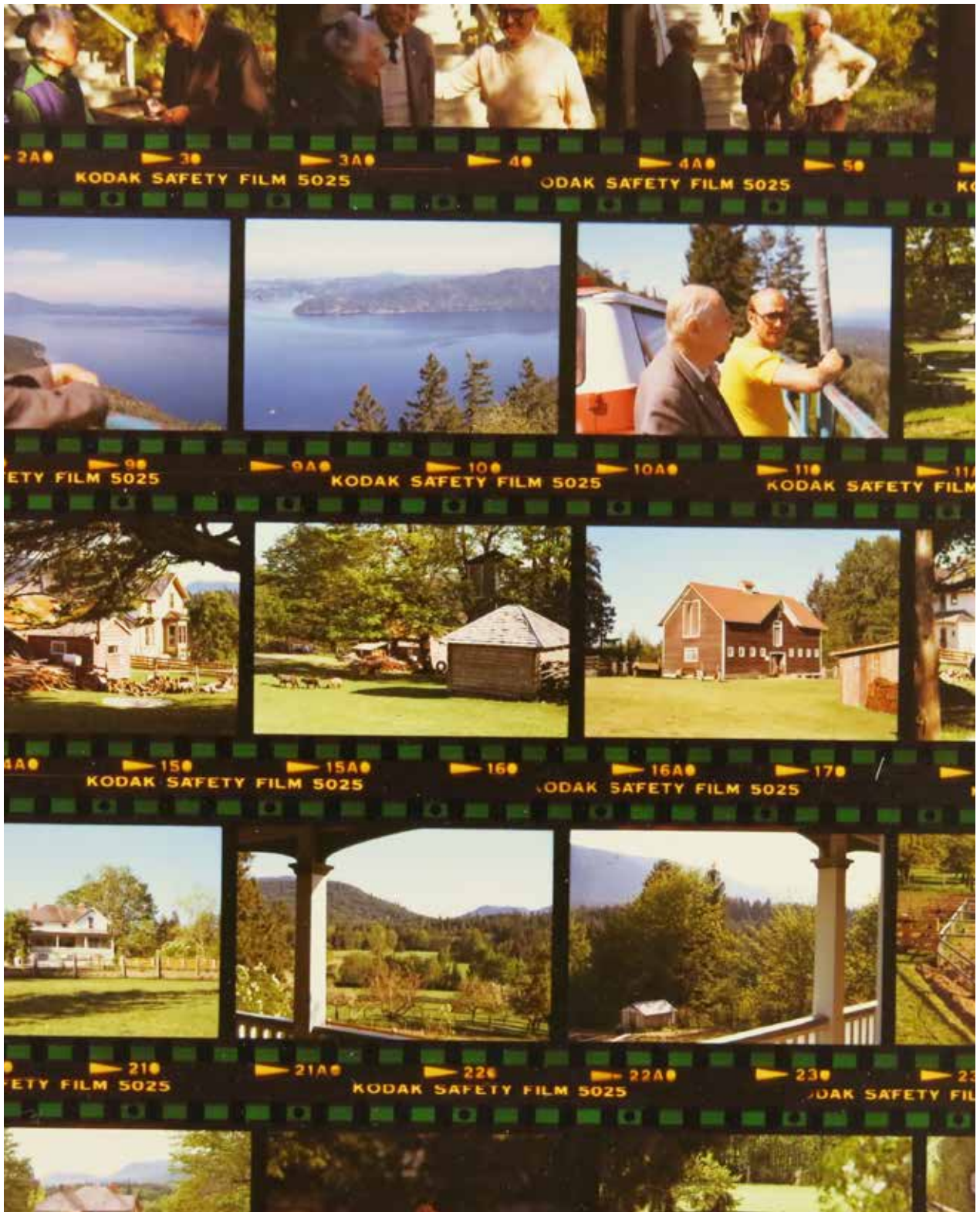


Fig. 96

A contact sheet from Chapman's unfinished film about Baker, c.1980

UoS, Fonds, MG 513.

In 1977 Chapman wrote to Baker saying that he had been trying to reach him, as he was seeking funding for the film which they had discussed on a number of occasions. Chapman asked what other films had been made about Baker, and what the scope might be to film in New Zealand, Africa and other international locations.



Fig. 97

A second contact sheet from Chapman's unfinished film about Baker, c.1980

UoS, Fonds, MG 513.

The funding never materialised, and the film reels remain undeveloped in the archive after they were placed there by Chapman's widow in 2015, tantalising with the possibility that it will not just be through books that a new audience might be found for Baker's story.



Fig. 98

A late portrait of Richard St. Barbe Baker c.1980

UoS, Fonds, MG 513.

My Life, My Trees, Baker's last autobiography, ends with Baker's expressing the hope for a world in which everyone lives in harmony with nature and closes with this quote from St. Francis of Assisi which is both in praise of God, but also recognises the sanctity of the earth and the plenty she brings forth. The Man of the Trees' artful craft of the scripture he came to know as a boy, demonstrating his lifelong ability to spread his gospel of trees through his distinct pantheistic credo:

'Praise be, my Lord, for our Sister, Mother Earth, which does sustain and keep us and bringeth forth divers fruits and flowers of many colours and grass.'

Richard St. Barbe Baker, *My Life, My Trees*, (London: Lutterworth, 1970), p.174.

1. Introduction

I am not a professional writer but a planter of trees. An autobiography is perhaps like a coffin – the last thing one needs.

In this book, I have tried to record some of the numerous experiments of my life; indeed I am vividly aware that life is one continuous experiment. I would like to feel that what I have been permitted to achieve in conservation and as an Earth Healer through a life-long planting of trees may encourage many others to dedicate their lives to the service of the earth.

I acknowledge with gratitude my teachers and co-workers in the field of silviculture and land reclamation. Any success for which I have been given credit has been the result of teamwork. As I look back on the past the more I realize my personal limitations.¹

Richard St. Barbe Baker introduced his third autobiography with the caveat that the book was not the work of a professional author, but rather a chronicle of decades of experimentation in the field of silviculture and land reclamation. However, if writing an autobiography was akin to putting himself in a coffin, he had built that casket himself on at least two occasions prior to the publication of *My Life, My Trees*. Baker was a consummate self-publicist who used his life's story with considerable agency to further his wish that others would join him in service to the earth. This study takes the creation of Baker's origin myth as its focus, demonstrating the way in which he honed the story of the first thirty years of his life to trace the inevitability of his evolution into the Man of the Trees.

Baker was ninety-two years old when the New Zealand filmmaker, Leon Narbey, released a documentary about him entitled *The Man of the Trees*.² The opening shot has immediacy and impact. Baker looks into the camera and tells his audience that if he had the chance to have his life over again, he would not change a thing. The life would start in his father's forest tree nursery, in the garden of his childhood home. Moreover, it would take him on the same path through life, a path that gave him the authority to speak out about the loss of the world's tree cover and the terrible risks posed to humanity by deforestation and desertification. Baker's voice has the quiver of old age but is still measured and strong. The doubt and regret that might

¹ Richard St. Barbe Baker, *My Life, My Trees* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1970), p.xi.

² *The Man of the Trees*, dir. by Leon Narbey (Narbey Productions, 1981).

colour some people's reflections is absent. He was a man who tied the whole story of his life to the act of planting and nurturing trees and was convinced that that act was essential to the continuation of life on this planet.

This thesis seeks to explore Baker's origin story to understand the evolution of the persona he created: the Man of the Trees. He was a man whose upbringing, activities and interests made him - amongst other things - an author, lumberjack, soldier, photographer, lecturer, broadcaster, explorer, social worker, missionary, humanitarian, ethnographer, inventor and diplomat. With such a broad portfolio, why did trees and forestry give his life such form and purpose? What does this unusual man's life story tell us about the emergence of forestry as a discipline and, furthermore, through placing Baker's story more firmly within historical events including imperial and colonial attitudes towards conservation, can we humanize events in the canon of environmental history?

Baker was a prodigious writer, and despite some repetition across texts, was reputed to have written over thirty books on various topics, with the majority being about trees. Following his death in 1982, two collections of his writings were produced to celebrate his contribution to conservation, and in 2018 the first biography of Baker was published: *Man of the Trees Richard St. Barbe Baker, The First Global Environmentalist* by Paul Hanley. However, in contrast to the texts produced by those close to Baker, the research that informs this work presents the opportunity to look beyond his account. This approach allows the inclusion of material that contrasts against Baker's established public persona, as well as highlighting the isolation of his position outside the professional and academic field of forestry. This context gives weight to the concept at the heart of this thesis: that to understand Baker, one must understand the conscious development of his persona as the Man of the Trees and the way in which he used his life story as a means of encouraging others to see the world as he did.

Within this work, new visual, archival, and literary material was combined with Baker's established narrative to illuminate the world within which Baker operated, and that was key to the communication of his message. This task is made more urgent because Baker did not leave a legacy of schemes, maps, or plans of his forestry activities. Instead, the richest conceptual legacy is found in his writing - much of which is autobiographical. It was through these texts that Baker demonstrated the ways in which he tried to change the world, and to lead by example. This literary legacy is complex, contradictory, and inconsistent, with treasure troves relating to certain periods and empty caches in relation to other persons and events. Moreover, if examined alongside archival material, it creates a picture quite different to the one that Baker's published

works alone conjure. Nonetheless, his biography taken at a glance - and based upon his biographical account and adaptations of it by others - is notable for its internationalism, diversity, and dynamism.

A LIFE IN BRIEF

Richard Edward St. Barbe Baker was born on the 9th October 1889 in a village called West End on the outskirts of Southampton. His father, John Richard St. Barbe Baker, was a nurseryman, growing forest and ornamental trees for estates and gardens, and Richard had a role in tending them. However, as well as the tree nursery, his father also built a mission hall on his land and the family helped officiate during the services held next to their home. Central to Baker's account of his childhood was a spiritual rebirth in the woods which instilled in him a life-long gratitude for nature, and which he described in many of his autobiographical accounts. Practical faith and practical work were intertwined in their family life. His family were Evangelists and part of the Evangelical revival in Britain. He had four younger siblings: two brothers and two sisters. The Baker home welcomed the great and the good, including the founder of the Salvation Army, General William Booth and Baker inherited a love of music from his mother, Charlotte (née Purrott), as well as a love of horses.

Baker was educated at Dean Close School in Cheltenham, before emigrating from England to Canada in his late teens. Baker grew up with stories of his family members who had gone to Canada, and he followed their example, experiencing the frontier as a student of Divinity at Emanuel College in Saskatoon. In Canada he broke horses, farmed, planted shelterbelts, and worked as a lumberjack. He returned to England in 1913 with the intention of studying Theology at Ridley Hall in Cambridge and joining the Anglican church, as generations of his family had done before him. Baker also spent time volunteering with a Christian community in the East End of London, as well as leading early Boy Scout expeditions to Epping Forest. However, the First World War curtailed his studies, and Baker volunteered immediately after the conflict was declared. After serving in the army, Baker was invalided out having sustained serious injuries on two occasions. Whilst recuperating, he became involved in efforts to create the Ministry of Health and the Forestry Commission, before returning to Cambridge.

By then in his late twenties, Baker switched his studies from Theology to Forestry; a subject that he felt was a more practical way of addressing ‘a sense of mission to the earth itself.’³ Alongside his studies, Baker recruited for the newly formed Forestry Commission, set up a beekeepers’ association at the university, and ‘invented’ the modern caravan as a form of social enterprise for disabled ex-servicemen. This sense of moral and spiritual duty was carried over to his first appointment as Assistant Conservator of Forests in Kenya. His role was to identify wood and timber that could be traded within the Empire, whilst also ensuring that such cropping could be sustained. Baker was struck by the need to find a practical means of replanting trees in a country that was quickly becoming denuded, due to the colonial extraction of timber, overgrazing and the traditions of slash and burn agriculture. He envisioned an alternative to the large-scale plantations favoured by the colonists and proposed an alternative tree-and-crop scheme that would ensure that the forest would regenerate when the soil was exhausted, now known as agroforestry.

Baker saw an opportunity in the Kikuyu tradition of dance and combined it with the practical philosophy of the Boy Scout movement, to initiate an event that he called the ‘Dance of the Trees’. Within the Kikuyu tribe, there were dances and celebrations around sowing and harvest, but none for tree planting, and Baker used the occasion, attended by three thousand Morans - the tribe’s young male warriors - to nominate and initiate some of them into the Watu Wa Miti, the Men of the Trees. The rules for membership were simple: to do one good deed a day, to plant ten trees each year, and to take care of trees everywhere.⁴ This event went on to be his signature tune for decades to come. It is recounted in most of his publications, representing the first implementation of his social and ecological vision that made him an early exponent of what is now known as social forestry.

Baker’s career within the colonial forestry service lasted until the late 1920s, by which time he had spent time in Kenya and Nigeria. His friendship with the indigenous Kenyans did not make him popular with the colonists, and an incident in which Baker intercepted a blow intended for one of his subordinates may well have impeded his ascent within the Colonial Office.⁵ Baker

³ Richard St. Barbe Baker, *Dance of the Trees: The Adventures of a Forester* (London: Oldbourne Press, 1956), p.31.

⁴ Baker, 1956, p.49.

⁵ ‘Baker, Richard Edward St. Barbe (1889–1982)’, in *The Baha’i Encyclopedia Project* (2012) <http://www.bahai-encyclopedia-project.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=282:baker-richard-edward-st-barbe&catid=37:biography> [accessed 2nd Jan 2020].

also developed systems for the sustainable extraction of mahogany in Nigeria, ensuring that regrowth kept pace with extraction in the territories that he oversaw. In 1924, Baker started to publicise his exploits in Kenya and formed the first English chapter of the Men of the Trees. 1924 was also the year that Baker was introduced to the Bahá'í faith at the First Congress of Living Religions, where he was presenting a paper on Kikuyu beliefs. Meeting Claudia Stuart Coles, described in her obituary as one of the 'most loyal and enthusiastic adherents' of the faith, was a significant turning point for Baker as he embraced the religion and dedicated the rest of his life to sharing its teachings.⁶ Coles was also one of the early Council members of the Men of the Trees, along with Sir Francis Younghusband and General Allenby.

In 1926, the Men of the Trees' Honorary Secretary, Ursula Grant Duff, presented the story of Dance of the Trees at the first World Forestry Congress in Rome, which Baker also claimed to have helped organise. Duff described the Men of the Trees as 'the forest scouts of Africa – a band of young warriors now many thousands strong, who, finding that their forests were rapidly disappearing, pledged themselves to protect their woodlands and plant trees.'⁷ The profile of the society was in keeping with a growing political movement in Europe, with Duff declaring that Baker had been inspired by the reaction of the Italian Ambassador in East Africa, who had exclaimed 'This is the Fascisti of Africa!' Moreover, like the Fascisti, the Kikuyu warriors had 'banded themselves together in the spirit of self-sacrifice, to save their country from destruction.'⁸

In 1929 Baker was invited to Palestine by General Allenby and asked to promote afforestation. Baker was able to bring together the leaders of the religious leaders in Jerusalem to agree on a tree-planting programme, and Shoghi Effendi – the head of the Bahá'í faith - became the first life member of the Men of the Trees. Baker's visit resulted in a resurrection of a traditional Jewish celebration, the 'Feast of the Trees.' Back in Britain General Allenby and Lord Clinton, the head of the Forestry Commission, lauded Baker's achievements in one of the early annual meetings of the Men of the Trees in London that year. They declared that the world faced a timber famine,

⁶ 'In Memorandum' *THE BAHÁ'Í WORLD: A Biennial International Record*, Vol IV, 87 and 88 of the Baha'i Era, April 1930-1932 A.D. p.264, <http://bahai-library.com/memoriaw_bw_4> [accessed 9 December 2019].

⁷ Ursula Grant Duff, 'The Men of the Trees', *Proceedings* (Rome: World Forestry Congress, 1926), p.309.

⁸ Grant Duff, p.309.

and that there was need of ‘an enlightened public opinion in regard to forestry’, of which the Men of the Trees were vocal advocates.⁹

Baker went on to form chapters of the Men of the Trees around the English-speaking world as he embarked on an international career as an author, broadcaster, and lecturer. The year 1930 was a turning point for him as he embarked on a round-the-world tour to visit forests and foresters he had encountered over the preceding decade. Arriving in New York with little by way of funds, Baker was able to secure a publishing deal for a book based on his exploits in Africa. The American broadcaster Lowell Thomas promoted the book which kick-started Baker’s career as lecturer in the States. His time in America and the contacts that he had made at the Forestry Congress in Rome in 1926 connected him with the upper echelons of American conservation. Through these connections, Baker was able to claim that the forestry plan that he developed whilst in the States was presented to F.D. Roosevelt whilst he was Governor of New York, and which contributed to the creation of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC).

Baker became involved with the Save the Redwoods League, a campaign that he was to join with vigour and record in his book *The Redwoods* (1943). Of great significance was one particular stand of Redwood trees that Baker called the Grove of Understanding, which he dreamt of turning into a Mecca for tree-lovers and which brought greater urgency to his advocacy to protect them. Baker became involved with tree and forestry related issues around the world from the 1930s onwards: he claimed to have turned around New Zealand’s forestry policy in 1930; in the 1950s in India he helped the Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru set up a tree-planting programme; he was an early voice to bring attention to deforestation in the Amazon Basin in the 60s and 70s; and he championed the Chipko tree defenders in Northern India in the last decade of his life.

Primary source material relating to the early days of the Men of the Trees is scant, and the single page of Grant Duff’s testimonial is one of the few contemporary sources that relate to the society. It was published four years before Baker’s first books, *The Brotherhood of the Trees* (1930), and *Men of the Trees: in the Mahogany Forests of Kenya and Nigeria* (1931), and a decade before the first of the society’s journals, *Trees* (first published in 1936). From the beginning, the Men of the Trees was an organisation with an origin story; a self-mythologizing attitude towards their beginnings which justified their organisation’s aims and ambitions. They sought ‘to further the

⁹ ‘The Men of the Trees: Lord Allenby and threatened timber famine’, *Glasgow Herald*, 18 June 1929, p.3.

cause of silviculture everywhere by enlisting the active interest of everybody, and especially the rising generation in their own native woodlands and in the planting and care of trees.¹⁰

Furthermore, the Men of the Trees claimed that ‘the love and care of trees has a beneficial effect, not merely upon the physical health of human beings, but also upon their mental and moral outlook.’¹¹

Over the course of his career, Baker wrote over twenty books recounting his exploits and drawing upon his knowledge. He claimed to have delivered the first children’s broadcast on BBC radio, and from 1938 organised annual Men of the Trees summer conferences, the first of which included presentations by Rolf Gardiner and Sir Albert Howard, doyens of the early organic movement in Britain. The Men of the Trees sought from the early days to recruit young people into the movement, with a special sub-section called ‘twigs’, and Baker was to champion the inclusion of children and young people in conservation work throughout his life. As well as his work with the Men of the Trees, Baker hosted World Forestry Charter Gatherings in London which welcomed members of the Diplomatic Corps between 1945 and 1956 and which produced the source material for his book, *Green Glory: The story of the forests of the world* (1948).

Baker encapsulated his ecological credo in one document in 1950: The New Earth Charter. The society’s plea for knowledge, peace, and reconciliation preceded many of the twentieth century’s environmental proclamations and publications and followed the 1945 Charter of the United Nations. The momentum behind the Charter and the ecological and ethical imperatives that it proclaimed set in motion the journey that Baker was to make across the Sahara in 1952 which would define his attitude towards global peace. Baker believed that resource scarcity was only going to increase conflict, and instead of the militarization of the Cold War, the world should come together in the reclamation of wastelands. He believed that planting trees and making sure there was an abundance of food and water for everyone was the best means of preventing war. The Green Front was a vision for world peace brought about through the restoration of soils, water and tree cover and described in his 1954 book *Sahara Challenge*. Following a twenty-five-thousand kilometre journey around the Sahara in 1964, Baker wrote a second book on the

¹⁰ Grant Duff, p.309.

¹¹ Grant Duff, p.309.

subject, *Sahara Conquest* (1966), which was given the Freshel Award by the Millennium Guild of New York as the book most likely to advance the cause of humanitarianism.

A profile published in *The Observer* upon Baker's departure on his second expedition to the Sahara demonstrates the unique energy he brought to the task. The article (which appears to have been written by Baker himself) opens with one of his most famous aphorisms 'If a man loses on third of his skin, he dies. If a tree loses one third of its bark, it dies. If the world loses one third of its trees, it will die.', and then describes the man behind the words:

With his soft voice and faraway look in his eyes, one might mistake him at first for, perhaps, a dreamy scoutmaster. But his gentle exterior hides a restless vitality, and the single-mindedness – though not the violence – of a fanatic. At sixty-five he runs up and down stairs like a boy.

Last Friday, Mr. Baker set off, via Paris, for Tangier, where the first seeds of his latest enterprise, the Sahara Reclamation Company Ltd., are to germinate. The company's aims are "to arrest the process of soil erosion and degradation in the desert and unfertile areas of the Sahara and elsewhere and check the further advance of such deserts and unfertile areas upon food producing lands..." It may legitimately be asked how one man, with a "company" which exists, as yet, more or less in name only, can hope to realise plans of this scale. To this question, the facts of Mr. Baker's life provide the best answers.¹²

For the rest of his life Baker championed this global fight against desertification that he conceptualised as the Green Front and the Sahara Reclamation Programme. He envisioned the Front as a band of trees planted across Sub-Saharan Africa to hold back the sand, but also an effort that could be applied elsewhere. Part of his plan was to establish a university in North Africa to train people in desert reclamation, and Baker undertook a great deal of advocacy to try to get the institution established in Morocco. Although his vision of desert reclamation did not take form during his lifetime, the Green Front is currently being implemented as the Great Green Wall of the Sahara and the Sahel Initiative, and although Baker is rarely credited in its development, there is a clear conceptual link which would benefit from research in the future.

Baker was married twice, first to Doreen Young in 1946, with whom he had two children. The marriage was dissolved in 1953 and his second marriage was to Catriona Burnett of Mount Cook

¹² Richard St. Barbe Baker, 'Profile – Man of the Trees', *The Observer*, 30 Jan 1955, p.3.

Station in New Zealand. In the 1960s, Baker stepped back from his role at the head of the Men of the Trees and took up permanent residence, although he continued to make annual trips around the world, meeting friends, delivering lectures, and promoting his cause. In 1971, he was made an Honorary Doctor of Law by the University of Saskatchewan, and in 1978 was appointed O.B.E. by H.M. Queen Elizabeth. Charles, Prince of Wales, became the Patron of the Men of the Trees in 1978, declaring that the Society's aims were necessary in all matters silvicultural: 'From this enviable standpoint they may seek to convince a world bent on worrying profits from land to focus attention on the plight of trees internationally.'¹³ Baker was also a life-long vegetarian and was made the first Member of Honour of the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) in 1969.

Baker died in 1982, whilst making a round-the-world journey to celebrate the sixtieth anniversary of the formation of the Men of the Trees. He passed away in Saskatoon, where he is buried, consolidating his life-long connection with Canada. In the obituary written by the Men of the Trees, he was declared 'a legend in his own time and undoubtedly the greatest authority on trees and the reclamation of desert and waste land. He truly believed that we must leave the world better for our having been in it.'¹⁴ There were elements of mythologizing, with Baker credited with planting (or planting and saving) billions of trees during his lifetime, with one acolyte trumpeting the achievement and declaring him 'one green old man.'¹⁵ The Men of the Trees changed its name in Britain in 1992 to the International Tree Foundation (ITF), although there are some original groups still in existence who carry the original name. The society's journal – *Trees* - is still being produced, making it one of the oldest continuous environmental publications in the world.

All of Baker's books are out of print but readily available on the second-hand market. The documentary that was made in New Zealand the year before his death is freely available on YouTube, and the ITF has a link to it on the page of their website describing the history of the organisation. Alongside images of Baker's work in Kenya in the 1920s, it also contains excerpts of his writing, such as the following from the first issue of *Trees*. The passage states the intention

¹³ 'A Message from HRH Prince of Wales', *TREES: Sixty years towards the future* (Crawley, Sussex: The Men of the Trees, 1982), p.7.

¹⁴ 'Dr Richard St. Barbe Baker, O.B.E., LL.D., F.I.A.L. 1889-1982', *TREES: Sixty years towards the future* (Crawley, Sussex: The Men of the Trees, 1982), p.5.

¹⁵ Michael Brett-Crowther, 'Planting for the Future: forestry for human needs' (book review) *International Journal of Environmental Studies* 1979, Vol. 14, pp.72-8 (1979) 14:1, 72-84.

of the society to keep a balance between the sentimental, material and economic relationship humanity has with trees, and that above all that ‘the society has endeavoured to emphasise the importance of planting for those who will come after us.’¹⁶ Texts such as this are integral to the perpetuation of Baker’s image as the Man of the Trees, and consistent with the way in which those who continued his work sought to sustain the inspiration that he gave to people through edited collections of his writings which removed the autobiographical account, and creating repositories of sage prophecy, bon mots, prayers and poems.

The two books, *Richard St. Barbe Baker, 1889-1982: A keepsake book for all ages and generations* (1989) and *Man of the Trees: Selected writings of Richard St. Barbe Baker* (1989) were published respectively in Australia and California, two countries with distinct Men of the Trees followings. The texts demonstrate the esteem in which he was held in parts of the British Commonwealth, and the intention the editors and publishers had in keeping his contribution to the philosophy and history of conservation alive. The Australian collection is the more succinct of the two, with excerpts of Baker’s letters, media appearances, prayers, and poems. The selected writings are made up of longer texts taken from Baker’s published works, and are divided into sections like Woodland Rebirth, Trees and Life, Ancient Groves and Desert Challenge.

BAKER’S PLACE IN HISTORY

Decades before the earth was photographed from space and understood as a unitary ecological reality, St. Barbe was practicing forestry from this global and holistic perspective. His view of the planet as a living organism anticipated the Gaia theory, which has provided such a fruitful base for scientific investigation in recent years. Very early in his career, St. Barbe began to see the complex ecological interactions within the forest as a mirror of the organization of all life.¹⁷

Baker’s list of achievements and attributes made him a generalist, with trees as his specialist subject, who created and perpetuated his image as ‘the Man of the Trees’ as a single-minded activist for trees. A sketch portrait in *The Guardian* goes some way to illustrate the enduring nature of the organisation and persona that he created and the more complex and human story

¹⁶ Richard St. Barbe Baker, ‘Early History from Kenya to Men of the Trees’, *International Tree Foundation* <<https://internationaltreefoundation.org/history/>> [accessed 02 Jan 2020]

¹⁷ ‘St. Barbe, His Ideas’, *Man of the Trees: Selected Writing of Richard St. Barbe Baker*, ed. by Karen Gridley (Willits, California: Ecology Action, 1989), p.14.

behind it. After coming across the society at a country show, John Vallins, writer of the 'Country Diary', was struck by the diversity and impact of the Men of the Trees' achievements: innovative social forestry in Kenya, preservation of the Redwoods in California and the greening of the Sahara, and all 'because an ex-soldier with a degree in Divinity cared about trees'.¹⁸ This observation hits at the heart of Baker's myth making, not least because Baker never gained a degree in divinity, just a diploma in forestry. When Baker died, his obituary in the *Daily Telegraph* communicated the persona that he had created as a man who had 'spent his life in a single-minded campaign which stressed the essential importance of the part trees play in people's well-being.' One of his most memorable assertions was that of 'the absolute necessity to keep a minimum of one-third of the world's land mass covered with trees', and who had warned that in 1982, the world was within one percent of going beyond that limit.¹⁹ This message was key to the devotion to silviculture and conservation that marked his life after graduating from Cambridge in 1920.

Baker features in two histories of the organic movement, *The Origins of the Organic Movement* (2001) and *The Development of the Organic Network* (2011) by Philip Conford. In that context, Baker is featured as one of the British colonial servants whose experiences in Africa went on to shape the intellectual development of the organic movement through the influence he had upon Sir Albert Howard.²⁰ The second volume examines his contribution to the practical establishment of the organic movement through the formation of the Soil Association. Conford noted that the 'institutions of Empire' enabled the forerunners of the organic movement to innovate and that, despite its Imperial context, Baker's work anticipated that of Wangari Maathai and the Green Belt Movement.²¹ Baker comes across as an enthusiastic, visionary and heroic figure in Conford's account, innovating on the edge of Empire with the intention of creating a better world for all through the study of trees and forests.

In this context, Baker's life was 'one of astonishing vigour and expertise, linking the pre-1914 world of the Canadian prairies with the establishment of the Findhorn Community.' Moreover, Baker demonstrated the 'close relationship between the organic movement and religious faith.'²²

¹⁸ John Vallins, 'A Country Diary: Cider House', *Guardian*, 31 October 2000, p. 19.

¹⁹ 'Richard St. Barbe Baker', *Daily Telegraph*, 11 June 1982.

²⁰ Philip Conford, *The Origins of the Organic Movement* (Edinburgh: Floris, 2001).

²¹ Conford, (2001), p.63.

²² Conford, (2001), p.60.

However, research into the literature that surrounds the history of ecological thought, the history of colonial forestry and of forestry in more general terms for any mention of Baker and the Men of the Trees draws a blank. Works such as Anna Bramwell's *Ecology in the 20th Century: A History* (1989), *Empire forestry and the origins of environmentalism* by Greg Barton (2007) and Ravi Rajan's *Modernizing Nature: forestry and imperial eco-development 1800-1950* (2006) make no mention of Baker or his silvan society. This prompts the question: if Baker is not in any of this literature, should he be? Or, might his absence indicate that his is part of a different tradition, sat outside of academic and professional institutions - connected and with influence - but not central to their histories?

Nevertheless, Baker does make occasional appearances in the history of British and Colonial forestry. In Pauline von Hellerman's monograph on forest governance in Southern Nigeria, Baker is present as one of the British colonial foresters whose activities affected the implementation of policy in relation to the development of scientific forestry in West Africa. Baker's claim of having 'preached passionately to the Oba about the dangers of desertification' is repeated by Hellerman, with the plea making a 'deep impression.'²³ Hellerman disputes Baker's claim that he was responsible for securing funding for a research station, which is dismissed as being 'unlikely' despite the fact that one was established in the Sapoba Reserve in 1926 during Baker's tenure.²⁴

What is most pertinent is that the points of reference that Hellerman has for Baker are his autobiographies, which are problematic as primary sources. Her scepticism of Baker's elevated role is clear in her description of him as a self-publicist, but she also concedes that his enthusiasm for his work comes across powerfully in his memoirs of his time in Nigeria.²⁵ Baker also appears briefly in Judith Tsouvalis' book on the history of the Forestry Commission, *A Critical Geography of Britain's State Forests* (2000), which does not include him as a significant player, but does quote from Baker's 1944 book, *I Planted Trees*. The reference indicates Baker's disapproval of the outdated German trend of creating exclusively coniferous plantations, although it is unclear from Tsouvalis' book what kind of text she is referring to. Such use suggests that Baker's experiences could contribute to an understanding of the early days of the

²³ Pauline von Hellerman, *Things Fall Apart? The Political Ecology of Forest Governance in Nigeria* (Oxford: Berghahn, 2013), p.54.

²⁴ Hellerman, p.97.

²⁵ Hellerman, p.97.

Forestry Commission but are not explored in any further depth. Baker's inclusion also demonstrates the difficulty presented by using Baker's writings as an authoritative source about forestry. Taken at face value he is either a latter-day saint or a silvan man of action, but has his image ever been interpreted differently?

SHADOWS IN THE FOREST

Baker's image of an irreproachable forester-turned earth healer is the greatest vulnerability of his persona, and the cause of polarising views of the context of Baker's work and the contribution that he made to environmental thought. 'Conservationist, vegetarian, supporter of the Bahá'í faith – at first glance, Richard St. Barbe Baker appears to have been some sort of secular saint.'²⁶ So begins Angus McLaren's profile of Baker, a laudable summary that is key to the appeal that Baker's work had for members of the Eugenics Society. McLaren encountered the Men of the Trees as a result of his research into the Canadian biologist and eugenicist, Reginald Ruggles Gates, 'one of the more extreme eugenicists of the interwar period', whose papers included circulars and letters from the Men of the Trees. First conjuring 'Tarzan-type figures', McLaren became interested in why Gates (married to Marie Stopes between 1911-1914) and the chief society organiser of the Eugenics Society, Ursula Grant Duff, had also held membership of the Men of the Trees. The answer being, 'that both eugenicists and environmentalists' had embraced scientific racism.²⁷ *Reproduction by Design* presents Baker as the poster boy of the Eugenics Society. Baker had been 'marked by his father's religiosity and admiration of colonials', or, as Baker put it, 'men of our stock who had blazed the trail of overseas settlement.'²⁸ Baker's career is deftly sketched, covering his work in Kenya and Nigeria, a CV that might have resulted in him 'remaining little more than an obscure, itinerant lecturer, but luckily for him a visit to America rescued him from oblivion.'²⁹ McLaren identified what others had not: that of the most important environmentalist contacts in the United States that Baker made, the most notable were eugenicists. Madison Grant, for example, one of the founding members of the Save the Redwood League had written one of the 'classic works of scientific racism', *The Passing of the Great Race* (1916).³⁰

²⁶ Angus McLaren, *Reproduction by Design* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), p.138.

²⁷ McLaren, p.138.

²⁸ Richard St. Barbe Baker, quoted in McLaren, p.138-139.

²⁹ McLaren, p.139.

³⁰ McLaren, p.140.

In McLaren's version of events, Baker was 'prodded by his friends' to 'cobble together' his lectures into a book. This early publication cemented his appeal and he gained wealthy and influential admirers in America and England. Baker 'recognized the importance of fashioning an appropriate image of the gentleman adventurer' and as his activities were covered by his friends in the press, he went on to produce numerous books and became 'an active public speaker and broadcaster.'³¹ McLaren recognised the repetitive use of autobiography, bold – if not wild – claims, yet also acknowledged the influence that Baker had in bringing about a wider understanding of the potential of tree planting on a huge scale:

Most of his books simply retold in one form or another the story of his life. How reliable the accounts are is difficult to judge. He attributed to himself an importance in establishing the British Ministry of Health and the United States Civilian Conservation Corps. Every reforestation program in every country he visited, he claimed, was due in part to his activities. A United Nations official later recalled that by the 1960s Food and Agriculture Organization officials regarded Baker as an eccentric and yet recognised that he had been one of the first to publicize the importance of reforestation and watershed management and the challenges posed by loss of biodiversity and climate change.³²

Why was Baker so polarising? As McLaren demonstrates, there was a growing field of literature about forestry, so what made Baker's work stand out? Britain already had a Royal Forestry Society and Forestry Commission, so what need did it have of another society in the Men of the Trees? The appeal was that instead of assuming that the readers of his texts would include 'the statesman, economist, engineer, doctor, and forester,' Baker 'targeted a more popular audience.'³³ He invited his audience 'to participate in a moral crusade', and this gave him an everyman appeal. Was it by accident that the Man of the Trees has the same ring of comradeship as man of the people? A persona that made the silvan accessible to ordinary people. But is this idea of moral and environmental crusading unique to Baker, and might this persona have found precedent in some of the other people with whom Baker was associated before meeting these professionally advantageous conservationists and eugenicists?

³¹ McLaren, p.141.

³² McLaren, p.141.

³³ McLaren, p.141.

Overall, Baker comes across as an opportunist and buffoon, drawing upon the reactionary nostalgia for rural life felt in the interwar period in Britain.³⁴ Much as Baker's acolytes drew together his most edifying quotations in collections like those in *Man of the Trees: Selected Writing of Richard St. Barbe Baker* (1989), McLaren airs much of Baker's less laudable connections and philosophies: championing British military rule in Palestine in the 1920s, perceiving moral degeneracy in unemployment, and the dangers of universal franchise. The supporters of the Men of the Trees are described as a mixed bunch, encapsulating 'that heady brew of environmentalism, anti-capitalism, eugenics, racialism, and rural values that percolated in parts of 1930s Britain.'³⁵ McLaren also noted that the instinct to protect nature did not sit on either end of the political spectrum, and that Baker generally presented himself as being above politics, seeing an ideal in the forest rather than civic society. However, it is important to note that McLaren's study is of the interwar period, and that Baker's career continued for another four decades, giving him time to slough off some of these associations. This is in line with other associates of the Men of the Trees such as Vita Sackville West, Sir Frances Younghusband, and Sir Albert Howard who are all identified by McLaren as espousing explicit or implicit eugenic views, yet who are remembered respectively as a garden writer, explorer, and organic farmer.

THE FIRST BIOGRAPHY

McLaren's profile of Baker sits at odds with Paul Hanley's biography of Baker, *Man of the Trees: Richard St. Barbe Baker, the first global conservationist* (2018). The book features a foreword by Charles, H.R.H. the Prince of Wales, and an introduction by the primatologist and anthropologist Jane Goodall, who declared that Baker was 'without a doubt, one of the greatest advocates for the protection and restoration of forests, ever. I am amazed by his life and accomplishments. He is one of my heroes.'³⁶ The back cover and first page carry 'advance praise' for the text from figures from the environmental movement with connections to Baker and the International Tree Foundation (ITF): Satish Kumar, Philippe Cousteau, Wanjira Maathai, and Roger Leakey. The scope of figures endorsing the title gives a sense of the network that still

³⁴ McLaren, p.150.

³⁵ McLaren, p.154.

³⁶ Jane Goodall, in Paul Hanley, *The Man of the Trees: Richard St. Barbe Baker, the first global environmentalist* (Regina: University of Regina Press, 2018), p. xi.

surrounds the deceased Baker: friends and connections through his Bahá'í faith, followers of his ecological credo, and successors within the Men of the Trees.

Hanley met Baker in 1976 whilst studying in Regina and wrote the first draft in 1989. In the book's acknowledgements, Hanley describes the process through which the idea was sustained by friends and associates of Baker's. *The Man of the Trees* claims that Baker is the unrecognised 'first global environmentalist', an assertion that creates the structure of the text. Hanley, in his prologue, addresses some of the contradictions and confusions of Baker's long life:

... as you read about his life in detail, what emerges is a portrait of an indefatigable conservation hero full of paradox. Baker was a sylvan Don Quixote, a forester who rarely had a steady income, often surviving on the largesse of others. He was at once humble and self-aggrandizing; was equally at home in a thatched hut or a mansion; was by turns paternalistic and progressive, conventional and eccentric, soldier and peace activist.³⁷

Hanley recognises the shifting nature of Baker's narrative, demonstrating an evolution that took his subject from colonial servant to peace advocate and champion of indigenous people around the world. After declaring that serendipity was Baker's currency, Hanley concedes that Baker's account is often hard to believe, that 'At times, his stories strain credulity. Did he really plant the seed that became Roosevelt's Civilian Conservation Corps? Did he deliberately exaggerate his role? Did he consciously craft his own mythology?'³⁸ The outlandish claims are not fully verified, although Hanley does summarise the recent research on the beginnings of the CCC that provides one of the few points when Baker's version of events is examined alongside other histories and presents the possibility that there were many uncredited people involved in the creation of the CCC.³⁹ Hanley makes the necessary caveat that whilst Baker's participations in the milestones of conservation history are not fabrications, they are certainly 'inflated,' and although his confidence in Baker's stories is shaky, 'at other times seemingly incredible stories are verified.'⁴⁰

Man of the Trees is not an interrogation of Baker's life, but rather a summary of Baker's autobiographies and embellished with the information that was forthcoming from interviews

³⁷ Hanley, p. xvi.

³⁸ Hanley, p.xvii.

³⁹ Hanley, p.133.

⁴⁰ Hanley, p.135.

with others who knew him. The result is a hybrid of biography and autobiography, with Hanley acting as interpreter for – and editor of – Baker’s texts. References are provided in the form of paragraphs describing the sources used. For example, the first chapter uses information from *My Life My Trees, I Planted Trees, and Dance of the Trees*. There is no specification as to which of the papers in the Special Collection and Archive at the University of Saskatchewan were incorporated, but Hanley does note the extra detail provided by *Dance of the Trees*, Baker’s autobiography written for a younger audience.⁴¹ What is not apparent is a hierarchy of sources, or an appraisal of the most and least reliable of Baker’s texts. Incidents in Baker’s childhood, as a result, are recounted as if gospel truths. The opening page of the first chapter, ‘Child of the Trees’ ends with a lyrical paragraph about the idyllic childhood Baker supposedly enjoyed:

Richard plays childhood against this bucolic backdrop, with the suffering and sinister world, its dark satanic mills, well beyond the hedgerows. Home is innocent, pastoral, Arcadian, a world of country parsons, farm folk, God-fearers. Embraced in a fair wood of oak, beech, and pines, it is a green and pleasant land.⁴²

Extensive quotations from Baker’s books (some spanning four paragraphs) perpetuate the single-view narrative of Baker’s childhood: that he was a boy destined for a career that related to trees, as near to God-anointed as could possibly be, and that his home life was the perfect incubator for these talents and interests. Hanley’s text, framing Baker’s account, differs little in its lyrical and romantic description of events of dubious authenticity: ‘While other children played with toy soldiers, Richard marched about the seedbeds, saluting the new trees and popping off their seed “caps” with his toy sword.’⁴³

Similarly, Baker’s ‘rebirth in the trees’ is treated uncritically. Hanley uses the omniscient perspective whilst recounting the event – one in which his voice as an author hovers over the child. The third person creates immediacy, and although the past tense is used, the intention of the text is to convey an incident that only one of the two authors ever experienced. The last sentence before a quotation from Baker demonstrates the romance Hanley wished to convey: ‘His senses heightened, he saw, felt, smelled, and heard the forest, its every light, texture, fragrance, cry, and murmur, new but not a threat, rather an invitation, a splendour of trees.’⁴⁴

⁴¹ Hanley, p.278.

⁴² Hanley, p.1.

⁴³ Hanley, p.5.

⁴⁴ Hanley, p.6.

The slip into hagiography is complete with the rapture presented by Baker, reinterpreted by Hanley as gospel:

The overpowering beauty entered into his very being; his heart brimmed with an inarticulate thankfulness at being alive; his universe said YES and he agreed with his own small voice. Strange to say, it seems that he was adopted by these trees, or born a second time, now to forest parents, a child of beeches and pines. Merging with the trees he became root, branch, and heartwood. In the temple of wood and light, he is leaf and seed.⁴⁵

This paragraph embroiders what was already a highly perfumed ecstasy in Baker's original narrative. Yet Baker's childhood was not as idyllic as he later portrayed, and the chronology of his publications alone in respect of his father's death suggest a long period where this incident was not commonplace in Baker's narrative. Baker's later incorporation of it into his autobiography might lead a more sceptical biographer to think that there was an element of embellishment at play. Hanley is not entirely uncritical, demonstrating to his reader the points at which he is aware that he is acting as emissary for Baker. He has condensed and curated Baker's account, so it is more palatable to a contemporary reader. Hanley interjects, posing questions about how we might relate to events a century ago,⁴⁶ or by passing the baton to his audience: 'Was he more colonialist or ally of the African? I'll let the reader judge.'⁴⁷ What is significant for this study is that it is hard to judge Baker's early attitudes based exclusively on his own writings, and that the greatest primacy of source might come from contemporary materials.

Man of the Trees becomes a much more interesting book when Hanley returns to his skill as a journalist to research the latter years of Baker's life. Baker's autobiographies only cover events up until the early 1970s, and so Hanley reconstructed the last decade of Baker's life from the letters and diaries that are held in the University of Saskatchewan Special Collection and Archive. Through the incorporation of these sources, there is a greater opportunity for analysis and objectivity. Hanley also benefits from the insight that comes from interviews with Baker's friends and associates that offer a more intimate perspective on his character, fitting for a biography written by someone who had known Baker in life and is close to his surviving friends

⁴⁵ Hanley, p.7.

⁴⁶ Hanley, p.37.

⁴⁷ Hanley, p.44.

and associates. The friendly tone of the book can be identified in the way Hanley refers to him as Richard and St. Barbe, as well as Baker; making use of the name by which he was known and perpetuating his saintly image.

THE PRIMACY OF SOURCE

Baker's literary legacy – if considered one body of unobjective source material - is both compelling and confounding; he published work that is charming, authoritative and engaging, yet also produced books that are frustrating in their lack of structure, references or objectivity. These texts can be repetitive, overly personal and eccentric, even for someone with previous knowledge and interest in his work. Nevertheless, the whole corpus shines a light on aspects of Baker's life that would not otherwise be obvious to anyone coming to any of his books individually as events and accounts mutate over time. Moreover, whilst there is repetition, there are asides that offer a glimpse into the wider history of the environmental and social activism in which he played a part.

The three autobiographies that Baker wrote are most useful if viewed as secondary sources and traverse the years from his birth to their point of execution. The Lutterworth Press, a religious publishing house, published *I Planted Trees* in 1944, close to the death of Baker's father and not long before his first marriage. *Dance of the Trees: The adventures of a forester* was written for younger readers and published in 1956 by the Oldbourne Press when Baker was sixty-seven. *My Life, My Trees* was first published by Lutterworth in 1970, and then republished by the Findhorn Foundation in 1981. Baker was in his early eighties when he wrote *My Life, My Trees*, and in his early nineties when the second edition was published. In each instance the years to cover grew ever more numerous as a greater number of people, projects, incidents, and countries demanded inclusion.

It is no surprise that one of Baker's side projects – unfinished in his lifetime - was a catalogue of profiles of people he had known over the years; he was never going to fit them all in or do everyone justice whilst maintaining pace and immediacy (and the focus on himself). The compendium of people who had played a part in Baker's life is a useful appendix to his other works and was posthumously published as *Tall Timber* in 2010 by the Australian Men of the Trees. When reviewing *Tall Timber*, Philip Conford described Baker's methods in choosing his subjects as being 'characterised by a randomness that artists in the Dada movement would have savoured' as each day he would pluck six names out of a hat and start writing, resulting in a

repetitive collection ‘with no discernible structure.’⁴⁸ Conford identified a ‘degree of vanity’ in Baker’s reminiscences, yet coupled with the ‘energy, knowledge, unstinting commitment and love of nature which made [him] so inspiring’:

Here was a man for whom the earth’s green mantle was the key not just to fertile soil and pure water, but to social stability and world peace. To preserve and extend the world’s forests and woodland was a means by which the supposed enmity of science and religion could be overcome, with scientific knowledge put to the service of healing, rather than conquering, God’s creation.⁴⁹

Although *Tall Timber* ‘conveys Baker’s zest and his prodigious work for peace’, it resembled a kaleidoscope, ‘with many fragments of information but no clear pattern.’⁵⁰ The profiles are neither chronological nor alphabetical; however, working with material that is by its nature fragmented offers the potential of a more critical reconstruction of Baker’s life. In much the same vein, *The Man of the Trees and other dedicated environmental guardians*, a book ‘presented’ by Baker’s second wife, Catriona, is a treasure trove of information and sources. It includes excerpts from Baker’s books, documentation of the founding of the Men of the Trees in Palestine in 1929, a list of all of Baker’s books in his collection, a programme from an event in the Grove of Understanding, alongside profiles of Baker’s colleagues and friends (some taken from *Tall Timber*, some written about later figures like Wangari Maathai). It is clear that the book was produced with love, care and attention, but is unlikely to hold any appeal to anyone unfamiliar with Baker’s work. In many ways it demonstrates the challenge presented by the volume of material. How best to make sense of it? Where should one start, and what represents the most authentic body of material to draw upon?

THE UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN ARCHIVES AND SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

In addition to Baker’s published works, the most significant cache of materials are the papers and artefacts held by the University of Saskatchewan in their Special Collection and Archives. Biographical sketches alone cover 230 sides of paper, describing the person that Baker wished to

⁴⁸ Philip Conford, ‘Tall Timber: A Great Forester Revisits the Many People who Influenced the Course of his Long Life’, *Rural History* (2012), Vol.23 (1), pp.115-116, p.116.

⁴⁹ Conford, (2012), p.116.

⁵⁰ Conford, (2012), p.116.

present to the world: a knowledgeable, well-travelled and well-connected man of action. Within each folio, it is possible to discern subtle differences in tone, content and approach. Their variety, in part, demonstrates the different personas that Baker was able to conjure. Many of these biographical sketches start in much the same way: his name, place and date of birth, marriages, and his military and forestry career. Some, however, take a different tack. One - a dictation taken by a man called Sydney Walton in 1960 - takes Baker's childhood as its point of departure, and from there we are invited into the story that he created of his boyhood: a happy time of tree planting, of time spent with his father, and his 'call' to graduate in forestry.⁵¹ The first page has two hand-written notes in the corner, suggesting 'A spread in Los Angeles Times before would be helpful', and the document appears to have been written as a sort of appendix to Baker's Who's Who listing; 'a small boat as compared with the wide seas' of his life's experience.

This note suggests that the biography was intended as a means of securing press coverage for Baker's activities in California, quite possibly his long-standing involvement with the Save the Redwoods League and his campaign to save the Grove of Understanding. Tracing the evolution of Baker's autobiography through its different manifestations in his published works means treading and re-treading the same ground. Baker's consistency in relaying his life is linear – there is a beginning, a middle, and an end – but one can tell when he has taken the longer route, revelling in the details of certain events, or the short cut; the most perfunctory summary with only the most essential landmarks recorded. However, these maps are palimpsests; there are often faint lines that suggest other routes.

Alone, the biographical notes in the Richard St. Barbe Baker Papers represent the lost cartography: forgotten landmarks, and a circuitous path through a complex and compelling life. It is with this new information that meeting the challenge set by Philip Conford in his review of *Tall Timber* becomes possible: that Baker's work 'might inspire some ambitious environmental historian to research a full, chronological account of [his] life, since the urgency of his message increases with each acre of the world's forests that is felled.'⁵² Arguably, Hanley has produced

⁵¹ Saskatoon, University of Saskatchewan (US), R. St. Barbe Baker Papers, fonds MG 71, B. I. 1 (1960).

⁵² Conford, (2012), p.116.

the first full chronological account of Baker's life, but what this study proposes is that the investigation needs to be more wide-ranging to make it independent of Baker's version of events.

For that reason, this is only a study of the first thirty years of Baker's life. Where relevant, it moves its focus to people and events that precede his birth in 1889, and where necessary, it contextualises events beyond the end of this study. It would be impossible to do justice to Baker's work in Africa in the 1920s in addition to a close examination of his early life.

Moreover, Baker himself chronicled his work in Kenya and Nigeria, and therefore such a study would necessitate a different approach. Conceptually, this account of Baker's early life forms the first of three volumes. The first, reconstructing his childhood, youth and life as a young man; a second, looking at his evolution from colonial forester to international conservationist; and a third, looking at the afterlife of his most significant vision, the Great Green Wall. Yet everything must start somewhere, and thus this is a deconstruction and reconstruction of Baker's origin myth.

'As a boy he had little time for games', Walton's note states, 'between school hours and in the holidays his work and recreation were the tender and planting of trees for timber and ornament.'⁵³ However, this document makes no mention of Baker's siblings, of the Mission Hall, or of his mother; all figures who come to life in other retellings of a childhood spent in a house called The Firs, surrounded by a tree nursery and garden, and close to the New Forest. A childhood with faith and forestry bound up in its fabric. Moreover, at least in this telling of it, a strong Christian faith is absent from this recollection of childhood, something totally at odds with the small folio of family papers and correspondence held in the archives in Saskatoon. So, starting with these papers, can we get a sense of the boy called Edward, the family he was a part of and the influence it had upon him?

Perhaps the most telling line is in a letter from Richard St. Barbe Baker's mother, Charlotte Baker (who always signed her correspondence Charlotte S. Baker). Charlotte admonished her son for causing confusion when adding St. Barbe on the envelopes: 'Please address Mrs J.R.St.B. Baker – do not write St. Barbe in full as it causes mistakes thinking it is my surname & of course it is one of dear Father's Christian names.'⁵⁴ To this end, a process begins that pitches the

⁵³ US, R. St. Barbe Baker Papers, fonds MG 71, B. I. 1 (1960).

⁵⁴ US, R. St. Barbe Baker Papers, fonds MG 71, A/1/43 (1944).

account that Baker made of his own childhood against that of a boy born in the 52nd year of Queen Victoria's reign into a family with a tree nursery in their back garden and a Mission Hall in the front. This represents a key duality as practical tree planting and practical faith were to be intertwined for the rest of his long life, but the complexity of this heady mix has only been told through the mouth of one man and now, for the first time, the archives can add their voice.

2. Literature Review

To unravel Baker's story and understand better the narrative that dominates his telling, one must understand the culture of storytelling of which he played a part, and in which his autobiographies are situated. This demands an appraisal of the other stories that were told by - and about - his contemporaries and the period in which they were active, and the narrative tradition in which they are situated. One form of narrative, or story, defines the focus of this literature review: biography. In this, the recording of life, from the Greek *bios* and *graphia*, is taken more broadly as a concept and applied not just to the chronological ordering of the events of a human life, but also to concepts, movements, and disciplines: that of ecological thought, environmentalism, and their expression in the science and practice of forestry. Writing about the history of environmental problems is recognised by Alf Hornberg as presenting a difficult model of a global 'we', one which masks the distinction between winners and losers in the story of environmental change and necessitates a plurality of voices so as to lessen the dominant mode of writing environmental history as a simplified 'arrow of time'.⁵⁵ Furthermore, individuals' biographies have been used as a tool by environmental historians to fix certain figures like Henry David Thoreau into the pantheon of modern environmentalism, seen by Kent Kurtis as often an anachronistic construct if one is to actually return to a close study of Thoreau's writing which is demonstrably more focussed on the idyll of rural Concord than its despoliation by mankind.⁵⁶

This framework allows the shifting 'nature' of ecology to be explored in the context of three ecotables (connected either closely or tangentially to Baker) and examines the way in which their biographies inform our understanding ecological thought. What can we learn from the biographies of other figures who have been elevated to the environmental hall of fame? What put them there, and how are their life stories used to fix their position? Yet for this to be really understood, it needs to be explored in the context of the creation of historic narratives in forestry, an appraisal of the impact those historic narratives had on the field of ecological and environmental history, and the role of biography and autobiography in both, especially in light of

⁵⁵ Alf Hornberg, 'Introduction: Environmental History as Political Ecology' *Rethinking Environmental History: World-System History and Global Environmental Change* edited by Alf Hornberg, J. R. McNiell, Joan Martinez-Alier (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

⁵⁶ Kent Curtis, 'The virtue of Thoreau: biography, geography, and history in Walden Woods' *Environmental History* 15 (January 2010): 31-53.

the history of environmental and ecological thought in the twentieth century. The three figures put forward as counterpoints to Baker's narrative are two American ecologists: the creator of the 'land ethic', Aldo Leopold, Rachel Carson, author of *Silent Spring*, alongside Albert Howard, principle figure in the early organic farming movement in Britain. These three people share an orbit with Baker, connected through environmental ethics, communication of ecological decline, and the lessons that can be learnt from indigenous practices. However, before approaching these grandees of the forestry and environmental realm, it is important to explore the use and role of historical narratives that we use to elevate people to this pantheon. A biography, if you may, of faith in and of ecology, the history of ecological thought and environmental history.

FAITH IN ECOLOGY

The medieval historian Lynn White Jr. shook the fields of history, theology, and natural science in the late 1960s with his essay 'The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis'. White deftly argued that humans have a dynamic and amplified effect on non-human life, and that the history of the ecological change wrought by mankind 'is still so rudimentary that we know little about what really happened, or what the results were.'⁵⁷ Furthermore, an ambivalence to this history had let humanity walk into a situation in which populations exploded, planless urbanism 'spread like a cancer', and the creation of 'geological deposits of sewage and garbage.'⁵⁸ This environmental disaster was unequivocally laid at the door of the western Christianity and its embrace of science and technology. White's powerful rhetoric demanded that his readers recognise that 'no creature other than man has ever managed to foul its nest in such short order.'⁵⁹

The central argument of White's thesis is that Judeo-Christian beliefs about the right to exploit nature for humanity's gain uniquely positioned Europeans to subjugate natural resources for their benefit.⁶⁰ The provocations made by White continue to yield debate and form a fundamental part of the evolution of ecological and environmental debate today. White's suggestion that St. Francis of Assisi offers an alternative model of a more environmentally minded Christianity is recognised as a significant part of the development of ecocriticism,

⁵⁷ Lynn White, Jr., 'The Historical Roots of Our Environmental Crisis', *Science*, 10 March 1967, Vol. 155, No. 3767, p.1203.

⁵⁸ White, p.1204.

⁵⁹ White, p.1204.

⁶⁰ White, p.1207.

environmental ethics, and ecologism. However, White's essay is not defined only by interpretation and reflection; whilst ecological damage has been accelerated by Western cultures, and much as Saint Francis may be an alternative medieval foci for Americans, he closed the paper with a call for contemporary remedies:

Both our present science and our present technology are so tinctured with orthodox Christian arrogance toward nature that no solution for our ecologic crisis can be expected from them alone. Since the roots of our trouble are so largely religious, the remedy must also be essentially religious, whether we call it that or not. We must rethink and refeel our nature and destiny. The profoundly religious, but heretical, sense of the primitive Franciscans for the spiritual autonomy of all parts of nature may point a direction. I propose Francis as a patron saint for ecologists.⁶¹

The focus often remains on White's most celebrated and contentious essay. 'The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis' is often returned to and represents a turning point in the wider recognition of the environment in which human history has taken place. White assumed that his audience reflected his own culture. It is not 'The Historical Roots of *the* Ecological Crisis', instead White takes a polemic turn and inviting his readers to recognise their own culpability, and their own potential to take up his call to find some kind of 'pan-psychism of all things animate an inanimate' in the same rebellious and transcendental model as Saint Francis. This reading of Saint Francis was consistent with White's interpretation of Medieval and Christian history which saw dogma as a distraction from the history of the faith.

White's specialism was the history of technology in the medieval period, and especially its application in agriculture. The history of agricultural technology is grounded in its practicality and the pragmatism of its observations. However, the agrarian context of White's work is often overlooked by other theorists and historians in comparison to more contentious parts of his argument. Greg Garrard brings attention to White's observation of similarities between Christianity and Zoroastrianism through their shared apocalyptic trajectory, in which their anthropocentric and dualistic philosophy provides fertile ground for acceptance of the End by evangelicals, rather than the climate emergency prompting action to avert it.⁶² The impact of White's essay is explored by Roderick Frazier Nash in the context of the development of

⁶¹ White, p.1207.

⁶² Greg Garrard, *Ecocriticism*, (Oxford: Routledge, 2004), p.88.

environmental ethics, in which the arguments and ‘unpalatable’ conclusions made by White as a historian invoked a response with ‘strong emotional overtones’ from environmentally aware Jews and Christians.⁶³ Mark J. Smith disputes the fundamentalism of White’s argument, suggesting instead that it ignores reverence and respect for nature that can be found elsewhere in Christian scriptures despite illustrating the shifting anthropocentric and ecocentric turns of environmental thought.⁶⁴ Furthermore, in Thomas R. Dunlap’s appraisal of the response to White’s essay, a general criticism was that it is as likely that people justify their actions after the event, rather than them being the ‘main-spring of action.’⁶⁵

Nonetheless, before situating White within the history of ecological thought, it is important to return to his interest in Saint Francis: A medieval historian chooses a medieval saint as the patron of ecologists, yet also calls for a wider reconciliation of faith and nature as a means of solving our ecological crisis. Can that be done through the beatification of one man alone? Or might there be other people whose lives and works have made them worthy – or subject – of ecological hagiography? Are there contemporary figures whose lives have been held up as exemplars of environmental good, prophets of a new environmentally aware age? Furthermore, does this canonisation sanctify or atrophy the contributions that real people have continued to make to ecological thought? In the Catholic Church, the proof of miracles is essential if one of the faithful is to be elevated for inclusion in the heavenly host. In this context, any review of the literature surrounding the foundational history and mythology of environmentalism in the ecological age should be mindful of the sources, selection, and analysis of the ‘proof’ that consecrates their lives. Ecological hagiography, if you may.

THE ECOLOGICAL AGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY

The word ‘ecology’ is derived from the Greek word for home, *oikos*, which in turn is a word with three meanings: the home, the family, and the family’s property. *Oikos* also reflected the concept of heredity, as well as a household and *oikos* became the ‘eco’ in both economics and ecology. Economics constituted the study of household management in Ancient Greece, and developed into the science of wealth, exemplified by Adam West’s *Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the*

⁶³ Roderick Frazier Nash, *The Rights of Nature: A history of environmental ethics* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), p.89.

⁶⁴ Mark J. Smith, *Ecologism: Towards Ecological Citizenship* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1998), p.4-8.

⁶⁵ Thomas R. Dunlap *Faith in Nature: Environmentalism as Religious Quest* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004) p.38.

Wealth of Nations (1776). The German biologist Ernst Haeckel coined the word ‘ecology’ in the 1870s to reflect the emerging understanding of the interconnectedness of life, but which in turn was an evolution of the term ‘economy of nature’ which had been used by Kenelm Digby and Linnaeus in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.⁶⁶ Ecology is best understood as a biological science, of which the study of communities of plants and animals and their environment is the primary enterprise, and as a science it emerged in the same period as Charles Darwin published *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection* (1859) which proposed a process of evolution, as opposed to the creation of all life by God. The emergence of the word ecology does not mean that there were not expressions of what we could now call ‘ecological thought’ before Haeckel, a state often at odds with philosophical realism, which is noted by Gregory Barton as a concept which emphasised ‘wholeness and connectedness.’⁶⁷

Mark J. Smith, writing at the close of the twentieth century, recognised the preceding one hundred years as having been defined by a new way of thinking, based on ‘a series of assumptions which displace human beings from the central position they have occupied in social and political evolution’ in framework he defines as ‘*ecologism*.’⁶⁸ These assumptions turn the science of ecology into a set of principles, conditions or doctrines which in turn can be examined in much the same way as theologisms are speculations about theology. Ecology has also had an elasticity to its application, and rather than representing a break between science and faith, it is also interpreted as offering an alternative way of life, a shortcut to goodness: cleaning products can become ‘eco’, you can go on holiday to an ‘eco-retreat’, and ‘ecovangelism’ features in the *Urban Dictionary*.

In relation to the history of ecological thought, the events and connections of Baker’s life positioned him amongst significant figures, practices, and events in the fields of conservation, colonialism, imperialism, and environmentalism, the histories of which have yielded rich areas enquiry in the field of environmental history. The conservation movement (especially in the context of the United States) has contributed to the political drama of the last century, providing ‘issues tailor-made to arouse the public to a fighting pitch, and they continue to inspire the

⁶⁶ Smith, p.1-2.

⁶⁷ Gregory Barton, *The Global History of Organic Farming* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018) p.12.

⁶⁸ Smith, p.1.

historian to recount a tale of noble and stirring enterprise.⁶⁹ The colonial expansion of European powers began with plantation agriculture by the Portuguese, and expanded with British and Dutch trade to the Caribbean, East Indies, and India, at the same time as ‘the catastrophic consequences of their capital – and labour-intensive activities became clear as the early island colonies experienced drought due to the drying up of perennial streams, soil erosion, dust storms, and the disappearance of animal and plant species.’⁷⁰ Ecological imperialism and the global trade created ‘a particular kind of traveller [who] did more than most to promote the natural power of empire: those who combined touring with botany and other scientific, or quasi-scientific, enquiries.’⁷¹ Lastly, the ‘uneven historical development of environmental concern’ noted by David Pepper, echo many of the major events of Baker’s life.⁷²

These themes are represented by Baker work in conserving the Coast Redwoods in California in the 1950s, his colonial and imperial activities in Canada and Africa, and the international environmental advocacy that he undertook under the banner of the Men of the Trees, all topics which have become prominent lines of enquiry in the field of environmental history.

Environmental history, as a discipline, is a field defined by its interest in the ‘changes humans have made in the environment [that] have in turn affected our societies and our histories.’⁷³ As a discipline, it has sought maturity from an environmental determinist perspective on history, instead attempting ‘to engage in an ecological analysis which stressed the complexity and interdependency of the relationship between human social institutions and nature.’⁷⁴

Early contributors to the field were predominantly American, and the focus of research included urban history, agricultural history, the history of technology, and forest history.⁷⁵ It is to the history of forests, and of forestry, that this study will return to in the context of Baker’s education at Cambridge, however it is important to note that the connection between forest history and environmental history in the United States is close, with the co-publication of the

⁶⁹ Samuel P. Hays, *Conservation and the gospel of efficiency: the progressive conservation movement, 1890-1920*, (Pittsburgh, Pa.: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1999), p.1.

⁷⁰ Richard Grove, ‘Climatic Fears: Colonialism and the History of Environmentalism’, *Harvard International Review*, Winter 2002, Vol 23, 4, p.50.

⁷¹ William Beinart and Lotte Hughes, *Environment and Empire*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 76-77.

⁷² David Pepper, *Roots of Modern Environmentalism* (New York: Routledge, 1984) p.15.

⁷³ J. Donald Hughes, *What is Environmental History?* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2006), p.1.

⁷⁴ Richard White, ‘American Environmental History: The Development of a New Historical Field’, *Pacific Historical Review*, Vol. 54, No. 3 (Aug., 1985), pp. 297-335, p.297.

⁷⁵ Hughes, p.6.

journal *Environmental History* by the Forest History Society and the American Society for Environmental History, of which the former society predates the latter by decades.⁷⁶ Nonetheless, as noted by Samuel P. Hayes, the ideological tone of both current conservation and its history leaves it vulnerable, not least because ‘the moral language of conservation battles differed markedly from the course of conservation events.’⁷⁷ Indeed, the rational and scientific education of many significant figures in the conservation movement – including hydrology, forestry, geology, agrostology, and anthropology – resulted in policy being created in the model of these disciplines.⁷⁸ Moreover, these disciplines were not singular and unassailable edifices, but communities made up of individuals whose upbringing, education, beliefs and values shaped their expression.

Many individuals informed and inform what we understand as environmental or ecological thought, although only the more recent in the chronicle would recognise their contribution in those terms. Notables include Alexander von Humboldt, Charles Darwin, Ernst Haeckel, Henry David Thoreau, John Muir, John Ruskin, and William Wordsworth, and the twentieth century is replete with men and women who championed environmental causes and brought ecological thought to a wider audience, including Wangari Maathai, Edward Goldsmith, Chico Mendes and Jane Goodall. Another way to form a chronology might be through the publication of key texts, of which some notables might include *Cosmos: A Sketch of the Physical Description of the Universe* (1845) by Humboldt; *Man and Nature* (1864) by George Perkins Marsh; and *Small is Beautiful* (1973) by E.F. Schumacher. Yet another way of tracing the development is through organisations and institutions that have made a contribution to our ecological heritage, a list which would include the Sierra Club, Save the Redwoods League, WWF, the National Trust, and Greenpeace, amongst many others.

Indeed, the way in which ecological knowledge infused American culture is set out by Thomas Dunlap in his study of the parallels between environmentalism and the instinct towards religious quests. In this, ‘environmentalism emerged as a movement when people applied an ecological perspective to their lives and society, seeing the world as webs of relationships rather than separate things.’⁷⁹ This observation addresses the means with which environmental ethics

⁷⁶ Hughes, p.7.

⁷⁷ Hayes, p.1.

⁷⁸ Hayes, p.2.

⁷⁹ Dunlap, p.95.

entered the public realm; a time in the United States which was defined by anxieties about pesticide use, the spread of radiation from H-bomb tests in the Pacific ocean, and the contamination of food with toxic chemicals. Dunlap also recognises that the ground was laid for an environmental awakening by the inclusion of nature stories in elementary curriculums, as well as the impact of the Boy Scout's handbook which described plant succession.⁸⁰

However, significant to this study, three figures represent different contributions, approaches and themes within this international field: Aldo Leopold, the American forester, wildlife biologist and creator of the concept of a 'land ethic'; Rachel Carson, author of the book *Silent Spring* whose publication was the catalyst for widespread environmental awareness; and Sir Albert Howard, early proponent of organic agriculture and founding member of the Soil Association in Britain. Each had an international impact, had distinct and distinguished publications, and has been the subject of biographical enquiry. In this context, Leopold, Howard, and Carson provide useful points of reference for approaching the role of biography and autobiography in critical accounts of environmentalism. However, before attending to the ways in which the lives of notable figures in the environmental movement have been handled, it is important to understand the role of biography within the field of environmental history, and in particular the element of storytelling, or narrative form, which accompanies it.

NARRATIVES IN (AND OF) ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY

The relationship between narrative and environmental history is an important point of tension, as well as a rich source of discourse. Reconciling the meta-scale of environmental change through the innate human instinct to tell stories as a means of interpreting the world around us has been recognised as one of the major challenges of the field. William Cronon opens his essay on the significance of narrative when writing about the history of the natural environment, with the Biblical-sounding statement 'In the beginning was the story. Or rather: many stories, of many places, in many voices, pointing towards many ends.'⁸¹ This follows an excerpt from Graham Swift's *Waterland*, whose narrator is in no doubt that 'only animals live entirely in the Here and Now. Only nature knows neither memory nor history. But man – let me offer you a definition – is the storytelling animal. Wherever he goes he wants to leave behind not a chaotic

⁸⁰ Dunlap, p.95.

⁸¹ William Cronon, 'A Place for Stories: Nature, History, and Narrative', *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 78, No.4, March 1992, p. 1347.

wake, not an empty space, but the comforting marker-buoys and trail-signs of stories.⁸² Cronon does not elaborate on the excerpt taken from an early 1980s novel set in the English Fens, and instead focusses his attention on two non-fiction books published in the late 1970s about the Great Plains and the environmental cataclysm that enveloped them in the 1930s, the Dust Bowl.

Cronon observes that that the two books, although using much the same source material and in agreement about the facts, fundamentally differed in their conclusions, with one author championing the resourcefulness, tenacity, and hopefulness of the people of the plains, and the other, describing it as one of the most bleak moments of the last century. The contrast found between these two interpretations represents not just a difference in the conclusions reached by the authors, but that although they ‘narrate the same broad series of events with an essentially similar cast of character, they tell two entirely different *stories*.’⁸³ These two texts take different points of focus, one looking more at the human experience of the Dust Bowl, and the second a more environmentally focused study, looking at the shifting hydrology of a semiarid land, and have stories that are ‘inextricably bound to its conclusion.’⁸⁴ These conclusions are based on the interpretations of the authors, and the ‘analysis derives much of its force from the upward or downward sweep of the plot.’⁸⁵ This divergence, for Cronon, represents one of the more vexing questions facing the discipline of environmental history: where do these stories come from?

The question is deceptive, and Cronon recognises that for a discipline which draws upon the traditions of analytical history that in turn has absorbed those of ecology, anthropology and economics (as well as others) means expanding the conventional categorisation of people by gender, class, and race, further requires the inclusion of non-human categories: land, climate, plant and animal life. This necessitates, in Cronon’s mind, the need to ‘ally our historical work with that of our colleagues in the sciences, whose models, however imperfectly, try to approximate the mechanisms of nature.’⁸⁶ However, alongside these scientific models, there is still a powerful instinct towards narrative:

Like all historians, we configure the events of the past into causal sequences – stories – that order and simplify those events to give them new meanings. We do so because narrative is

⁸² Graham Swift, *Waterland*, quoted in Cronon, p1347.

⁸³ Cronon, p.1348.

⁸⁴ Cronon, p.1348.

⁸⁵ Cronon, p.1348.

⁸⁶ Cronon, p.1349.

the chief literary form that tries to find meaning in an overwhelmingly crowded and disordered chronological reality. When we choose a plot to order our environmental histories, we give them a unity that neither nature nor the past possesses so clearly. In so doing, we move well beyond nature into the intensely human realm of value.⁸⁷

Cronon uses the example of the Great Plains, and playfully conjectures that if he were to write the history of the region as a list, removing all elements of storytelling, the result would be a chronicle. Furthermore, in the example he provides, Cronon then goes on to demonstrate the hierarchy of certain events, which initially favoured the those of significance (the arrival of the horse, the migration of settlers, the destruction of the bison, the events of the Dust Bowl), yet which should – in a true chronicle – ‘would have included every event that ever occurred on the Great Plains, no matter how large or small, so that a colourful sunset in September 1623 or a morning milking of cows on a farm near Leavenworth in 1897 would occupy just as prominent a place as the destruction of the bison herds or the 1930s dust storms.’⁸⁸

Source material, as ever, plays a significant role in the construction of these narratives so as to elevate them from pure chronology into something engaging and illuminating. And it is with this consideration in mind that the lives of significant figures in the environmental movement can be approached, not least an understanding of the books, letters, and other material from which biographies can be constructed. Moreover, the distinction between initial reception, and later recognition and exploration of their legacy in respect of the development of ecological thought and environmental ethics.

ALDO LEOPOLD’S LAND ETHIC

William Cronon’s deconstruction of the analytical and structural forms used in environmental history was written not much more than twenty years after the field emerged and shares a self-awareness and sensitivity which is also found in the writing of Aldo Leopold (1887-

1948). Leopold is a foundational figure in the context of North American ecological thought, and he is remembered primarily as a conservationist and author, although his early training was in forestry.⁸⁹ Leopold grew up in Iowa, his family were immigrants from Germany and his early

⁸⁷ Cronon, p.1349.

⁸⁸ Cronon, p.1348.

⁸⁹ Curt Meine, ‘Leopold, Aldo (11 January 1887–21 April 1948)’, *American National Biography* <<https://doi.org/10.1093/anb/9780198606697.article.1300983>> [accessed 9 June 2020].

life was shaped by hunting and exploring with his father and siblings. Leopold made the decision to study forestry at the point at which it was becoming established as an academic discipline in the United States. Gifford Pinchot had donated money to Yale University to establish a forestry school, echoing the creation of the Division of Forestry within the Department of Agriculture. Leopold joined the Forest Service and worked in Arizona and New Mexico until 1924 when he was transferred to the U.S. Forest Products Laboratory in Madison, Wisconsin.

Leopold's specialism became game and wildlife management, and from the time of his work in New Mexico he had innovated: proposing the first wilderness area for the Service in Gila, now the Gila Wilderness area; writing the first handbook for the management of wildlife, and creating a management plan for the Grand Canyon. Leopold's authority was such that he was given the first professorship of Wildlife Management at the University of Wisconsin, within the Agricultural Economics Department. Alongside the family home, Leopold bought a plot of land in central Wisconsin, known as the Sand County. The land's forests had been razed, burnt, and overgrazed, but he saw the opportunity to try and restore the land and the journey led him to write *A Sand County Almanac* (1949) which expressed, amongst other things, his belief in the necessity of a land ethic. Leopold did not live to see the effect that his writing would have upon the wider public, as he suffered a heart attack whilst helping to put out a fire, and the book was published posthumously. It is clear, however, that he felt an urgent need to share his revelation with the world:

I have purposely presented the land ethic as a product of social evolution because nothing so important as an ethic is ever written ... the evolution of a land ethic is an intellectual as well as emotional process. Conservation is paved with good intentions which prove to be futile, or even dangerous because they are devoid of critical understanding either of the land, or of economic land use. I think it is a truism that as the ethical frontier advances from the individual to the community, its intellectual content increases.⁹⁰

⁹⁰ Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1949) p.225.

Leopold's publication record was relatively scant. *A Sand County Almanac* was his only book, although that added to academic papers that he wrote over the course of his career. His literary talents shine through, even when describing the minutiae of setting up a game cooperative, and Leopold echoed Hemmingway with his brief, elliptical prose. Evoking a trip on which he was looking for new hunting spots, he stopped for a drink of water, and entered into a conversation which proved to be the catalyst for the creation of the Wiley Game Cooperative: "The farmer, R. J. Paulson, was washing milk cans at the well. We talked game."⁹¹ The issue of land degradation is present, although Leopold is clear to state that his paper can offer no remedy for 'the erosion problem.'⁹² Leopold's research sought to increase cover through tree planting on unproductive and vulnerable farm land, and measure the success of the creation of cover for wildlife through an increase in the kill in the following seasons.⁹³ There is a pragmatism: the degraded land imperils the life of the farmers, but it was also expressed in the diminishing numbers of wildfowl.

Leopold was also able to deliver polemic, as he did in his 1943 essay 'Wilderness in American Culture' in which he sets out three values that inform American culture and which stemmed from its relationship with wildlife. The first is evoked in a boy scout 'Daniel-Booneing in the willow thicket below the tracks' or a farmer boy arriving for school with the smell of dead muskrats on him, 're-enacting the romance of the fur trade.'⁹⁴ The second is any reminder that good comes from soil, through plants and animals, and into the human food chain, yet 'civilisation has so cluttered this elemental man-earth relation with gadgets and middle-men that awareness of it is growing dim.'⁹⁵ The third and last is his condemnation of 'the conquest of nature by machines [which] led to much unnecessary destruction of resources.' This introduces Leopold's remedy, 'to extend our system of ethics from the man-man relation to the man-earth relation.'⁹⁶

A Sand County Almanac was not an instant hit. It would be twenty years before it became widely recognised, whilst in the meantime unpublished essays and journals were brought

⁹¹ Aldo Leopold, 'History of the Riley Game Cooperative, 1931-1939' *The Journal of Wildlife Management*, July 1940, Vol. 4, No. 3, pp.291-302, p.291.

⁹² Leopold, 1940, p.292.

⁹³ Leopold, 1940, p.295.

⁹⁴ Aldo Leopold, 'Wildlife in American Culture', *The Journal of Wildlife Management*, Vol.7. No. 4, January 1943, p.1.

⁹⁵ Leopold, 1943, p.1.

⁹⁶ Leopold, 1943, p.1.

into the public domain, including *Round River: From the journals of Aldo Leopold* (1953) and *For the health of the land: Previously unpublished essays and other writings* (1999). Furthermore, Leopold's work has remained relevant to ecological and environmental discourse. He is recognised as representing an important bridge between the sciences and humanities and his work represents a significant chapter in the literary biography of the environmental movement, as well as shaping the science and practice of conservation biology, education, and environmental ethics.⁹⁷ In the late 1960s the Sand County Foundation was established, as well as the Leopold Conservation Award. As well as Leopold's own writing, he has been the subject of biography: Curt D. Meine's *Aldo Leopold: His life and Work* (1991), *Fierce Green Fire* by Marybeth Lorbiecki (1995) as well as a collection of essays *Aldo Leopold and the Ecological Conscience* edited by Richard L. Knight and Suzanne Riedel (2002).

Leopold's legacy was such that it has produced specialist scholars and has a dedicated digitised archive held by the Aldo Leopold Foundation which was established by Leopold's family after his death. The Foundation's aims are to further the development of a land ethic in the United States, through outreach, education, and practical application of Leopold's ideas. The content of the two biographies demonstrates the impact that he had upon those who sought to adopt his vision. Curt D. Meine is currently a Fellow at the Aldo Leopold Foundation, where his historical knowledge of Leopold informs his contribution to the contemporary activities of the Foundation.⁹⁸ Marybeth Lorbiecki, as Leopold's second biographer, added context to Leopold's life story through the inclusion of insight from his children, students, scholars, and those involved in the projects that he brought into being.⁹⁹

As well as distinct and specific biographies, it is possible to trace Leopold's impact on the history of ecological and environmental thought through references made to him by several academics and writers. In Frank Fraser Darling's Reith Lectures in 1969, Leopold was singled out as 'the clearest exponent of an emergent ethic of the land' because of his recognition that in ecology the land is understood as a community, and that respect and love of that community is a necessary

⁹⁷ *Aldo Leopold and the Ecological Conscience* edited by Richard L. Knight and Suzanne Riedel (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

⁹⁸ 'Curt Meine' *The Aldo Leopold Foundation* <<https://www.aldoleopold.org/post/staff-board/curt-meine/>> [accessed 9 June 2020].

⁹⁹ Marybeth Lorbiecki, 'Books for Adults' <https://www.marybethlorbiecki.com/books/booksadults.html> [9 June 2020].

ethic, in contrast to its exploitation as a commodity.¹⁰⁰ Philip Conford in his second chronicle of the organic movement in Britain noted that Lady Eve Balfour ‘much admired’ Leopold, demonstrating his impact on both sides of the Atlantic.¹⁰¹ Greg Garrard frames Leopold within the canon of wilderness writing in the United States, whilst suggesting that as a philosopher Leopold is most successful in navigating the difficult territory in which an affection for nature can result in the fetishizing of wilderness, not least because he was ‘wary of religious language and imagery, preferring to communicate his natural history observations and philosophical arguments in a relatively self-effacing, low-key idiom.’¹⁰²

Leopold’s intellectual legacy is woven throughout Tim Hayward’s monograph on ecological thought, with focus on Leopold’s reversal of the paradigm that all things are subservient to economics, instead placing an ecological understanding as the lens through which to understand the biotic in human interactions.¹⁰³ Robyn Eckersley, in explaining and defending the theory of ecocentrism, references the land ethic as an example of ethical holism, but which doesn’t stand up to interpretations as a form of environmental fascism, in which ‘individuals are dispensable – indeed, might need to be sacrificed for the good of the whole.’¹⁰⁴ Leopold’s impact upon ecological thought is also recognised by Naomi Klein, yet with the caveat that as the philosophy was unattached to any populist movement and that it presented no threat to the status quo or the process of industrialization.¹⁰⁵ This observation is a critical distinction between the legacies of Leopold and another titan of the environmental pantheon, Rachel Carson.

RACHEL CARSON

Rachel Carson (1907-1964) was born in Pennsylvania and educated at Woods Hole Marine Biological Laboratory and gained her MA in zoology from Johns Hopkins University, before becoming a marine biologist. Her early work and writings focussed on marine biology, writing and then editing the publications of the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The publication of three stand-alone books *Under the Sea-Wind* (1941), *The Sea Around Us* (1952), and *The Edge of the Sea*

¹⁰⁰ Frank Fraser Darling *Wilderness and Plenty: The Reith Lectures 1969* (London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1970), p. 83.

¹⁰¹ Philip Conford, *The Development of the Organic Network* (Edinburgh: Floris, 2011) p128.

¹⁰² Garrard, p. 72.

¹⁰³ Tim Hayward, *Ecological Thought: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995) p.108.

¹⁰⁴ Robyn Eckersley, *Environmentalism and Political Theory: Toward an Ecocentric Approach* (London: UCL Press, 1992), p.61.

¹⁰⁵ Naomi Klein, *This Changes Everything* (London: Allen Lane, 2014), p.184.

(1955) led her to retire from the Service and concentrate on writing. She was a gifted author, who was able to communicate her deep love for the natural world, and especially the seashore.

The freedoms afforded by being a full-time author allowed Carson to start to concentrate her research on the growing use of synthetic pesticides in the United States following the end of the Second World War. Informed by meticulous research, and delivered with an astute sense of the impact that a wholesale disruption and degradation of life would have on both flora and fauna, Carson held up an alarming vision of the future, in which the environment was so poisoned that the sounds of life emerging anew each year were lost forever. *Silent Spring* was published in 1962, as well as being serialised in *The New Yorker*. Carson's ability to communicate complex biological science into powerful environmental advocacy had an immediate effect despite the book being challenged by the chemical manufacturers whose products like DDT were implicated in the widespread decline in aquatic life with consequences throughout the food chain.

Whilst researching and writing *Silent Spring* Carson had been undergoing treatment for breast cancer, an illness that she kept secret in case knowledge of it was used against her to suggest an emotional and personal mission behind her environmental advocacy. By 1963 her condition had worsened. The effect of the radiation therapy has caused her to develop anaemia, and she was subsequently diagnosed with metastatic cancer in her liver. Carson died in April 1964. Prior to her death, Carson had contributed to the public and political debate about pesticide use in the United States. She had appeared in front of a Presidential committee, contributed to a broadcast watched by millions in which she and her critics presented their sides of the issue, and *Silent Spring* was chosen as a national 'book of the month', catapulting it into bookshops across the country. Carson was awarded the Audubon Medal and the Cullum Geographical Medal, as well as being inducted into the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

Silent Spring became the rallying point for the nascent environmental movement in the United States, and formed the bedrock of advocacy for issues like the campaign to have DDT banned as a pesticide, as well as leading the Nixon administration to establish the Environmental Protection Agency in 1970. As well as kick-starting a popular movement, Carson also gained posthumous recognition by being awarded the Presidential Medal in 1980, having a European research centre created in her name, the Rachel Carson Centre for Environment and Society, and numerous other research vessels, statues, colleges and prizes.

The impact that Carson has had on both the science of ecology, as well as the interlinked studies of its history as both a literary corpus and popular movement, has led *Silent Spring* to be declared

‘the founding text of modern environmentalism.’¹⁰⁶ Furthermore, the impact was not just in the powerful communication of scientific reason, but also a use of literary tropes that draw from apocalyptic and utopian traditions, bound together in a ‘decidedly poetic parable’ in which the rural idyll of small town America is blighted by an invisible killer.¹⁰⁷ *Silent Spring* is now well-understood as one of the major international catalysts for an awakening of environmental awareness. However, alongside its impact, there have been dissenting voices who suggest that it is essential to recognise the book as part of a chronology of conservation and environmental history. For Mark J. Smith, *Silent Spring* represented a period of ‘emerging environmental consciousness, that had begun with Thoreau, Muir and Pinchot, further enlivened through the work of Aldo Leopold, and then blossoming with the publication of a number of seminal texts in the 1960s and 70s that included the report to the Club of Rome, *The Limits to Growth* by Meadows et al., and *A Blueprint for Survival* by Edward Goldsmith et al., both published in 1972.¹⁰⁸

Silent Spring has also been presented as an anomaly within the development of environmental thought, leading to new sensibilities, theories and critiques, yet without really impacting dominant Western ideas about the nonhuman world.¹⁰⁹ Mary Anne Bishop traced the impact of the environmental movement, noting that in the year following the publication of *Silent Spring* a million acres of wilderness was set aside in the United States, yet still fewer and fewer peregrine falcons flew overhead as a result of the spraying of DDT.¹¹⁰ It is seen as feeding into fears felt by societies rocked by the advent of nuclear weapons and chemical innovation, that the plant and animal life on the planet were at risk from human behaviour.¹¹¹ The impact of *Silent Spring* also calls into question the role of message and messenger. Frank Fraser Darling, founder of The Conservation Foundation said in his BBC Reith Lecture that although he was glad that *Silent Spring* had been written, he would not have enjoyed writing it, and criticised its emotional overtones, whilst recognising its ability to shift official attitudes towards pesticide use that more erudite scientific opinion had.¹¹²

¹⁰⁶ Garrard, p.2.

¹⁰⁷ Garrard, p.2.

¹⁰⁸ Smith, p.12.

¹⁰⁹ Eckersley, p.9.

¹¹⁰ Mary Anne Bishop, ‘Great Possessions: Leopold’s Good Oak’ *Aldo Leopold and the Ecological Conscience* p. 76.

¹¹¹ Brett Bennett, *Plantations and Protected Areas: A Global History of Forest Management* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2015) p.102.

¹¹² Darling, p.45.

Philip Conford in his second chronicle of the organic movement, goes further, suggesting that *Silent Spring* obscures any understanding of the history of environmentalism and ecological thought, as if ‘nobody had heard of ecology or been aware of environmental damage until a modest marine biologist scooped the publicity pool and drew everyone’s attention to these subjects.’¹¹³ Conford’s assertion is that for decades there had been efforts to foster an ecological perspective and awareness of environmental destruction, and that figures like Richard St. Barbe Baker, Sir Patrick Geddes, and Philip Mairet, had drawn links between the collapse of civilization as a result of the despoliation of the natural world long before the publication of Carson’s book. Furthermore, these concerns were expressed in the lessons learnt through the destruction of forests in the British Empire, exploitation that had appeared economically justified at the time but which had been shown to be short term, and an example of an ecological crime.¹¹⁴

Gregory Barton also asserts the link between Imperial forestry and the inception of the conservation movement, long before Carson’s touchstone was published, whilst also recognising that the period itself represents a problematic and under-researched history. Problematic, because as a discipline, environmental history’s origins are characterised by its emergence as a radical and subversive approach, and so is unable to square the connection between environmental romanticism and the history of practical conservation in the form of forest reservations.¹¹⁵ Barton makes this charge on the basis that environmental history retains an American hegemony, that can only be addressed by placing it within a global economic and institutional history. Furthermore, given the ‘democratic aversion to empire’ scholars within environmental history have remained oblivious to the imperial roots of environmentalism.¹¹⁶ In this, the contributions made by scientists and administrators of the European colonial powers in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries are misunderstood, and any real understanding of how Victorians related to the natural world are superficially sketched, and meaningless.

Barton sought to address this in *Empire Forestry and the Origins of Environmentalism* by looking beyond national histories and describing the impact of Britain’s practice of forestry upon every major type of forest in the world.¹¹⁷ To do this, Barton drew upon material relating to imperial

¹¹³ Conford, 2011, p.258.

¹¹⁴ Conford, 2011, p.258.

¹¹⁵ Gregory Barton, *Empire Forestry and the Origins of Environmentalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p.5.

¹¹⁶ Barton, 2002, p.5.

¹¹⁷ Barton, 2002, p.1.

forestry practices across the British Empire, and demonstrated through a chronological and geographical structure, the interwoven network of foresters whose shared education and practice resulted in a collective mindset that was perpetuated and popularised in magazines and scientific journals.¹¹⁸ For the most part, *Empire Forestry* focusses on the institutional and organisational history of environmentalism, a study of this forgotten period as opposed to a collection of biographies of the major contributors to it; men like Lord Dalhousie, Dietrich Brandis and Wilhelm Schlich. However, institutional biographies have not been the only way in which Barton has demonstrated the interlinked histories of contemporary environmental thought and the British Empire, and it is through his recent biography of the soil scientist Sir Albert Howard, that the role that biographies play in enlivening the history of environmentalism can be more fully understood.

SIR ALBERT HOWARD

The histories of forestry and the histories of agriculture often seem distinct, yet there are issues and figures who transcend those boundaries. In Britain, the discipline of forestry emerged as a distinct enterprise to further the interests of the Empire, with the conservation of important forest reserves laying the foundation for ideas of environmental protection. The discipline drew upon the culture that preceded it: one that had needed timber ships for trade and battle, produced treatise on tree planting, and created legal protection through forest charters. By the turn of the nineteenth century, Britain embodied a paradoxical culture, in which trees and woodlands were celebrated, despite (or maybe because) the islands were a net import of timber.¹¹⁹ This reliance on overseas imports and a lack of any unified domestic body to produce essential wood products fostered anxiety prior to the First World War. Anxiety turned into the reality of wartime shortages which in turn led to the formation of the Forestry Commission in 1919.¹²⁰ Furthermore, the emergence of national and colonial forestry in the United Kingdom and British Empire formalized a schism between agriculture and silviculture as two competing

¹¹⁸ Barton 2002, p.7.

¹¹⁹ Michael Williams, 'The Role of Deforestation in Earth and World-System Integration', *Rethinking Environmental History: world system history and global environmental change*

¹²⁰ Alec Dauncey 'A Century of Forest Policy-makers at the 'bar of history'' *Quarterly Journal of Forestry*, January 2019 Vol 113 No. 1.

and seemingly incompatible forms of land use which is still evident in land-use policy today.¹²¹ However, this division is not as firm and immutable as it might first appear, and evidence of interconnection between the two is found in the form of the botanist and agricultural scientist Sir Albert Howard (1873-1947).

In writing about the origins of environmentalism in the context of empire forestry Gregory Barton found ample material to demonstrate that the science and practice of forestry defined the origins of environmentalism, long before the publication of *Silent Spring*. However, this is only one form of land use and in the context of the commerce and economy of the British Empire timber was not the only commodity of interest. Returning to the overlooked aspects of nineteenth and early twentieth century environmental history, especially histories seemingly disconnected from contemporary ecological issues, Barton is not alone in demonstrating the contribution that certain ‘servants of Empire’ had upon the evolution of environmental thought, men, who in Philip Conford’s opinion, had an insight into the workings of the natural world that offered a direct critique of the trade and industrial superiority of the British Empire as being inherently unsustainable. For Conford, the three men who encapsulated this critical voice were Richard St. Barbe Baker, Sir Robert McCarrison, and Sir Albert Howard, men who sought to combine Western knowledge with indigenous wisdom to challenge the received wisdom of the day.¹²²

Conford situates his history of the organic movement with the contribution of these three men, broadly seen as respectively innovating in the fields of nutrition, soil health and forestry. Sir Robert McCarrison (1878-1960) was a Northern Irish doctor appointed to the Indian Army where he first worked as a Medical Officer on the Northern Frontier. McCarrison observed that the Sikh, Hunza and Pathan tribesmen that he worked with exhibited high levels of good health, especially the Hunzas, whose agility, stamina and ‘lack of nerves’ marked them out. McCarrison’s observations found that they didn’t suffer from cancers, heart disease, diabetes or multiple sclerosis, and posited that good nutrition in the form of a diet rich in wholegrains, dairy, fresh fruit and vegetables, and little meat and alcohol, was responsible.¹²³ Furthermore, their

¹²¹ Sandra Bell, ‘Nine principles for using our land wisely at a time of climate and nature crises’ *Friends of the Earth* <<https://policy.friendsoftheearth.uk/insight/nine-principles-using-our-land-wisely-time-climate-and-nature-crises>> [accessed 10 May 2020].

¹²² Conford, 2001, p.48.

¹²³ Conford, 2001, p.51.

agricultural practices honored the 'Rule of Return' in which waste in the form of compost was applied to the soil to maintain fertility.

One issue presented by Conford in his biographical sketch of McCarrison is that the obscurantism of the organic movement often belies the scientific rigour of its early exponents.¹²⁴ In McCarrison's case, he was a distinguished scientist who was academically and institutionally recognized for his work as a Companion of the Indian Empire, received a knighthood, and was appointed as Honorable Physician to the King in 1935. However, despite his contribution to the science of nutrition, much of the research that McCarrison sought to do was hampered by a lack of funds and an inability to execute long-term nutritional studies along the lines of Western scientific research. Despite these limitations, McCarrison was able to test his hypothesis that Western diets (especially that of poorer people in Britain which had as their dietary mainstays white bread, jam, sweetened tea, tinned meat and margarine) when fed to rats led to a decline in mood and an increase in gastro-intestinal and pulmonary disorders, disorders also commonplace in the low-income populace.¹²⁵ McCarrison went on to share his findings with colleagues in Britain who were interested in the issue of nutrition, especially the two doctors, George Scott Williamson and Innes Pearse, who established the Pioneer Health Centre in South London. McCarrison delivered a series of lectures at the Royal Society of Arts in 1936, and his work led to the creation of the McCarrison Society in 1966, whose manifesto is 'health through nutrition: a birthright.'

Conford follows his profile of McCarrison with Sir Albert Howard (1893-1947), British agricultural scientist and early advocate of Vedic-style farming, alongside Lady Eve Balfour and Rudolph Steiner. Howard's biography is more detailed, with the distinction made of how Howard's practical experience of agriculture on his father's farm influenced his belief in the necessity of farming first-hand before undertaking any theoretical science.¹²⁶ Yet this intrinsic practicality was not at odds with his academic abilities, as Howard excelled in his studies at the Royal College of Science in Kensington, went on to gain a First in Natural Science from Cambridge and achieved the highest grade in England when he took his Agricultural Diploma. In a scant six pages, Conford rattles through Howard's achievements: an intuitive academic in his

¹²⁴ Conford, 2001, p.51.

¹²⁵ Conford, 2001, p.52.

¹²⁶ Conford, 2001, p.53.

early posts in the Caribbean, the challenges he faced working within increasingly orthodox education at Wye College in Kent, before being posted to India as Economic Botanist at the Agricultural Research Institute in Pusa, founded by Lord Curzon.

It was in India that Howard pioneered agricultural systems that did not rely exclusively on expensive equipment or additives, instead drawing upon the knowledge of the Indian peasant farmers whose methods allowed them to grow largely pest-free crops.¹²⁷ A major breakthrough was the creation of a method of compost-creation which addressed a shortage of manure, and which facilitated a much more wide-scale addition of fertility to the soil. After being appointed Director of Plant Industry in the State of Indore, Howard was able to expand upon his work and develop systems and tools which increased the production of key crops like cotton, as well as better health of livestock and the reversal of land degradation.¹²⁸ Yet unlike McCarrison whose personal life has not affected his professional legacy, Howard's work was as a result of close collaboration with his first and second wives (who happened to be sisters) Gabrielle and Louise Matthaei.

Gabrielle Matthaei was a noted scientist and fellow of Newnham College, and she and Howard married in 1905 In Bombay Cathedral after he had been appointed to India. Her expertise was in botany, and she was appointed Second Imperial Economic Botanist in 1913. Their union made them a couple of comparable impact to the social reformers Sidney and Beatrice Webb, and the contributions that they each made to their publications were impossible to distinguish between.¹²⁹ Louise, writing about her sister's contribution to Howard's understanding of plant life, traced it to an engagement letter in which Gabrielle extolled her future husband to see plants as living things, 'knowing no divisions of science.'¹³⁰ Albert Howard's career in India ended with Gabrielle's sudden death in 1930, after which he married Louise and returned to England. However, his intention of publishing *The Waste Products of Agriculture* in 1931 as a conclusion of his work in India led to a new programme in the expansion and application of the technique. Howard's methods of composting were widely adopted across the British Empire, leading to experimentation with other ways of transforming plant and animal waste into a form which

¹²⁷ Conford, 2001, p.54.

¹²⁸ Conford, 2001, p.55.

¹²⁹ Conford, 2001, p.55.

¹³⁰ Louise Howard, quoted in Conford, 2001, p.56.

could address soil erosion. The particular Indore technique which uses heat to transform the waste into compost was generally deemed unsuitable to cooler climates like in Britain, however that did not prevent a number of farmers attempting similar methods, informing the practice of farmers like Friend Sykes on the Chantry Estate near Andover.¹³¹ Nonetheless, it is important to make a distinction between messenger and message, and one key contribution that Howard made to the development of the organic movement in Britain was through his publications and advocacy: he wrote for the *New English Weekly*, published a journal *Soil and Health from 1946-48*, was involved with McCarrison's Pioneer Health Center, and was part of groups advocating for economic reform.¹³²

Biographies of Howard to date have been informed by his published works, *An Agricultural Testament* (1940), *Farming and Gardening for Health or Disease* (1945) and *Darwin on Humus and the Earthworm* (1945) following *The Waste Products of Agriculture: Their Utilization as Humus* published in 1931 and cowritten with Yeshwant D. Wad. Furthermore, Louise wrote an account of his colonial career, *Sir Albert Howard in India* (1954). Conford, for the most part, draws upon these published accounts in his profile of Howard, along with the obituaries of Albert, Gabrielle and Louise. Yet there has been more to substantiate, and as a result of access to the private archives of the Matthaei family, Gregory Barton has been able to recast the narrative of the development of the organic movement in Britain and its influence around the world through the integration of new primary source material, so as to produce a global history of organic farming.¹³³ This monograph builds upon a number of publications which have sought to demystify the origins of organic farming and forestry and situate them in a more rigorous and critical historiographic canon. Barton recognizes that the limited scholarship in the field has been hampered by its encyclopedic or chronicle-like form, creating 'an interesting potpourri of bibliographic references and themes' which is surprising given the complexity of the relationship between the organic farming movement and environmental movement and the focus that the latter has received as a sub-discipline of environmental history.¹³⁴

¹³¹ Conford, 2001, p.82.

¹³² Conford, 2001, p.227.

¹³³ Gregory Barton, *The Global History of Organic Farming* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

¹³⁴ Gregory Barton, 'The Myth of the Peasant in the Global Organic Farming Movement' *Interario*, 2017, Vol. 41, No. 2, pp. 75-91, p.77.

For Barton, Albert Howard represents a key bridge between these histories, especially in the way his work epitomizes many of the key theories of the pre-Second World War conservation movement which became the core of the latter period.¹³⁵ Either side of the temporal division created by the war lie two distinct models of environmentalism. The former, defined by a conservational mindset most often with the commercial and productive potential of forests at the center and with soil health and retention as key anxieties. The latter became defined by issues like pollution and health, yet within which many of the assumptions of the earlier period are present. Barton found a rich seam of evidence to argue that Howard's biography and the persons connected to it exemplified the connections made between forestry and agriculture, and so in the same way as forestry officials 'looked at the natural functions of the forest as a model for management, so Howard looked to the forest to provide an explanation of how agriculture could maintain soil fertility and plant health.'¹³⁶

Barton situates Howard's agricultural and ecological philosophy firmly in the academic, professional and social networks of which he played a part: his education at Cambridge which created a direct line of succession through his teacher Marshall Ward, to Thomas Henry Huxley who himself had been the man who popularised the work of Charles Darwin.¹³⁷ Furthermore, after forging a colonial career in Botany in which he became noted for his innovation in techniques which increased crop health and yields, Howard joined a coterie of individuals who sought to reverse the damage done to human health and agriculture in Britain by the Industrial Revolution, figures who included Rolf Gardiner and Gerard Wallop, Earl of Portsmouth.¹³⁸ Barton recognises the parallels that Robert McCarrison offers to Howard's work, and that both men's philosophy sits comfortably with other synthesis of western science and eastern thought, such as F.H. King's *Farmers of Forty Centuries*. Furthermore, Barton recognises that it was through Howard's two books on his research *The Utilization of Agricultural Wastes* and *Agricultural Testament* that he most powerfully communicated his theories and reached his audience.¹³⁹

Howard's central thesis was that most agricultural crops were sustained by a depleted and exhausted stratum of soil, which would normally have nutrients circulated by the presence of

¹³⁵ Gregory Barton, 'Sir Albert Howard and the Forestry Roots of the Organic Farming Movement' *Agricultural History*, Spring, 2001, Vol. 75, No. 2 (Spring, 2001), pp. 168-187.

¹³⁶ Barton, 2001, p.174.

¹³⁷ Barton, 2001, p.171.

¹³⁸ Barton, 2001, p.171.

¹³⁹ Barton, 2001, p.173.

trees which would draw up water and minerals through their trunks which then unfurled as leaves, falling to the floor and enriching the soil below. Therefore, through the clearance of trees for agriculture, the necessity became to find another method to replenish the soil with a 'full natural range found in organic matter and the fungi that make it available to the plant' through the application of compost.¹⁴⁰ Yet even this did not go far enough, and for Howard, the only way to sustain yields over a long period of time was to develop a system of rotation which represented a 'marriage of forestry and farming' which would allow 'farmland to suckle at the breast of nature herself.'¹⁴¹

Barton recognises the significance of the chronology of Howard's public advocacy for organic farming, first his presentation to the Royal Society of the Arts in 1933 on the Indore process, and then the wartime publication of *An Agricultural Testament* in 1940 and *Farming and Gardening for Health and Disease* in 1945. Furthermore, the network that the Earl of Portsmouth, Lady Eve Balfour, Sir George Stapledon, Robert McCarrison and G.T. Wrench formed as the group the Kinship in Husbandry, with the intention of exploring the relationship of plant, soil animal and human health, and to widen public awareness of the issue.¹⁴² Moreover, he has recognised the complexity and shortcomings of Howard's legacy: a vision for a holistic vision for health which was not incorporated into the National Health Insurance Act, failure to achieve the goal of legislating the use of organic compost in agriculture, and a commitment to folk and collectivist traditions which put his ideas at odds with the capitalist forces in the Anglo-American world, and a lack of balance when investigating non-organic methods of farming with the mindset that chemical fertiliser was the devil incarnate.¹⁴³

Despite his shortcomings, Barton is clear that Howard and his contemporaries left a legacy which is still relevant to the environmental movement today and that Howard in particular illustrates the progression of ideas and ideals of nature as expressed in forestry which then found form in agriculture, and then resurface in concepts of human health.¹⁴⁴ Barton returned to this thesis in the first publication to draw upon the Matthaei family archives which explores myth making in the early days of the organic farming movement, demonstrating that the indigenous

¹⁴⁰ Barton, 2001, p.179.

¹⁴¹ Barton, 2001, p.179.

¹⁴² Barton, 2001, p.184.

¹⁴³ Barton, 2001, p.186.

¹⁴⁴ Barton 2001, p.187.

wisdom which Howard and his cohort claimed to have been influenced by was in fact a fabrication, and that instead it was scientific rigour and protocol which informed the development of his composting method.¹⁴⁵

This argument is developed further and in greater depth in *The Global History of Organic Farming*, a book that recognises the growing interest in organic food and agriculture and delivers an accessible history of the movement. The task that Barton has attempted in delivering a global history of organic farming presents many of the same challenges that William Cronon recognises in the wider field of environmental history, namely the way in which historians faced with a complex aggregate of people, places and periods find form and create narrative. The limitations of Barton's approach were picked up upon by Paul Brassley, who noted a number of issues with the text, one being that although the archival sources that were drawn upon in the text are planned to be deposited with St. John's College, Cambridge, that has not yet happened and they are not yet available for scrutiny.¹⁴⁶

Brassley also questioned the weighting of a book that claims to be a global history, yet explores that position from the perspective offered by the family correspondence of the Matthaei family, in tandem with a close reading of the early publications of Albert and Louise Howard. Furthermore, Brassley identifies the limitations of such a scope when it comes to the recognition of other figures in the organic movement, such as Lady Eve Balfour and Jorian Jenks, and that much of the global scope is limited to countries like the United States, rather than drawing upon the development of organic standards of agriculture in the European Union or the conversion of Cuba's system to an organic approach in the late 1980s. Brassley closes his review by recognising the challenge made by Barton to the accepted mythologies of the early organic movement, yet suggests that it adds little to the wider knowledge about organic history that was already made available by Philip Conford and William Lockeretz in *Organic Farming: an International History* (2007).

The Global History of Organic Farming demonstrates one of the challenges presented in creating broad historical overviews of complex temporal, geographical and social events, ideas and networks. Intriguingly, although Barton uses the Howards' biography as the structure of his

¹⁴⁵ Barton, 2017, p.75.

¹⁴⁶ Dr Paul Brassley, 'Review of *The Global History of Organic Farming*, (review no. 2285)' *Reviews in History* <<https://reviews.history.ac.uk/review/2285>> [accessed 25 June 2020].

account of the history of organic farming, the book demonstrates a reticence to engage fully with the process of biography, compartmentalising aspects of the study into chapters that address the background of the organic challenge and the ‘cultural soil’ of organic farming before engaging with Howard’s biography, and the latter chapters situate Barton’s findings in the recent history from the 1980s onwards and contextualises it within globalisation. Each chapter is introduced with an abstract and key words, and some have their own conclusion. Although this could be considered just a matter of style, it poses the question as to whether Barton felt that writing a biography of the Howards was not quite enough, and that it would only reach a limited audience unless it was properly situated in an agricultural movement of international note? Furthermore, there is little to suggest that the content hinges on the biographies of Albert, Gabrielle and Louise Howard, instead conveying a much more generic and general appraisal of organic farming.

This is not to say that the text does not make clear the contribution that Albert Howard made to the organic movement, nor the different but invaluable talents and attributes that his two wives brought at different points in his career. Indeed, the perspective offered by the private archives of the Matthaei family is recognised as a key means of approaching the Howards’ legacy:

Albert Howard, along with his first wife, Gabrielle, and his second wife, Louise, played a central role in the rise of organic farming around the world. Most historians regard him as the founder of organic farming. The discovery of his archives, kept safe by the family of Louise Howard and used here for the first time, add weight to this assumption. The new archive also throws light on the remarkable teamwork of Albert, Gabrielle, and Louise. Gabrielle emerges as the love of Albert’s life. They worked side by side in a team in which Gabrielle’s accomplishment is substantial and she played a significant supporting role. Yet the creative mind was Albert’s own, and the drive for knowledge and the prodigious amounts of published output, as well as the daring to stand against bureaucracy and accepted modes of thinking, demonstrate the extent of his own unique genius.¹⁴⁷

Barton is clear about some of the limitations of the archival material held by the Matthaei family, notably that it includes very little material relating to Albert’s family and childhood, noting that ‘the omission of personal details in his writing may point to a lonely childhood focused on work

¹⁴⁷ Barton, 2018, p.50.

and even perhaps a severe and regimented home life.¹⁴⁸ This is in direct contrast to the brief account written by Howard, and extrapolated by Louise Howard, which placed recollections of Albert's childhood in 'the best period of nineteenth-century farming in England.'¹⁴⁹ In concluding, Barton raises the question of why Albert Howard is barely known in England, and even in the area of Shropshire where he was born. Surely, with his ideas having had a global impact upon organic farming there should be a statue of plaque to him? For Barton, the solution is in part met by his history, and he situates it within the histories of other globalizing phenomena. In terms of the Howards' intellectual legacy, Barton is clear to state that it was the Howards' rapprochement of science and culture – including spiritual values – that allows science to have meaningful impact upon the world, and that this was something that the Howards understood as scientists, and who judiciously shifted their means and methods to get their message across.

Barton is also clear upon the point that there were many thousands of experts employed throughout the British Empire - including foresters, vets, and agronomists - who held considerable influence on land use decisions. Within this cohort, Howard was unusual in his ability to reach beyond the 'narrow circle of colonial scientists' that others operated within; men and women whose 'legacies are found in archived annual reports and obscure technical bulletins and await future historians to tell their stories.'¹⁵⁰ Furthermore, the Howards' work bridged pre-war conservation concerns, with post-war environmental activism, including informing the rationale behind *Silent Spring*. Barton is also clear about the limitations of historical narratives, tending 'to overstate a few key figures by simplifying the past and overlooking other actors.'¹⁵¹ Furthermore, the Howards operated in a 'web' of environmental influence, of which Louise was at the centre, making her the 'most influential woman in the global environmental movement.'¹⁵² Yet even a statement such as Albert Howard being 'unique' in reaching beyond the traditional scientific and civil servant audience presents the opportunity to suggest that he was not unique, rather just unusual, much like Richard St. Barbe Baker.

¹⁴⁸ Barton, 2018, p.53.

¹⁴⁹ Louise Howard, quoted in Barton, 2018, p.52.

¹⁵⁰ Barton, 2018, p.199.

¹⁵¹ Barton, 2018, p.201.

¹⁵² Barton, 2018, p.202

APPROACHING BAKER'S NARRATIVE

Baker does appear in Barton's account of the Howards' life and work as little more than a footnote. He is highlighted as one of the early influences upon Albert Howard; one of the romantics whose efforts in farming and forestry promoted the idea that the spread of deserts was caused by deforestation.¹⁵³ Indeed, in Baker's collection *Tall Timber* he recalls that many of the members of the Men of the Trees were also members of the Soil Association, that Albert Howard was one of the speakers at the first Men of the Trees summer schools in 1938.¹⁵⁴ That Baker and the Howards knew each other is no surprise, yet what is intriguing about Baker's legacy is that it has so far remained unappealing to historians of either forestry, environmentalism or agriculture. Granted, he does appear in some works, such as Pauline von Hellerman's *Things Fall Apart*, but as Angus McLaren demonstrates in *Reproduction by Design* it is imperative to deal critically with the histories of people who were active in such a significant period, not least because to oversimplify can erase the necessary attention that should be played to issues and forces like race, gender and politics. Furthermore, any biography or history which shies away from things like the crossover in interests for foresters and eugenicists is to create work with a diminished relevance to the wider historical canon of which it is a part.

Sadly, the footnote linking Baker to Howard's interest in deforestation and desertification is incorrect and does not identify which source the assertion is drawn from. Furthermore, Baker's name is inconsistently spelt, in the first instance it is correct (albeit without full stop after St.), in the second it becomes Richard St. Barb-Baker. In the index the confusion is complete as he is listed as 'St Barbe Baker, Richard' in which his given name and surname are assumed to be double-barrelled. And, although he is quoted in Barton's text, the words are taken from E.F. Schumacher's *Small is Beautiful* (1973), so there are no direct references to any of Baker's works. Some personality, however, is sketched on Baker's bones. When discussing Schumacher's approach to alternative economics, something which Schumacher described as 'Buddhist', Baker is held up as one of the proponents of a particularly Imperial conservation model, of which the 'particularly colonial tone of the Men of the Trees' was typical.

¹⁵³ Barton, 2018, p.33.

¹⁵⁴ Baker, 2010, p.179.

What does such an appearance suggest for the standing and understanding of Baker's contribution to environmental thought? It appears that Baker, when he does merit inclusion, is often seen as either a saint or a colonial stooge. This paradoxical persona presents limitations for either his elevation to the upper echelons of the ecological pantheon, or his dismissal as a figure of note to the history of Imperial conservation. What is it about Baker's literary legacy which renders him thus? Did his autobiographical production line diminish the nuance and subtlety of his life's experience, fixing in aspic a persona rather than a real person? Barton's biography of the Howards demonstrates the insight gained from having access to original diaries and letters, much as Paul Hanley's biography of Baker was hampered by using Baker's idealised narrative as a work of fact, not fiction. The following chapters seek to redress this balance, drawing upon Baker's narrative only as architecture, and incorporating a rich and previously unstudied body of primary and secondary sources with the intention that this will allow for the first time for a nuanced and accurate revision of Baker's early biography to be made available to scholars of environmental history and other associated disciplines.

This biography will demonstrate how Baker's early life brought him into contact with people who shaped his ecological and social credo, that widened his perception of environmental issues, and which gave form to these influences expression in his persona of 'The Man of the Trees'. The volume of material in the public realm pertaining to Baker's life appears to dwarf that of the personal letters and artefacts that inform Barton's study of the Howards. It is a study which attempts rigour by drawing upon the widest range of source material available, to properly critique, corroborate, or contradict – where necessary - Baker's published autobiographies. In doing so, this endeavour seeks to answer the question of what is gained by rewriting Baker's biography. There are questions within questions which guided this exploration of Baker's world. What impact did his family's faith have upon his world view? What shifts in direction are evident in his early life? What made Baker an unusual student of forestry? What role does personality play in creating a movement for change? And lastly and most critically, can Baker's origin story be both an unreliable narrative *and* a robust framework for examining the social, and spiritual beginnings of his work as the Man of the Trees?

By approaching Baker's biography in this way it is possible to present Baker's story as one that illuminates the relationship between science and spirituality as expressed in the evolution of ecological thought and its advocacy in the environmental movement. Furthermore, by broadening the scope beyond the period which is most obviously silvan, we gain insight into the cultural, social and political influences upon Baker which shaped his ecological credo. To return

to John Vallin's remark that Baker's achievements were extraordinary for an ex-soldier with a degree in divinity, does this observation belie a much more important disparity between Baker's curriculum vitae and the impact that he was able to have upon the world?

3. Methodology

To address the question of whether Baker's origin story can be both an unreliable narrative *and* a robust framework for examining the social, and spiritual beginnings of his work as the Man of the Trees, it was necessary to establish a flexible but rigorous methodology based on an iterative process of archival research. When I began my doctorate I thought that the source material I would draw upon would consist of the available literature, the archives held at the University of Southampton, Saskatchewan University in Canada, at his home in New Zealand and at the International Tree Foundation (ITF) headquarters in Surrey. There was also the possibility that I would undertake interviews with those who knew him, were inspired by him, or grew to know him through his writings and with those who promote his philosophies today. I also entertained the idea of examining Baker's physical legacy through the mapping of forests that he protected and planted and examining what form and function they have today as well as examining their relation to wild, rural and urban form and urban tree use within their regional and national context. This legacy, in its international contexts, as was something I thought could be examined against contemporary agro-forestry, social forestry, re-wilding and other afforestation plans.

Throughout, this enquiry has evolved away from an initial interest in the values, spirituality, and leadership that Baker manifest, and became more focussed upon myth making, storytelling and narrative. However, it was clear from the outset that to write anything about Baker's later life and career was to base it upon a factual foundation almost exclusively drawn from Baker's own autobiographies, rather than any primary source material. Indeed, despite Baker writing authoritatively about the events and persons in his life, it became increasingly clear that this was deeply problematic and that the most important task in hand was to rationalise his biography, starting with his childhood and family upbringing which were the periods least corroborated by any other source material. This was undertaken on the proviso that Baker's origin story could be both an unreliable narrative *and* a robust framework for examining the social, and spiritual beginnings of his work as the Man of the Trees.

Subsequently, my methods had to be focussed and refined so as to do justice to the sources available to me and the necessity to avoid this thesis becoming overwhelmed by the potential scope if it was to attempt to take in all of Baker's life or works. My masters' dissertation on Baker provided me with a foundational knowledge of his published works and knowledge of the different archives and library collections in England that were pertinent to my first study of

Baker. Given the length of time available, my focus was on his published accounts of his time in Africa, which afforded the opportunity to present an overview of his career, the formation of the Watu wa Miti in Africa, and then of his activities around the world in the period after he left the colonial forestry service. Baker's return to Kenya in the 1950s provided the angle from which to interpret the evolution of his environmental philosophy as he had left Africa in the late 1920s and then spent the intervening decades talking about his experience there. However, the shock of returning during the Mau Mau uprising caused him to change the focus and tone of the Men of the Trees' activities, bringing to bear a greater sense of urgency to the cause.

I undertook to tell the story of his change of heart and focus by concentrating on lesser-recognised sources. In particular, the two children's books that he published after returning from his overland trip across the Sahara: *Kabongo* (1955) and *Kamiti* (1958). I found that they were expressive of Baker's feelings in a more powerful and immediate way than many of the other texts that I had studied. The stories helped reconcile the exoticism of Baker's portrayal of his time in Africa in the 1920s with the mileage that he gained from it as an international author and campaigner from that point on. Whilst writing my dissertation I amassed a personal collection of Baker's published texts, visited the International Tree Foundation's (then) offices in Surrey to review the material they had in storage, and used the resources of the British Library to consolidate my knowledge of the material held there, and its relevance to the writing I was undertaking at the time.

Developing an argument when reviewing and representing Baker's activities throws up the same problem time after time; namely how to wrest the story from his hands. Furthermore, how best to incorporate the wealth of material available to create a version of events which ensures that one's critical faculties as a researcher are engaged, and not to slip into hagiography. Writing *Africa Drums* consolidated my early knowledge and understanding of Baker's life and work sufficiently for me to commence writing a chapter for *A History of Groves* (2017). This chapter developed into an examination of the parallel histories of preservation of the Giant Sequoias and Coast Redwoods and the way in which the word 'grove' gained agency in their conservation. This afforded a more wide-ranging historical study to be undertaken, and which placed Baker and the Grove of Understanding alongside other people and places, such as the eugenicist

Madison Grant and a plutocrats' playground, the Bohemian Grove.¹⁵⁵ It was necessary to contextualise Baker's activities within the existing knowledge of the conservation of the Redwoods, and in turn developing and increasing knowledge of this area of environmental history in which the international scope of the Save the Redwoods campaign was explored.

DEVELOPING THEMES AND QUESTIONS

The first stage of archival research during my doctorate was to identify key archives, and appraise the material pertaining to Baker. For each collection it was necessary to read, order, and reduce; sifting through each collection and from there creating a chronology which could then be used to identify relationships to events in Baker's narrative. The second stage necessitated the identification of further secondary sources (newspapers, biographies, tangential histories, etc) which were then weighed against Baker's narrative to corroborate or contradict his version of events. This process often resulted in the identification of gaps or omissions in Baker's narrative, which then necessitated amending the chronology to create a coherent structure. The last stage was to determine key periods and persons and collate material relating to them, interrogate their relationship to Baker based on key research question for that period or person, and resolve, wherever possible, using further primary and secondary source material.

Themes emerged in relation to the different periods of Baker's life, and those themes evolved into questions which added structure and enquiry to the evaluation of the sources drawn upon:

- What was Baker's childhood like, what were the foundational episodes, and how did he use his experience to shape his origin story?
- How did Baker's experience of evangelism at home and at school shape his methods of communication?
- Why might an inconsistency between Baker's accounts of his time in Canada suggest that he used the years as a period of reinvention?
- To what extent did the spiritual and social work that took place in the East End prior to the outbreak of the First World War influence Baker's approach to social activism?
- In what way do the contradictions between Baker's different accounts of the war suggest a different experience to the one represented in his autobiographies?

¹⁵⁵ Camilla Allen 'Groves as metaphor for the fragmented redwood forests of California' in *A History of Groves* edited by Jan Woudstra and Colin Roth, (London: Routledge, 2018).

- Who were the men who informed Baker's ideas of reconstruction after the First World War, and what influence did they have upon him?
- To what degree did the Cambridge School of Forestry anticipate the spirit of the Men of the Trees?

TIMETABLE

In the autumn of 2015, I contacted the University of Saskatchewan, Baker's alma mater, to enquire about the Richard St. Barbe Baker papers. Up until that point I understood that they had a relatively small collection, but upon receiving an updated catalogue of their holdings it became apparent that Saskatoon was the location of the most significant wealth of material relating to Baker, little signposted in Britain. From that point on, I worked to secure funding to travel to Canada, eventually securing grants from the Landscape Architecture Canada Foundation (LACF) and the Canada UK Foundation. I arranged a month-long study trip to Canada that meant I could spend three weeks in the Special Collection and Archives. The papers were gathered there after Baker was awarded his honorary doctorate and were collected by Baker and his associates in the years before his death, with other tranches of material transferred to the archive after his death. Currently none of the collection is available online, and I would like to pursue funding so that material from the Baker Papers can be digitised so it can be made accessible to scholars around the world.

The papers and artefacts held in the collection cover eight linear metres, and their mass varied in terms of density of content. For example, some slim folders held several unique hand-written letters from the nineteenth century, and another might contain a box of glass lanternslides with few labels and little obvious chronology. The order (and occasional chaos) of the archive can be attributed directly to Baker, who gathered much of the material for the archive from disparate locations around the world, and certain absences of content appear to have occurred due to the bombing of a property in which Baker lived during the Second World War. In addition, there appears now to have been some 'editing' done by Baker's mother, who wrote to her son in 1945 (the year of his father's death) to say that she was in the process of burning some of the family's papers.

Over the course of the days I spent in the archive, I spent the majority of the time digitising the documents and photographs held in the collection, listening to tape recordings, watching the 16mm film reels which are held there, and reading as much as I could. The volume of material held in the archive meant that I had to distinguish what was unique to the Canadian archive, which I would not be able to access again, and what is duplicated in the UK. For example,

although the archive holds a complete collection of the Men of the Trees journal, it is also in the possession of the British Library and the archive of the International Tree Foundation. On the opposite end of the spectrum, the drawings and paintings from Baker's childhood are unique artefacts and seeing them was an experience unique to my visit to Saskatoon. Having taken digital photographs of the documents, I saved them on an external hard drive using the same file system as the archive to make referencing them more straightforward.

As well as the material held in the Baker papers was another cache of material which related to the Richard St. Barbe Baker Foundation which was held in a different file, and material about a conference which was held in Baker's memory in Saskatoon after he died. These activities were not apparent from my searches within the UK, indicating the wealth of material that might still be held in the other countries in which he was active. The Baker Papers are particularly important as they are a record of the latter years of Baker's life after he had published his last autobiography. For example, circular letters that he sent to friends and followers around the world provide a record of his activities and interests up until his last around-the-world trip, and were something that Paul Hanley drew upon in his biography.

Nearby the University of Saskatchewan's Special Collection and Archives, on the same campus, is the Provincial Archive for Saskatchewan. The archivists in the special collection alerted me to the possibility that there was material there that pertained to Baker's application for a homestead, and they were correct in their suggestion. Within the collection of the Provincial Archive are maps of the area which Baker explored, all defined by the lines of the Dominion Land Survey. Baker's half-acre property sits on the same map that takes in Beaver Creek and the reserve where the first nation community that he befriended lived. Having all this material on one map meant it was easier to question the sense in Baker's decision to take on the site at the end of his period in Canada. Furthermore, when I came to write up these documents, I was able to identify that Baker had his application and declaration of abandonment stamped on the same day by the Provincial Authorities; indicative, perhaps, of a quick change of heart.

Beyond the archives, I was able to explore the landscape in and around Saskatoon that, although much changed from Baker's time there, still contained elements that he would have been familiar with. Beaver Creek has become a nature reserve (still with beavers); the plot that Baker had applied for and abandoned stands just off the road back to Saskatoon, and the areas of unploughed and unimproved prairie around Saskatoon introduced me to a snapshot of the seasonal change in the landscape. I spent time in the Richard St. Barbe Baker Afforestation Area, visited the last tree that Baker planted on the university campus, and his grave in Woodlawn Cemetery.

After returning from Canada the material held in the Baker papers has formed the backbone of my thesis, as it provides insight into aspects of Baker's life and work which no other body of material can do.

CORROBORATING, CRITIQUING AND EXPANDING BAKER'S NARRATIVE

Leaving Baker's writing unchallenged has never challenged the evolving form of his narrative. Over time, events became hazy and various figures disappeared from the telling. Furthermore, he was incapable of putting any distance between himself and the events of his life. Despite the professional knowledge he amassed he probably lost many readers as his books were never going to be the definitive reference texts on a subject as they were often too personal, too fixed in time, and often poorly referenced and repetitive. For this reason, the necessity of this study becomes clearer: for Baker's contribution to environmental thought to emerge from the fringes it must be rationalised, and a rigour brought to aspects of his life's story that had previously got in the way of a good yarn.

Identifying material in other collections and archives represented a significant part of the work that I undertook in the first year of my studies. As well as the trip to Canada, I visited the library of the Natural History Museum in London, the Kew Gardens' Herbarium and Economic Botany Collection, Southampton University, and the National Archives. Some archives and collections proved to be more useful than others. Southampton University, for example, has a small folio of papers related to Baker, with little indication of their provenance and which were not relevant to this study. On the other hand, the National Archives has a wealth of material relating to Baker's war service, the Ministry of Reconstruction, and the Forestry Commission that I examined on several occasions as their relevance to this study became more apparent.

The British Library holds several rare and out of print works that relate to Baker and the Men of the Trees, as well as copies of the entire chronology of the Men of the Trees' journal, *Trees*. Additionally, there is miscellaneous material pertaining to the organisation; for example, a pamphlet for a tree-planting ceremony and the proceedings of the first Men of the Trees summer conference in 1938, at which Rolf Gardiner was one of the speakers. I have made use of the British Library collection in both London and Boston Spa and, where appropriate, photographed the relevant sections of books and manuscripts for future reference. The British Library has been an invaluable resource in referencing out of print titles that are contemporary to Baker. The iterative nature of the process of researching and simultaneously writing necessitated

new points of reference to understand the figures who emerged from Baker's autobiography. Thus, I was able to read into the work of Percy Alden, the Ministry of Social Service, and the Cambridge School of Forestry, to name just three, and understand them in a way that would have been impossible from Baker's published works or archives.

In 2016, I was awarded a grant by Landscape Research to travel to Kenya and Ethiopia; two countries that have a connection with Baker. Kenya was where he worked as a colonial forester in the 1920s, and Ethiopia featured in his advocacy work from the 1950s onwards. Furthermore, Ethiopia is the seat of the African Union and is one of the countries involved in the Great Green Wall project. Arrangements meant that many of the afforestation projects that we were able to visit were in Kenya, which were arranged through the International Tree Foundation and the Mount Kenya Trust. Whilst in Nairobi I visited the Kenyan National Archives and engaged a researcher there to locate material relating to Baker and the Men of the Trees - not used in my thesis - but which provides a useful contribution to the record of his African activities.

A significant experience during the trip was a trek in the Simian Mountains in Ethiopia. Originally intended as a recreational part of our travel plans, the six days I spent in one of northern Ethiopia's national parks brought into sharp relief the necessity of the preservation and restoration of vegetation and soil on the dry, steep hills. The reality of life within the national park meant that some communities had been moved out because their grazing practices had eroded and imperilled the landscape. The damaged landscape was going to be the focus of state-organised reforestation, but there was a forgotten social element: the people who had lived for generations in that place had been moved, rather than being engaged in restoration. This is a simplistic perspective on the situation, yet it deserves mention as I think that Baker's experience of seeing land degradation around the world was often a visceral one, and that his solution in the majority of cases was social. He is often referred to as a humanitarian as well as an environmentalist, and this is an important duality. He saw deforestation and the destabilisation of the world's ecosystems as a societal problem, with social solutions: people coming together in cooperation, the importance of training and educating, and the possibilities of both top-down and grassroots action.

In January 2018, I visited West End and was shown around the village by a local historian, Peter Sillence. I was able to visit the woodlands that had surrounded the family home, look at artefacts in the village museum, and walk in the gardens surrounding The Firs. There are certain areas of Baker's life that are absent in his autobiographies, not least the fact that he had two sisters. Their total absence from his published accounts is remarkable, alongside his brothers' faint shadows.

Visiting his parents' graves in West End made it clear that his sisters lived into adulthood and reinforces the fact that Baker's autobiographies do not offer any kind of objective account or point of reference for his immediate family.

Online newspaper archives have also played an important part in this study. It was possible to search national and international newspaper databases for mentions of Baker and the Men of the Trees, finding evidence of the profile and impact that they had beyond the record held in their journal. Through this search I was able to identify Baker's letters to *The Times*, coverage of the Men of the Trees in American newspapers, and the posthumous mention of Baker in the *Guardian* by John Vallins. As my research and writing has progressed, I have continued to make use of the online archives of the national newspapers in Britain. When researching Baker's experience in Canada, for example, it was possible to tally his account with those featured in *The Times*, finding obituaries, news articles and reports from Canada and the UK that contextualized and embellished Baker's account.

There is a lack of consistency in the richness of material available in the archives, necessitating a balance in its use to maintain an argumentative and narrative flow. Most of the sources used in this study are primarily textual, with some photographic and graphic illustrations used for context, and are incorporated in such a way as to demonstrate the character and context of each. Methodologically, each chapter began with a rough outline of the years and events that would be covered, based on the chronology provided by Baker's autobiography. Having developed a portfolio of source material, a secondary search based on key names and terms added breadth to the study. Examples of this were figures and themes like Bishop Exton Lloyd in Canada, muscular Christianity, and the Evangelical Revival.

Whilst writing each chapter, I have made use of the British Library and have been able to identify and use rare and hard-to-obtain books on topics such as key figures in the Bahá'í movement, Baker's mentor Daniel Dunlop, and pamphlets from the Salvation Army. This iterative process extended and extrapolated the narrative as new source material demanded inclusion. A definitive visual source was 'The Broad and Narrow Way'. In early versions of the first chapter, I referenced a posthumously written account of Baker's childhood by one of his Bahá'í friends. The letter mentioned an image that Baker had described to this woman, Ursula Samadari, but without sufficient details for me to find it. It was only upon visiting Baker's childhood home and the Mission Hall that stands beside it, that I was finally able to identify the image. Upon this discovery I mentioned the finding to an archivist at the Salvation Army with whom I had been in touch. He was able to inform me that the same publisher printed the

frontispiece to William Booth's book *In Darkest England and the Way Out*, linking these two powerful images of sin and salvation from the nineteenth century.

Details like this are not visible in the final thesis but illustrate the reflexive nature of developing and writing this study, as well as identifying future areas of research and publication such as Victorian representations of the social and spiritual condition of the country. The manuscript is structured chronologically, using Baker's published accounts of his life as the framework. However, this has allowed me to identify and analyse areas in his account that deserve elaboration, as well as areas where there are apparent omissions or contradictions. For example, the chapter about his childhood incorporates material that suggests that the Baker household had a more keen focus on spirituality and salvation than the bucolic environment that comes across in his autobiographies. I also wanted to communicate the process of creation, deconstruction, and reconstruction that was necessary in bringing together disparate and often contradictory sources. Rather than write the definitive account of Baker's war service, for example, I wanted to communicate the disparities between different accounts and pieces of evidence. This, I hope, allowed me to clearly demonstrate my methods in corroborating, critiquing, and expanding upon Baker's narrative, rather than just replacing his account with my own.

LIMITATIONS

The most significant limitation of this study was that the scope of this manuscript was initially intended to take an overview of Baker's whole life, but then had to change focus and concentrate instead upon his early life up until his departure to East Africa in 1920. Although this was disappointing in some respects, the rationale was clear: after Baker began his colonial career his literary footprint became much more substantial and the content of his published works from 1930 onwards – although sometimes extraordinary – are likely to be much more reliable as a description of his activities as they are more consistent with those of his other publications and his wider network. However, the period before that, is one which deserved substantial critique and substantiation, and thus became the focus of this study. There is much that could be developed further, and a great deal of archival material that could be brought to bear on other aspects of Baker's life and work. Further enquiries into the insight of the archives could go further into looking at the planting and conservation activities of the Men of the Trees in Britain and overseas. Other physical archives which have not been explored include the material left in New Zealand at the St. Barbe Baker Memorial Library in Twizel. Research could also be undertaken in a number of North American archives and libraries on the context of Baker's activities there, including his involvement with the Civilian Conservation Corps, his advocacy for

the Redwoods, and the hundreds of public addresses which he made across the continent as a paid lecturer.

Lastly, there is much that will be gained from contextualising Baker's later work within other European nation's interests and anxieties. Diana K. Davis' study *Resurrecting the Granary of Rome* demonstrates the influence that desertification had on the public imagination in France, and the impact that it had upon colonial administrators in North Africa. Baker was a key figure in perpetuating these messages which is a legacy of environmental thought which still has impact today. An early draft of this manuscript sought to frame Baker's life within the legacy that exists in the form of the Great Green Wall, but encountered the problem that without a definite biographical text from which to make assertions about his contribution to the idea of continental-scale ecological restoration, the task was impossible. Indeed, the process reinforced the necessity for this manuscript to understand the message, one must also understand the messenger. Thus, Baker's early life is examined in such a way as to unravel and explain the persona that he created in the Man of the Trees and the powerful message of ecological salvation that he preached.

4. Child of the Trees

Why do you love trees? How did you first become interested in forestry and tree planting? are questions often asked. The answer is that the love of trees is in my blood, for I inherited it.¹⁵⁶

In 1953, Richard St. Barbe Baker returned from a journey by land across the Sahara from Morocco in North Africa to his former home in East Africa, and took to the rostrum at Speakers Corner, Hyde Park; his subject being the urgent need for tree planting in Africa.¹⁵⁷ These talks followed the fifteen-thousand-kilometre ecological survey of the Sahara that Baker had undertaken in 1952. He went on to write up the survey in his book *Sabara Challenge* (1954), after having promoted it in the press and documented in the Men of the 'Trees' journal throughout the journey. It had been a daredevil mission, executed on a shoestring, and which he claimed proved that the great desert was steadily encroaching into the fertile lands in Sub-Saharan Africa. This was an idea that had been prevalent within the European colonial forestry community of which he had been a part, and which still motivated him over twenty years since first working in Africa.¹⁵⁸ Was this a forester delivering a speech about restorative silviculture, or an ecological visionary delivering a sermon on the transformational potential of trees to restore and redeem? He claimed that a love of trees was in his blood, but might Baker have called upon other aspects of his inheritance including the wisdom and experience of his forebears when it came to public speaking and spiritual address? Baker's ancestors being men and women whose lives were spent spreading the word of the Gospel, similar to his own that told of the good news that could come through planting and protecting trees.

The Sunday sermons would have used very similar rhetoric to that employed in his published works: immediate, engaging, accessible and inspiring. Baker returned to Speakers Corner a few weeks later to find that one of his arch-hecklers had taken his spot and

¹⁵⁶ Richard St. Barbe Baker, *I Planted Trees* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1944) p.9.

¹⁵⁷ *Richard St. Barbe Baker 1889-1982: A Keepsake Book for All Ages and Generations*, edited by Barrie Oldfield and Christopher Fyfe (Lesmurdie: The Men of the Trees (Western Australia Branch) Inc, 1989), p.11.

¹⁵⁸ See: S. Ravi Rajan, 'Foresters and the politics of colonial agroecology: The case of shifting cultivation and soil erosion, 1920-1950', *Studies in History*, 14, 2, n.s. (New Delhi: Sage, 1998), pp.217-236; and Joseph M. Hodge, 'Colonial Foresters versus Agriculturalists: The Debate over Climate Change and Cocoa Production in the Gold Coast', *Agricultural History*, (2009), pp.201-220.

was espousing the same credo of tree planting.¹⁵⁹ Later, in his account of the journey across the Sahara, he described the certainty he felt about his mission, that ‘All through the present age of industrialism, man has been trying to conquer Nature and now the implacable forces of the natural cycle are hitting back. The deserts are advancing. Man must accept its challenge.’¹⁶⁰ With the choice of language - ideas of conquest, loss, implacable enemies and the violence of nature - addressing the physical and moral challenge presented by land degradation and countering it with an army of the righteous and just. This image of Baker as leader, bringing together a loyal congregation of believers, is the one he best honed: the Man of the Trees.

Holding sermons under trees was commonplace for Baker. Gathering together nature lovers, reading poetry, performing plays - all outdoors and amongst trees – are recurring features in Baker’s work and writing, most notably in his idea in the 1930s for the establishment of a Grove of Understanding in the Californian Coast Redwood forest.¹⁶¹ Was this something unique to Baker’s form of ecological evangelism, or was it rooted in something deeper? In his childhood and the home environment he grew up in, the company that his parents kept, or their aspirations for their oldest son? After all, they were people who built chapels when none around suited them as vanguards of an evangelical wave that had swept through the country and the Empire.

Standing under the trees on the corner of Hyde Park, in what is renowned for being a place of debate and discussion, Baker implored his audience to see reason and join him on his crusade to save the world through tree planting. He did this in the manner of ‘an enlightened Vicar who saw the value of going among the people and, like the Salvation Army, compelling them to come in’.¹⁶² The idea of a nonconventional space in which to hold such a service held even more potency for Baker than just the engaging manner of delivery when describing the Army’s outdoor sermons:

Beautiful, peaceful and inspiring though many of our places of worship are, there are not a few among us who on a fine spring or summer morning would feel their minds better attuned to the Divine Message under the blue dome of heaven or in a forest of venerable

¹⁵⁹ Baker, (1970), p.116-117.

¹⁶⁰ Richard St. Barbe Baker, *Sahara Challenge* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1954) p. 146.

¹⁶¹ Camilla Allen, ‘Groves as metaphor for the fragmented redwood forests of California’, in *A History of Groves* ed. by Jan Woudstra and Colin Roth (London: Routledge, 2018).

¹⁶² Baker, (2010), p.9.

trees – Nature’s Cathedral – than they would when confined within any building made by human hands.¹⁶³

In addition, it was for ‘pointing the way to greater simplicity and flexibility of conventional modes of worship’ that Baker thanked the Salvation Army, but the General and his followers were not the only people to impact the formative years of Richard St. Barbe Baker. Ideas of duty, salvation and service were present from his early years, as was the beauty and the glory of God. The sanctity of an informal service and the necessity to share a message with the world was something that he had encountered from a young age.

CHILD OF GOD

It was my good fortune to be born in an English country-side of God-fearing forebears and dedicated parents who lived a life of Service to others.¹⁶⁴

On a scrap of paper in a folder of miscellaneous family papers collected in Saskatoon are the words: ‘you can read and destroy’. The handwriting appears to be Baker’s – the flow and the blue ink are consistent with other documents – and it is impossible to know if it refers to one or all of the documents in the folder, or to some other piece of paper, and to whom it was addressed. The glimpses into his childhood as illustrated in the archives are at odds with the tree-focussed nature of his autobiographies, describing a youth spent in an evangelical family of strong practical faith that permeated all aspects of home and work. Baker, in the telling and retelling of his story, always started at the beginning: with his childhood on the edge of the New Forest. The same ground is trod and re-trod: his family had always planted trees; his father had a variety of apples named after him; his earliest activities were the planting and tending of plants and trees in the family’s garden and nursery. His upbringing was practical as well as religious, and Baker had a transformative spiritual awakening in the forest. Christian devotion is present in these narratives, but the archives tell a different story, with trees barely evident; practical faith surpassing practical silviculture.

The Baker family had originally hailed from Kent and their rather ordinary name belied an aristocratic history. Sissinghurst Castle (later the home of Vita Sackville West and Harold

¹⁶³ Baker, (2010), p.9.

¹⁶⁴ US, R. St. Barbe Baker Papers, fonds MG 71, A/1/2 ‘The Way By Which I Have Come’ (1977).

Nicholson) was the family seat after Henry I bestowed the land to one of his ancestors. Sir John Baker (1488-1558), who served as Chancellor of the Exchequer and Speaker of the House of Commons, built the house that was known as the castle. The Bakers lived there until the castle had become dilapidated and was used as an internment camp for French prisoners during the Seven Years War in the mid-Eighteenth Century. The achievements and appointments of the Baker family between 1758 and 1854 were compiled in the *Venn Alumni Cantabrigieenses*, demonstrating the Baker family's longstanding association with the university as a place of religious study and ordination, a fact trumpeted by Baker.¹⁶⁵

Richard Edward St. Barbe Baker was the oldest of the four children born to Charlotte (née Purrott) and John Richard St. Barbe Baker. His siblings are shadows in the published accounts, and not much more in evidence in the archives, slipping in and out of the narrative. Yet two figure looms large in both: the thickly bearded and sparkly-eyed John Richard St. Barbe Baker, and John Baker's God. The papers held in Saskatoon are alive with evangelical fire, not least when they describe the attention paid to his oldest son. One note reads 'Gave Baby (R.E.St B.B.) some Postal orders – he threw them down – showing his contempt for money.' This is the first line of a document describing the moral and spiritual character of a child in his first year of life and suggests that from an early age the young Richard was an exemplar of his father's relationship with God:

'Baby playing with a toy, sees food coming – throws it down, for the better morsel / Baby cries when he cannot get what he has in view – children of God need to cry unto the Lord for supply.'¹⁶⁶

John Baker was the son of an evangelical preacher, John Wright Baker. His great-grandfather, the Rev. Richard Baker, had moved from Norfolk to take up a position in the nearby village of Botley in the early 1800s and these four generations consolidated Baker's familial ties to the area, with the family moving from Botley to West End in 1865. Richard St. Barbe Baker described his grandfather John Wright Baker as 'an eloquent reader' whose congregation of the rich and poor were drawn to his sermons that brought to life 'the ancient characters of the scripture for their enlightenment and enchantment'.¹⁶⁷ John Wright Baker's sermons did not find favour with the

¹⁶⁵ Baker, (1970), p.3.

¹⁶⁶ US, R. St. Barbe Baker Papers, fonds MG 71, B. XI. 7, A/1/1, (1890).

¹⁶⁷ Baker, (1970), p.5.

Bishop, and his early death was attributed to criticism levied at him. This left his only son, aged fourteen, as the sole support for his mother and in much reduced circumstances. Financial necessity meant John Richard Baker had to sell the large family home in West End, Firgrove House, and over the years developed a tree nursery on land behind the new house, The Firs, as the family's main source of income.

Being the only child and sole breadwinner meant John Baker could not follow his father to Cambridge and undertake a formal education to join the church, and so instead applied his own evangelical Christianity to the Victorian Evangelical Revival. He pursued this independently of the Church through connections made with the niece of Archbishop Chenevix Trench, Mary Trench, and with the help of his future wife, Charlotte Purrott. The circumstances of John Baker's proposal to Charlotte are something Baker impressed upon his readers, as her father had been wealthy and John's first proposal was rebutted. It was only upon her father losing his fortune that she approached John Baker and asked him to marry her. Baker was clearly very fond of his mother, and credited her with as great a scholarly interest in the Bible as his father, as well as having a gift for music and a love of horses that she was to instil in her oldest son.

In the 1891 census, the household at The Firs was made up of John Richard St. Barbe Baker, his wife Charlotte, Richard Edward St. Barbe Baker (then aged one), and their servant, Alice Rooke, who had been born in Waltham, in the Borough of Southampton.¹⁶⁸ By 1901 the family had grown to include his brothers James (aged nine), sister Ethell Mary (aged seven), and brother Thomas, (aged five), Fanny (aged four), as well as Richard's maternal grandmother, Ann Purrott, and a new servant, Ella Pavey. It is possible that it was around this time that the one surviving family portrait was taken. In it, the four children gather in the doorway of The Firs with their parents, and it is likely that Ella was also included. It was the same occasion as a separate portrait of the two youngest children was taken, as well as the rather sombre portraits of Richard and his parents in the Mission Hall.

Baker's two sisters make virtually no appearance in Baker's autobiographies, although their names do crop up in the archive in Saskatoon. Both died before their parents and are buried in the same churchyard as their oldest sister who did not survive infancy. It is not clear what killed the two women. Ethel, born in 1893, died in 1925 aged 31, and the younger sister Grace, born

¹⁶⁸ Kew, National Archives (NA), Census Returns of England and Wales, 1901, RG13, 1065; Folio 81; p.23.

in 1897, died in 1936 aged 39. Neither married, and there is the possibility that a rotating sun room in the garden, which was constructed by Richard St. Barbe Baker, might well have been intended as a place for his sisters to recuperate from tuberculosis, a common cause of premature death at the time.

THE TIN TABERNACLE

As well as undertaking evangelical mission work in Hampshire and the South of France, John Baker hosted large groups of people in the reading room of The Firs, but which he soon outgrew as his congregation swelled. This problem was resolved through the purchase of a prefabricated 'tin tabernacle' that had been available from the 1850s, with one model available from the garden supplier William Cooper on the Old Kent Road. John Baker built the West End Evangelical Mission Hall around 1884. He and Charlotte were married in 1886 and Richard was born in 1889. The Mission Hall appears to have been a place of inter-denomination and inter-faith activity, with the breadth of the congregation recalled by Baker in *My Life, My Trees*:

My father could not abide sectarianism and each month held a united prayer-meeting to which he welcomed ministers of all denominations. In the atmosphere of prayer their religious differences vanished, for with their convenor they all acknowledged the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man. To his hospitable home came Hindus and Buddhists, Persian Sufis, devout followers of Islam and missionaries on furlough.¹⁶⁹

One visitor was the founder of the Salvation Army, 'General' William Booth (1829-1912). In Baker's account, Booth had a lengthy debate with John Baker about backsliding – the potential for a converted Christian to revert to their previous faithless state – which in Booth's mind could only happen twice. However, in John Baker's mind his Lord had the capacity to forgive 'until seventy times seven'; a reference to Matthew 18:22. This encounter left the young Richard 'so hypnotised by the General and in sympathy with the poor soul [he] too fell flat on my face on the floor'.¹⁷⁰

The Evangelical Revival in which John Baker participated was a continuation of the Protestant Reformation that had started with Martin Luther, which transformed the word 'evangelical' from one that was synonymous with good news and the gospel into one with a direct relationship to a

¹⁶⁹ Baker, (1970), p.9.

¹⁷⁰ Baker, (1970), p.15.

new form of faith that had broken with the Church in Rome. Firstly, it celebrated the triumph over the death of Christ as opposed to the focus on his sacrifice that was central to the Catholic mass. Secondly, the Catholic Church derived that ultimate authority from the scriptures, as read by its believers, rather than its interpretation. Thirdly, it ushered in a new idea of a priesthood that represented all Christian believers, rather than a priest class.¹⁷¹ In this instance, and especially in continental Europe, Evangelical became interchangeable with Protestant, but in Britain in the mid-eighteenth-century it became closely allied to the idea of pietism, a ‘usage designating a set of convictions, practices and oppositions’ that manifested in ‘intense periods of unusual response to gospel preaching linked with unusual efforts at godly living’.¹⁷²

Evangelical characteristics can be defined by four main qualities: ‘conversionism’, belief in the necessity of changing lives; ‘activism’, sharing the good news of the scripture; ‘biblicism’, which takes the Bible as the premier authority; and ‘crucicentrism’, where the sacrifice of Christ on the cross is highly stressed.¹⁷³ In relation to ‘conversionism’, John Baker, becoming an evangelist in his late teens, was typical of young men entering this radical Christian community. Between the years of 1780-1840, the average age of conversion was around seventeen years old. Between 1841 and 1900, it was around sixteen.¹⁷⁴ Whether John Baker had a moment of enlightenment - the light and joy ‘entering into his soul’ - is not something that is communicated in the family’s papers. However, the culture in which he played a part took in the gamut of sudden conversions, gradual enlightenments and the combination of the two, and this culture is key to his son’s later expressions of faith, as well as faith in silviculture.

John Baker added St. Barbe to his name around 1887 as a means of recognising another branch of the family, but it was never formally incorporated into his name. The family bible had been passed down from Charles St. Barbe (1776-1849), who was a banker and Mayor of Lymington. The name St. Barbe is derived from Saint Barbara and is one of a number of variations on the contracted form, including St Barb. Lymington, on the coast of the New Forest, has a St Barbe Museum that houses displays about the history of Lymington and the New Forest. After naming

¹⁷¹ Mark A. Noll, *The Rise of Evangelism: The Age of Edwards, Whitefield and the Westleys* (Leicester: Varsity Press, 2004), p.14.

¹⁷² Noll, p.15.

¹⁷³ D.W. Bebbington, *Evangelism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), p.3.

¹⁷⁴ Bebbington, (1989), p.7.

his eldest son Richard Edward St. Barbe Baker, another family name was added to his second son's name, making him Thomas Guillaume St. Barbe Baker. Amongst the family papers held in Saskatoon is a family tree that links the Guillaume family to the St. Barbe Bakers. John Baker is listed as St. Barbe Baker, and Charlotte as Lotte, with the Guillaume name coming from his mother's family, her maiden name being Harriet Martha Maria Guillaume.

The reality of life in The Firs was never one to get in the way of a good story. In a sketch autobiography, never intended to be read as prose, the Baker name alone is enough to conjure a formidable legacy of authority and spirituality:

Life of Faith. Home of ancient calm and dignity. We were aware of our antecedents [sic] from Henry I downwards. In British History every now and again our family had produced a leader, sometimes a Divine [...] scholar and Fellow of his College [...] These Bakers distinguished themselves as soldiers, sailors or diplomats [...] with an inherent sense of duty to the land and their [tenants] [...] My father had inherited these traits of leadership and he dedicated them to the Evangelical Revival of the latter part of the 19th Century. A deep student of Prophecy.¹⁷⁵

This aristocratic grandstanding is commonplace in Baker's writing and demonstrates the reverence in which he held his forebears, as well as the legacy he felt it was his duty to continue. The legacy also gave gravitas to the role to which John Baker appointed himself: minister with his own Mission Hall, leading a life of dynamic evangelism and social work. The Mission Hall and Firs hosted Lord Radstock, a member of the Plymouth Brethren, and John Wood, one of the founders of the Evangelisation Society, as well as General Booth. John Baker also met the American evangelist John Moody, and his mission work continued in the local area for 60 years until his death in 1944. He illustrated his sermons with magic lantern talks using glass slides depicting Biblical scenes, something which his son would go on to do with great effect in his lectures in years to come, albeit with a different subject.

John Baker's reputation in the village was one of a social benefactor: a local businessman who provided work on his expanding nursery, his generosity to the poor and unemployed, and of his efforts to help people in the years before and after the First World War. There was a practical connection between trees and faith, with work undertaken with a sense of vocation and service.

¹⁷⁵ US, R. St. Barbe Baker Papers, fonds MG 71, A. I. 4.

John Baker's primary role was as a lay preacher with his own platform for sharing his evangelical message, and the tree nursery provided a means of creating an income for himself and his family to sustain that work. The characteristics of the Mission Hall - a place that welcomed people of all faiths and denominations - were typical of a prevailing attitude within the evangelical movement.¹⁷⁶ 'Barby Baker', as John Baker was known in the village, was remembered as a kindly and eccentric figure in West End. The family set up a soup kitchen during a particularly hard winter that brought to a sudden halt the building industry in the area, leaving people without savings destitute. Mr and Mrs Baker took soup to the elderly and those in need, whilst encouraging local tradespeople to give credit to their neighbours to help them through the difficult times.¹⁷⁷

CHILD OF THE TREES

Baker's accounts of his childhood in The Firs always prioritised the tree nursery and the role he had in tending the young saplings over his evangelical experiences. He would describe his father's careful advice to his clients when they bought trees for their land never to acquire ones 'which he felt would not be happy or thrive in their new surroundings', and the long lasting relationships he created with his customers.¹⁷⁸ The affection and admiration that Baker had for his father for the work he did in the community comes across in the recollections of his childhood: work provided in his gravel pit during the winter and times of unemployment, coffee suppers and lectures, and the fact that their house was open to everyone. Richard's role as the oldest son was to support to his father in his patrician role as host and employer:

Each morning a string of children and grown-ups would arrive with cans for milk, or loaves of bread for their sick or old folk. On wet days one of my jobs was to grind the wheat in a large coffee mill and sift out the coarsest bran. I learned to make bread before I was ten, but my father was the master-baker. He would always be down in the morning and greet the men with a cup of tea as they arrived. "Good morning Harry. What sort of night did you have? How is the wife?" or "Good morning, William. What shall we do today? Did you finish transplanting those trees you started yesterday?"¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁶ Noll, p.17.

¹⁷⁷ Charles Sillence, *Tales of Old West End* (West End: The West End Community Association, no date), p.7.

¹⁷⁸ Baker, (1944) p.14-15.

¹⁷⁹ Baker, (1944), p.17.

However, what Baker did not communicate in his later accounts was the urgency of his father's faith, the belief that the day of judgement was imminent, and the necessity to ensure the salvation of his family, and it is this John Baker who emerges from the archives. The collection of letters is by no means exhaustive, and the content indicates that there would have been frequent and lengthy contact between Baker and his mother and father which has been lost. Nonetheless, the interests and activities of the family are evident, and it is possible to understand from a different point of view exactly what place salvation had in the Baker family.

Baker used his books to demonstrate how his spiritual connection to trees was present throughout his childhood. In both of his autobiographies, he described his 'rebirth among the pines' and remembered the sanctuary offered by a beech tree he called 'Mother Confessor'.¹⁸⁰ The events are not reflected in the family papers and correspondence but appear word-for-word in both *I Planted Trees* and *My Life, My Trees*, demonstrating the importance of these experiences to the structure of Baker's self-penned origin myth. One of his foundational stories featured an incident that occurred when he was small boy and was allowed to wander through the woods behind his home, which he evoked in vivid detail:

At first there was a path to which I kept as it wound its way down into the valley, but presently I found myself in the thick wood where the trees were taller and the path was lost in bracken beneath the pines. Soon I was completely isolated in the luxuriant, tangled growth of bracken [...] The sensation was exhilarating and I began to walk faster, buoyed up with an almost ethereal feeling of well-being as if I had been detached from earth. I became intoxicated by the beauty around me and was immersed in joyousness and exultation, to feel I was a part of it all.¹⁸¹

This episode was only set down in print after his father's death in 1944. This does not mean that he wished to hide it from his father, yet it also invites the possibility that Baker's childhood contained other events of similar revelation and transcendence. Evangelical ideas of spiritual calling and rebirth are rife in the history of the preachers that his family associated with. General Booth converted first to Methodism and then Evangelism. Baker's parents had felt the call from an early age, and the history of Christianity itself as a worldwide religion had the conversion of

¹⁸⁰ US, R. St. Barbe Baker Papers, fonds MG 71, A. I. 4.

¹⁸¹ Baker, (1944), p.11.

Paul on the road to Damascus as the principal point from which his missionary work spread the New Testament around the Mediterranean. Baker returned to the episode in his second autobiography, *My Life, My Trees*, in which he described the event as leaving him ‘in love with life; I was indeed born again, although I could not have explained what had happened to me then.’¹⁸²

Paul’s conversion, as described in two parts of the New Testament, is a dramatic event, in which the bright light that announces the presence of God blinds the militant enemy of the early Christians. He falls to the earth and hears a voice from heaven asking why he is persecuting Jesus, a voice that his companions can also hear (in the King James Version) but not see.¹⁸³ After his conversion, blind and unable to eat, Paul was sheltered in Damascus, where Ananias - a man appalled at the idea of sheltering a man who had done so much harm to the Christians in Jerusalem - had his concern rebutted by his god, telling him “Go! This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel. | I will show him how much he must suffer for my name.”¹⁸⁴ Upon hearing those words, Ananias visited Paul, placed his hands upon him, and filled him with the Holy Spirit, causing ‘something like scales’ to fall from Saul’s eyes and his vision was restored. After that, Paul was baptized and began his efforts to bring people into his newfound faith.

Baker’s own moment of enlightenment was a much less violent affair, but uses similar devices: falling to the ground, heavenly light, otherworldly sounds, all creating a vision of an event not unlike a living saintly beatification, with Baker becoming supremely happy and blessed:

Soon the bracken was left behind as a clearing opened where the bare pine needles covered the floor of the forest. Rays of blessed light were reflected in the ground mists and appeared as glorious shafts interweaving with the tall stems of the trees [...] I sank down on the ground in a state of ecstasy; everything became intensely vivid; the call of a distant cuckoo seemed just by me. As I lay back a dead twig snapped, but it sounded like the crack of a carter’s whip, the song of warbling birds sounded like the notes of a great organ.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸² Baker, (1970), p.5.

¹⁸³ Acts 9: 3-9.

¹⁸⁴ Acts 9: 16-16.

¹⁸⁵ Baker, (1944), p.11-12.

The transcendental nature of the experience was powerfully expressed, with Baker feeling fundamentally changed by the event. It was a moment of such significance that he felt it affected him for the rest of his life, and the beauty and spiritual charge of the telling would not have been lost on his readers, intrigued by the evolution of the Man of the Trees:

At that moment my heart brimmed over with a sense of unspeakable thankfulness which has followed me through all the years which have passed since that woodland re-birth [...] I was lost in the wood, but at that moment this did not dawn upon me. I was conscious of a feeling of bliss only once repeated in my childhood. [...] In the wood among the pines, it seemed that for one brief moment I had tasted immortality, and in a few seconds had lived eternally.¹⁸⁶

The transcendental beauty of this moment strains credulity. But the authority and vividness with which Baker delivered the story would have left those ready to listen believing that he was truly a child of the trees, and reinforced his standing as the as Founder of the Men of the Trees. It is a claim in keeping with other spiritual moments of enlightenment: the Buddha under the Bodhi tree; Joseph Smith, founder of the Church of Latter-Day Saints in his woodland; Thoreau by his lake. These foundational and powerfully evocative stories are central to spiritual, religious and social philosophies, and so is it any surprise that Baker was to claim one for himself.

WEST END

The image of the home and village in which Baker grew up, as well as the wider community that his family participated in, is worthy of some consideration. The former Chairman of the International Tree Foundation, A.C. Warne, described the paradoxical nature of Baker's early environment: 'He was born in England, and grew up in West End, which is now a suburb of Southampton, but in his books he writes as if Southampton hardly existed and West End was a quiet little backwater in the midst of woodland.'¹⁸⁷ So where does the truth lie, and if it was not the bucolic rural idyll that Baker described, what was the village of West End really like? The quiet home described in Baker's book, or somewhere more dynamic which felt the social and environmental pressures of industrialisation, militarization, afforestation and urbanisation?

¹⁸⁶ Baker, (1944), p.12.

¹⁸⁷ A.C. Warne, 'Richard St. Barbe Baker, Man of the Trees' *Visionaries: The 20th Century's 100 Most Important Inspirational Leaders*, ed. by Satish Kumar and Freddie Whitefield (Dartington: Green Books, 2006), p.46.

Baker introduced it as a warm and settled place, saying that he ‘was born in the country in a house on a sunny hill on the fringe of a pine wood in the south of Hampshire. Beacon Hill it was called because just above the house there had been the old telegraph station with high wooded arms which signalled messages - in about twelve minutes – between the Admiralty in London and Portsmouth.’¹⁸⁸

The telegraph station sat on the highest point near the village, surrounded by relatively sparse heath that afforded good views across the county. The hill later became the site of a number of villas for the more wealthy inhabitants of West End, with the village centre, workhouse and schools situated lower down on the road between Romsey and Portsmouth. The heath was planted with extra trees to create areas of commercial forestry, with trees also planted around the villas. These efforts changed the character of the heath landscape to that of a more dense wooded residential area, as demonstrated by ordinance survey maps of the area. The remnant of Telegraph Woods, which at one point came all the way up to the Baker family’s house, suggests centuries of use; with pine plantation, sweet chestnut coppice and iron age formations all telling tale of human activity. The hallowed woodland of Baker’s childhood, entered into from the house of his nurse Perrin, was in fact a place of industry and extraction: gravel dug for roads, sand for building, poles and timber for construction. Perrin’s husband was a forester, employed by Queen’s College, Oxford, demonstrating the investment in plantations and woodland management in the area and the close ties that the Baker family had to them.¹⁸⁹

John Baker and others used the woodland around The Firs economically and maps of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries are testament to the increasingly fractured nature of the landscape. The digging of gravel next to the family home is measurable, with the sheltered area later becoming the site of a tree nursery, decades later replaced by homes. The path which Richard would have taken to his nurse’s house may have been used a century before by soldiers encamped at the top of the hill, awaiting departure on a ship bound for the Napoleonic wars. Furthermore, the necessity of timber for a port such as Southampton would have meant that any tree growing in the local area was likely to have some economic use, rather than existing in an idealised landscape, more for ornament than purpose.

¹⁸⁸ Baker, (1970), p.1.

¹⁸⁹ Baker, (1944), p.10.

The woods, now managed by the local council, are still owned by Queen's College, and Baker's relationship with his nurse and her husband offers further evidence of the highly practical relationship with the trees and woodland in which he grew up. This practicality was imbued in him from a very young age, with his father's early observation of his aversion to money being just one element of his saintly childhood. Baker trumpeted that he gardened from the age of two, made his own leaf litter compost, created tableaux of miniature landscapes in his sand pit and tended tree seedlings in his father's nursery. As well as watering and weeding, he learnt how to graft and bud fruit trees, earning him an entrepreneurial autonomy that meant he was able to exchange his apple trees for his first beehive. The thrill which he had first felt when seeing someone else's bees had left him with an urge to minister to his own, and between the ages of twelve and sixteen he built up a collection of sixteen hives, with his manual skills evident in their construction:

By the time I was sixteen I had become a proficient bee-master, with sixteen hives, the best of which in a single season yielded me two hundred and forty pounds of honey. I built up my apiary with driven bees which I rescued from the cottagers' sulphur pits. My modern bar-framed hives I had made in my own workshop after the model of the first one I had bought.¹⁹⁰

This practicality was to stand him in good stead, with Baker later saying that he found it more effective to demonstrate how to do something, rather than just issuing instructions.¹⁹¹ Baker's appeal as a spiritual, social and ecological guru in part emanates from the skill that he had in weaving the sacred into the everyday and showing people how that could be done. In the same passage in which he praised his father for bringing him up with the belief 'that whatever a man's profession he should still be able to keep himself and his family through manual labour', he also recognised the peace and tranquillity that comes with such work:

There is another aspect of life on the land; while working in forest or garden a man has time for meditation and indeed his very act is devotion. He becomes in tune with the Infinite. The miracle of growth and the seasons' changes induce a sense of wonderment

¹⁹⁰ Baker, (1970), p.15.

¹⁹¹ Baker, (1970), p.16.

and call forth worship from his inner being and in this sense WORK becomes WORSHIP.¹⁹²

This is an experience that is framed very much in the language of the Christian faith and of faith structures more generally, yet it also has resonance for our time as we search for secular ‘wellness.’ Nonetheless, Baker’s later spirituality, his devotion to the Bahá’í faith and their ideas and ideals, was still a major departure from the environment in which he grew up, and which the archives in Saskatoon bring to life in a most illuminating way.

AWAITING SALVATION

When I spoke to dear Marion Hoffman about the ‘In Memoriam’ for Richard St. Barbe Baker, I told her that I would like to send some personal notes, as I felt it would be a pity if the only picture of him should be the very public one, of a world famous conservationist. She suggested my writing to you – so I am enclosing some personal recollections of him. They may be of no use, but you may find something of interest. I wish there could be anything that could help to inspire a poem!¹⁹³

Reconstructing Baker’s life from the papers he left behind is problematic. The story is as fragile as the material it is recorded on, prone to bend, tear, and crumple under its own weight. However, certain papers and documents bring things to life, shining a light onto a vanished time, onto long dead people, their forms suddenly becoming robust and real. Moreover, it is in a letter from a fellow Bahá’í, Ursula Samandari, that Baker’s family can be seen from the outside, not within. The letter was written to a friend of Baker’s in Canada, a member of the Bahá’í community who was preparing his memorial, and it paints a subtly different picture of Baker. Samandari had met Baker when he was promoting the work of the Men of the Trees at an agricultural show in Kent and Samandari was publicising the local horticultural college where she worked, and their friendship grew from there. Samandari went on to become the exhibitions organiser for the Men of the Trees, whilst privately, Baker introduced her to the Bahá’í faith.¹⁹⁴

Because of their friendship, Samandari was invited to visit The Firs and met Baker’s parents. She was struck by the intensity of their home environment; prayers every morning and meals eaten

¹⁹² Baker, (1970), p.16.

¹⁹³ US, R. St. Barbe Baker Papers, fonds MG 71, N. (1982).

¹⁹⁴ ‘A love for all peoples’ in *Bahá’í World News Service* <<http://news.bahai.org/story/230/>> 2003 [accessed 27 November 2017].

hurriedly in case the Lord should suddenly appear. This description contrasts with the warm sunny rural idyll presented by Baker:

I slept in what had been St. Barbe's bedroom, as a child. The décor had remained unaltered. The walls were papered with steel engravings, illustrating Bible stories, mostly of the more terrifying episodes, such as Abraham about to sacrifice his son; Lot's wife turning into a pillar of salt; the plagues of Egypt, and, of course the Last Judgement, with the 'sheep' floating aloft, supported by angels, to Heaven, and the 'goats' being pitch-forked into a fiery Hell by frightful devils!¹⁹⁵

The weight of these ideas of sacrifice, judgement, sin, and salvation would be a heavy burden for a child to carry. Samandari went on to recall an episode where she stood in a bookshop window, wondering why a Victorian print depicting a life of sin seemed so familiar, especially the picture of a man beating a donkey, when she realised it was Baker's memory, not her own. He had told her that it was the only part of the image that offered him any solace, as he was sure that it was the only sin he was never likely to commit.

An image such as this would be impossible to identify from this description alone, but luckily it still hangs on the wall of the Mission Hall, central on a wall replete with banners and a map of Jerusalem, most likely where John Baker placed it: 'The Broad and Narrow Way'. The image that so tortured the young Richard is more benign over one hundred years later. Rather faded, the framed poster depicts a forking path: one, the broad way, proclaims its expansive welcome; a small doorway, set within a high wall, forms the narrow. The image takes its title from the Sermon of the Mount, as described in Matthew VII: 'Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat;| Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.'¹⁹⁶ The poster was accompanied by a printed lecture, which describes the origins of the image:

The picture, of which the following is a description, is of German origin. It was designed by Mrs. Charlotte Reihlen, of Stuttgart, more than 30 years ago, and at her request was painted by a gentleman, named Walker, an amateur artist, also of Stuttgart. A Dutch

¹⁹⁵ US, R. St. Barbe Baker Papers, fonds MG 71, N. (1982).

¹⁹⁶ Matthew VII, 13-14.

edition was afterwards produced in Holland. One of these Dutch copies was brought from Amsterdam, in 1868, by Mr. Gawin Kirkham, who has since issued three English editions. The image is a chromo-lithograph, and is about 24 by 19 inches.¹⁹⁷

The creators of the poster and leaflet were Protestants who wanted to create an accessible illustration to their message of spiritual ruin that they felt the working classes were heading towards, and the international reach of the image reflected the interconnectedness of the European Protestant faithful.¹⁹⁸ The print is notable for the contrast between the two paths: the wide path runs through a newly built town, with grand buildings for the entertainment of the people, featuring a theatre, ballroom and gambling house. People in fine clothing mill around, but as the path recedes into the distance there is violence and death: a man is shot, armies fight, and a city collapses at the fiery mouth of hell. The narrow way, however, winds through an idealised mountainous landscape. A few buildings – the chapel, Sunday school and a tabernacle – break steep steps, bordered by lush meadows and trees, whilst an open-air congregation gathers on the Alpine slopes. All of this activity takes place in the foothills, whilst the path continues to snake up a much higher mountain to climb and reach the gates of heaven. The fate of people's everlasting souls played out on a metaphorical landscape, rife with ideas of environmental determinism.

The Broad and Narrow Way proved to be hugely popular, with numerous printings and re-printings. Gawin Kirkham became Secretary of the Open-Air Mission and toured England with it 'to the North in Lancashire, Westmorland, and Yorkshire; to the West in Worcestershire; and to the South Hants and Dorset; and the testimonies to its usefulness from mayors, magistrates and ministers are very encouraging'.¹⁹⁹ Could John and Charlotte Baker have attended a lecture in South Hants? It seems likely that, at the very least, they would have had the pamphlet to accompany the print, and that it would have formed the focus of spiritual gatherings in the Mission Hall, like the weekly Sunday school. The persuasive text that accompanied the image has italicised text to draw attention to elements in the print that bring to life the path between salvation and damnation:

¹⁹⁷ 'Explanation of the picture "The broad and the narrow way" in *The Cambridge Digital Library* (1886.7.541) <<https://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/PR-01886-00007-00541/3>> [accessed 11 Feb 2019].

¹⁹⁸ Jean Michel Massing, 'The Broad and Narrow Way: from German Pietists to English Open-Air Preachers', *Print Quarterly*, Vol. 5, No. 3 (1988), pp. 258-267.

¹⁹⁹ The Open-Air Mission, Twenty-Eighth Annual Report, quoted in Massing (1988), p.264.

On the right hand we see *ears of corn* and *bunches of grapes*, symbols of blessing and fruitfulness, at the same time suggestive of bread and wine, namely, the sacrament of the body and blood of the Lord Jesus, the second Adam. On the left, *thistles*, *thorns*, and *poisonous plants* appear. These denote the curse which came through the sin of the first Adam, and the unfruitfulness of the earth, which the destructive *Serpent* sufficiently shows.²⁰⁰

The decadent masses of the Broad Way include prostitutes, gamblers and drinkers, their lifestyle manifest in this allegorical townscape: ‘The road is, outwardly, beautifully smooth, and on either side are *splendid stone buildings*, *pleasant trees*, *plants*, and *open squares*, so there is no lack of introduction to the cultivation of worldliness, and no lack of amusements and enjoyments.’ Within this street is the person beating his donkey, a man who ‘regardeth not the life of his beast, for “the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel” –Prov. Xii. 10’ and the figure is picked out as ‘*man torturing an animal*’.²⁰¹ The image shines a light on what is otherwise a swirling and murky account, and may indicate one of the first cracks in the edifice of Baker’s faith. The image seems not to have provided comfort in the fact that he was one of the saved - or at least was on the path to redemption - but that he had a life ahead of him that promised much temptation and ruin, at odds with the pious evangelism of the Baker household.

²⁰⁰ Cambridge Digital Library, p.4.

²⁰¹ Cambridge Digital Library, p.9.

5. The 'Call'

Life at The Firs - with the Mission Hall next door and the tree nursery in the garden - must have been idyllic in many ways; it certainly appears so in Baker's autobiographies. The environment was spiritual, studious and practical, with the five children participating in the life of the home, business and chapel. Moreover, it is likely that the realities of the world were not hidden from the Baker children. Comfortable as they were, they would have been confronted with poverty through the lives of the other children who attended the family's Sunday school, many of whom may have been members of two congregations in order to qualify for summer outings and Christmas parties.²⁰² Indeed, the process of growing up in West End was one where the children of the Baker family were expected to engage fully in the service, and services, provided at the Mission Hall, as remembered by Baker:

... I entered with zest into the Sunday services and helped my father at the week-night meetings. The Mission Hall on Beacon Hill opened its doors to the workless in the dark days of unemployment and became a shining spiritual beacon. Coffee suppers were served and illustrated talks on Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* were listened to with rapt attention. By the age of twelve I was sometimes called upon to deputize for my father. In time, I and my brother, Scott, used to walk the five miles to Curdrige Church for the morning service and some Sundays to Bitterne, two miles in another direction, for the evening service. On my return after supper, my father would ask me to read Spurgeon's Sermons to him. Having given out all day he liked to hear a sermon from *The Christian Herald* or perhaps an article on prophecy from *The English Churchman*.²⁰³

This early experience of leading services and reading scripture to an eager audience was foundational to the power that Baker was later able to wield as a public speaker. His delivery and timbre was remembered as being immediate and captivating, conveying 'a zeal for his life's mission which was compelling and convincing'.²⁰⁴ These attributes formed the bedrock upon which his inclusion of Biblical and Bahá'í scripture in his work was to be incorporated, with references to Biblical phrases peppering his writing and public speaking. The oldest son, a rather

²⁰² Silence, p.7.

²⁰² Silence, p.27.

²⁰³ Baker, (1970), p.14.

²⁰⁴ Geoff Poulton, 'Man of the Trees' *Eastleigh Historical Society Occasional Papers*, July 1987, p.2.

serious looking boy in comparison to his younger siblings, afforded a platform that was unusual for a child to occupy; that of a spiritual leader. Was there an element of performance? He clearly enjoyed sharing stories and learning the art of delivering sermons with the intention of changing the audience's perception of or perspective on the subject. The spiritual tutelage that Baker received at home was complemented by a formal education that started in the village of Bitterne, a short journey away. And as well as making the journey to school by bicycle, Baker also cycled from West End to the New Forest, an experience which must have both offered the pleasure of recreation and the spectacle of a diverse and very productive wooded heath landscape.

In 1902, at the age of 13, Baker was sent to Dean Close Memorial School (soon after just known as Dean Close School) in Cheltenham, and he finished his studies in 1906. Dean Close Memorial School was founded in memory of Francis Close (1797-1882), later Dean of Carlisle, who had been Perpetual Curate at St Mary's parish church in Cheltenham. Close had been instructed by the Reverend Charles Simeon whilst studying at Cambridge, a famous evangelical preacher and champion of the missionary mind-set that would lead to many of the thousand young clergymen under his tutelage to become ordained, serve as chaplains in the East India Company, and become Church Missionary Society missionaries.

Francis Close, because of this friendship, was part of a distinct evangelical set within the Church of England, manifesting in a defined school of divinity and the establishment of a new and more egalitarian method of teaching and preaching in parishes.²⁰⁵ This vision for education made Close one of the best-known national spokesmen on education - and not just within the context of the evangelical clergy of the time - being recognised as a man who put the training and education from everyone, from the poor to the upper middle-classes, and especially teachers, as a high priority.²⁰⁶ In this context, Baker's experience of life beyond home was very typical of a new kind of schooling that brought together the aspirations of the evangelical churches, the growing middle class in England and the rapidly expanding British Empire.

Cheltenham was fertile ground for Francis Close when he arrived in the town in 1826, and throughout the following years that he spent there he built churches and chapels, founded

²⁰⁵ Alan Munden, *A Cheltenham Gamaliel: Dean Close of Cheltenham* (Cheltenham: Dean Close School, 1997), p.5.

²⁰⁶ Khim Harris, *Evangelicals and Education: Evangelical Anglicans and Middle-Class Education in Nineteenth-Century England* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2004), p. 131.

schools, and in doing so created employment, which bolstered the touristic attraction that the spa town was already known for. Reverend Simeon, visiting in 1836, declared it as 'heaven on earth':

The churches so capacious, and so filled; the schools so large, so numerous, so beneficial; the people so full of love; the ministers such laborious and energetic men; and God himself graciously with me in my exertions: in truth, I can scarcely conceive any higher happiness on earth than I am now privileged to enjoy.²⁰⁷

The environment that Close created in Cheltenham was significant. He was personally responsible for the erection of four churches. As chair of the town's committee on railways, he stopped plans for a line that would have damaged the water table and cut through the centre of the town, and he was responsible for creating the first cemetery in 1831; now the Winston Churchill Memorial Garden.²⁰⁸ The dynamic force that drove Close permeated the school which was established in his name after his death, its undertaking being 'for the Purpose of Training Youths for spheres of Future Usefulness upon Scriptural, Evangelical, and Protestant Principles in accordance with the Articles and Liturgy of the Church of England'.²⁰⁹ Objectives such as these were suited to the needs of the time; the expanding Empire needed educated young men to fill a myriad of new roles, a need that the existing population was unable to supply. Prior to the Evangelical boom of school building, High Church factions of the Church of England and the newly re-established Roman Catholic Church built most of the new institutions. This was at odds with the sentiments of Francis Close and his fellow evangelists, who felt that both the High and Roman Catholic Churches were respectively ritualistic and papist.²¹⁰ In addition, the growth of the middle classes meant that there was a demand for schools to meet the educational requirements of their children, for whom there was otherwise little provision.

The Baker family occupied an ambiguous place between the middle and upper classes. In this period, the middle class were generally seen to be made up of farmers, tradesmen and clerks, with the upper classes and upper middle classes having a greater claim of rank and property. John Baker was a man who had inherited land, but not an income, and as a result spent the

²⁰⁷ Charles Simeon, quoted in Alan Munden, *A Cheltenham Gamaliel: Dean Close of Cheltenham* (Cheltenham: Dean Close School, 1997), p.22.

²⁰⁸ Munden, p.30-31.

²⁰⁹ 'Cornerstone pamphlet', C.E. Whitney, *At Close Quarters: Dean Close School 1884-2009* (Wootton: Logaston Press, 2009), p.2.

²¹⁰ Whitney, p.10.

remainder of his life balancing his family's finances through the sale of trees and the sale of land. But, in the context of more visible external markers, he would have stood apart from other members of the middle class with his family's history and his (self-appointed) role as an unbeneficed lay preacher; a position which would have brought social status as opposed to financial return. Baker was clear about his father's intention in sending him to board:

Although my father had had a tutor he decided that if at all possible I should go to a Public School and he was concerned that it should be one with Evangelical tendencies. No doubt he discussed this with the Rev. Melville Churchill; so in 1902, when I was thirteen, I was sent to Dean Close School, Cheltenham. The headmaster was a German Jew by the name of Flecker, who had married a Russian Jewess. Both were clever.²¹¹

When Baker arrived at Dean Close Memorial School in 1902, the school was notable as being one of the most affordable Evangelical schools in the country, with its fees standing at about sixty percent of the cost of sending boarders to its rivals.²¹² His younger brothers, Thomas and Scott, later joined him there. Sending three sons to public school - regardless of the low fees - put pressure on the family's finances. However, the sacrifices made by John and Charlotte Baker to ensure that their sons received an education were made with the intention of setting them up for future roles. Many of Dean Close Memorial School's pupils took holy orders, suggesting that John Baker was investing in the formal education that he had not been able to enjoy, and providing his sons the opportunities he himself had not had.

Dean Close Memorial School put an emphasis on the employability of its students, as well as their spiritual care. The life of the school was one in which discipline – as handed out by the headmaster Dr William Flecker – was an ever-constant presence. Prayers were held twice a day, as well as regular classes on different church services including Matins, the Litany and Holy Communion. Boys slept in small cubicles, closed with a curtain. Meals were simple and varied little. Dean Close Memorial School had been built in the most economical way possible, at first anticipating small numbers of pupils and quickly expanding the facilities for teaching and boarding to accommodate a growing intake. One highly attractive feature of the school was the individual partitioned spaces in which each boy was housed. Each had a window, bed, and wall

²¹¹ Baker, 1970 p.16.

²¹² Whitney, p.16.

space to put up pictures from home; it was a much more comfortable proposition for families who may have been sending the first child of their family away to board.²¹³

The curriculum included Latin, mathematics, French (as well as commercial French), English and science, alongside Greek testament and prayer book.²¹⁴ Baker did not dwell at length on this experience in any of his autobiographies, framing them instead within a growing desire to travel to Canada and answer the ‘call’ which he felt had begun in his childhood as his family read old letters from his great-uncle, Richard Baker, who had been a pioneer in Ontario.²¹⁵ Writing decades later, Baker described the impact of hearing the deeply pious and yet exciting stories and reflections from his great-uncle’s time in North America, reinforcing the evangelical and missionary-focussed nature of his family’s interests and activities:

The letters were early Victorian, and as their writer was a deeply religious man, they were full of religious sentiment, much of which was inclined to be introspective. He would wonder if he was giving his best to life. A scholar and a deep student of divinity, Richard Baker devoted much space to theological discussion and an attempt at Biblical interpretation. To him the Bible was indeed a handbook of both heavenly and practical wisdom.²¹⁶

Richard Baker was the second significant absence in John Baker’s life. John Baker’s father died and left his son and wife to continue his Evangelical work in West End, and his uncle emigrated to become a religious pioneer and settling in Canada, never to return to England. Yet the Bakers’ connection was not unique, with overseas settlement mirrored in the broader impact of evangelical Christianity that was making significant inroads into North America at the time.

CANADA

The letters from Baker’s great uncle had been his first call to Canada, and the second came during his time at Dean Close School. A talk delivered by a Canadian missionary proved to be highly memorable, not so much for its content, but in the way in which he communicated the contrast of life overseas by just taking off his collar and exclaiming: ‘out in Canada we don’t have

²¹³ Whitney, p.13-28.

²¹⁴ Cheltenham, Dean Close School (DC), *The Decanian*, No. XXXIII., Vol. IV, 1902.

²¹⁵ Baker, (1944), p.22.

²¹⁶ Baker, (1944), p.22.

to wear these durned things. We can wear soft collars or no collar at all.²¹⁷ The romance of emigrating to Canada was reinforced in his teens, when Baker attended a lecture by Bishop Exton Lloyd, an ‘old-time pioneer’ who was chaplain to an expeditionary force during the Reil Rebellion, as well as to the Barr Colony.²¹⁸ Baker was invited to attend the talk by a friend of his father’s, Eugene Stock. Stock was a prominent member of the Church Missionary Society, as the editor of their journal and later a prominent historian of the movement.²¹⁹ During his time, the Church Missionary Society moved from being an organisation which championed the idea of ‘indigenous churches’ - ones which were self-propagating, self-financing, and self-governing as had been the intention of his predecessor Henry Venn - to an idea of overseas missionary work which was much more white-dominated.²²⁰ In this instance, ‘the call’ maybe became ‘the push’.

He spoke also of their longing to build churches of their own in which they might worship. He told several moving stories of self-sacrifice and self-dedication in the wilds. Among them that bishop in the Yukon, lost in a blizzard, who was reduced to eating his boots – making stew out of his moccasins – to keep himself alive when everything else had gone. Bishop Lloyd ended with a story of a little cripple girl who, in answer to an appeal for funds to build a church, gave her precious crutches as a donation, and so moved the congregation that more than the required amount was raised in a moment.²²¹

This Victorian image of piety, ingenuity and charity struck a note that was both sentimental and adventurous. Moreover, relating to the prevalent philosophy of muscular Christianity, Baker’s account conjures a basic and exciting life in Canada; one that would present many opportunities that may not have been available at home. Thomas Hughes’ aspirations for Rugby, Tennessee, was that it would provide an alternative living for the second sons of England, but for Baker, the fact that his family’s finances were relatively limited and the income drawn from the tree nursery so small, forging a new life on the Canadian frontier must have held economic, as well as spiritual, appeal. Indeed, the length of time that passed between him leaving school and his actual departure for Canada, may have been necessary for a lack of money to facilitate the plan.

²¹⁷ Baker, (1944), p.23.

²¹⁸ Baker, (1944), p.23.

²¹⁹ ‘Stock, Eugene (1836-1928): Missionary editor, administrator, and historian’ in *Boston University Missiology Collection* <<http://www.bu.edu/missiology/missionary-biography/r-s/stock-eugene-1836-1928/>> [accessed 4 December 2017].

²²⁰ ‘Venn, Henry (1796-1873) Anglican missions administrator and theorist’ in *Boston University Missiology Collection* <<http://www.bu.edu/missiology/missionary-biography/t-u-v/venn-henry-1796-1873/>> [accessed 4 December 2017]

²²¹ Baker, (1944), p.23-24.

Baker's later autobiography described the moment he broke the news to his father, although there is some ambiguity to which profession he felt his father wanted him to continue with: trees or church:

I too was deeply moved by Bishop Lloyd's address and when I went home I told my parents I wanted to go to Canada. My father, I felt, was just a little disappointed. I had been with him everywhere and he had taken infinite pains with my training; I believed he had hoped that I was going to carry on his profession.²²²

The appeal of Canada which Baker had first felt in Cheltenham, and was evident in the specific culture of colonial settlement at Dean Close School, had been given greater form and direction through a meeting with Bishop George Exton Lloyd when Baker was seventeen. Bishop Lloyd was back in England recruiting for young men to train at his Divinity College in the province of Saskatchewan. He had achieved success earlier in the decade as the man who had made a public appeal through a letter in 1902 in *The Times* to encourage British settlers to form parties and to establish townships in Western Canada. In an impassioned letter, his vision of a British Canada shone through, a place where he saw the arable potential of the prairie soils offering untold wealth to anyone wishing to settle there, providing a ready source of one of the most popular commodities in Britain; wheat:

Might not English newspapers do more than they are now doing to keep that magnificent area of wheat land in Western Canada thoroughly British by encouraging the emigration of English people to their own territories? Millions of acres of the finest agricultural land in the world are now being offered by the Canadian Government (160 acres a head, free) to all bone fide settlers, and yet English people are looking on while Americans (who generally know a good thing when they see it) are rushing over the border by thousands to seize the opportunity and, of course, the future reward.²²³

Straightforward, practical, and inspiring, the letter had a measurable effect. The appeal for settlers was also qualified with the offer of assistance in helping those interested actually get to Canada. In addition, by giving his address as a point of reference to would-be colonists, he became one of the architects of what was to be known as the Barr Colony: a group of English settlers who answered this call to colonize the wheat belt. The journey was hard, with the leader

²²² Baker, (1944), p.24.

²²³ George E. Lloyd, 'The Canadian Wheat Belt', *The Times*, 22 September 1902.

of the expedition ousted from his position for embezzling funds, and therefore Lloyd left his role as the chaplain of the group to become its leader. Western Canada was a place of interest to readers of *The Times*, with the expedition becoming renowned for the perseverance and fortitude of the settlers:

It was from Saskatoon that the Barr colony of Englishmen and Englishwomen set out, three or four years ago, on that long, miserable, muddy drive which gave them so unpleasant a first impression of their adopted colony. Lloydminster, the chief town of the colony, is now a station on the Canadian Northern Railway, and there is no doubt whatever that the colony, as a whole, is now in a prosperous condition. Lloydminster itself is but a little village, but the soil around is almost all very good and is producing capital crops, which can now be easily marketed.²²⁴

INTERLUDE

Veritas is somewhat of a mutable quality in Baker's books; the colour and emotion that he instilled into the recollections of his early life necessitate them being read with caution, keeping in mind that they are highly fictionalised accounts that were often deployed with quite particular objectives in mind. *Dance of the Trees*, a less well-known autobiography which was intended for an adolescent readership and dedicated 'to young people everywhere', makes no mention of Bishop Lloyd, only the lecture by the unnamed collar-hating missionary (with no mention being made of his having been a missionary, just a 'traveller'). Much more is made of the dilemma that Baker faced. His father was selling off land to pay for his education, which ended the carefree days of his childhood and brought home the necessity of becoming independent of his family:

He listened gravely when I told him that I knew of his sacrifices.

He was a man of medium height with jet black hair and dark auburn beard and side-whiskers. As I spoke he gazed at me quietly and intently. I told him I wanted to leave school and – I felt a lump in my throat and swallowed before the words emerged – I intended to go to Canada.

My father's eyes twinkled. "You mean you would *like* to go to Canada." He smiled as he studied my reaction. "Isn't that what you mean?"²²⁵

²²⁴ 'The Canadian North-West', *The Times*, 22 September 1906.

²²⁵ Baker, (1956), p.17-18.

This agreement between Baker and his father meant that he probably spent the following years helping at home, at a point when his contemporaries at Dean Close School would have been finishing their studies. Being away from his family at school, and then following those years with a period of practical assistance with his father's nursery business, may well have given him a greater yearning for a life of freedom and independence in a new country. Indeed, given how long, arduous and expensive the journey would have been, one wonders if his family thought they would see him again within the next ten years, if ever.

It is likely that a large proportion of Dean Close Schools' students made their way to parts of the British Empire after they finished their studies. The presence of settler and missionary culture is also evident in the school's newsletter. Following pages describing the Old Decanian's dinners and football results are listings of talks and events that offer a sense of other lives beyond the school, with the dangers and romance of life overseas vividly communicated back to the school community:

It is our sad duty to record the deaths of three Old Decanians, H. Brain, Prestidge and H.F.F. Dodd. Brain was engaged in felling trees in Canada. One tree had been cut down, and falling lodged on another. Brain's companion proceeded to cut down the second tree, while Brain kept a look-out to warn his friend of danger from the first one. Intent upon his duty in this respect he did not recognise his own perilous position; the second tree fell against him, breaking his back and right leg. Fortunately his sufferings were of short duration ... Prestidge also met his death in Canada. He left England the last day of 1902, intending to adopt a rancher's life in the Canadian prairie. He had hardly reached his ranch in Assiniboia when he was smitten down by a disease with which he must have been infected on his journey ... Two Old Decanians have gone to Canada this year. P.D. Maxwell is now in the new settlement – "plantation" it would have been called in the 17th Century – in Saskatchewan; J.N.B. Colley has joined his brother, who is now farming in Ontario.²²⁶

Baker was by no means the first Old Decanian to go to Canada - nor Saskatchewan for that matter - and his activities there were not out of step with the settler and evangelist ethos of the school, including a hands-on approach to forestry. In a later edition of *The Decanian*, Baker reminisced about his school days, feeling that they could have been longer whilst also identifying

²²⁶ DC, *The Decanian*, May 1903 No. 35, Vol IV, p.281-282.

the influence that his father's finances was to have on him making steps towards becoming self-sufficient:

Sir,—I left Dean Close to go to Canada: perhaps I left earlier than I should, but I discovered that my father was selling off fields outside his place to pay for my schooling, and that did not seem good enough. I had heard of openings in Canada, and I decided to try my luck in the wide open spaces of the North West, where I homesteaded on 160 acres of land, worked on the lumber lands, taught school and built houses. I could not have done that and earned 5 dollars a day but for the fact that I did carpentry at school under Uncle Page, and worked with the Estate carpenter at home in the holidays. It was while I was working up in the lumber camps and felling trees that I began to think what would happen when all the trees I was helping to fell were gone. That was how the call to study forestry came to me.²²⁷

There is no mention of a spiritual call in this account. Nor of Emmanuel College or of visiting far-flung communities to officiate services. This revision is typical of Baker and, as often as not, it allows an understanding of the more complicated periods of his life. The erasure of the spiritual side of his attraction and activities in Canada is also demonstrated in the erasure of the spiritual side of his adolescence, which was more powerful and mystic than anything which he alluded to later in his life.

SPIRITUAL COMMUNION

The family papers held at the University of Saskatchewan provide an incomplete but compelling picture of the child Edward and adolescent Richard, quite different to that of student and pioneer. His communications home seem to be those of a thoughtful and spiritual boy with an ear attuned to issues that his family would also have thought important. The revision that Baker makes in later life, of the deeply religious convictions that he and his parents held, is evident in the few remaining pieces of correspondence between them. In one surviving letter that Baker sent to The Firs during his school days, the study of scripture and its significance makes up the entire content of the missive:

We were very pleased to see Mr Isaacs on Thursday he spoke to us about the appearances of our Lord to the different people after his resurrection

²²⁷ DC, *The Decanian*, No. CLXXXVIII, Summer, 1954, p.36.

I His manifestation in response to love Mary Magdalene dealing with bereavement he brought joy.

II His manifestation in response to thought, the two disciples on the road dealing with doubt he brought understanding

III to penitence. Viz Peter. Dealing with sin – brought forgiveness

IV The Church (earth's day)

V to the others, with Thomas for creating faith

VI By the Lake while they were toiling

(note.) the appearing is not sudden but, their recognition is sudden

Yr loving son Edward²²⁸

Baker's interpretive reading, and the imaginative energies that would have been spent on creating the scene in which Jesus appears to his various followers and eliciting a different response in each of them, creates an impression of a quiet, spiritual boy. This Biblical study, academic as it is, finds an interesting counterpoint in some other documents in a folder containing miscellaneous family papers. Within it are notes and texts with little context and often lacking a clear author; although in the context of the other documents it is possible to understand them as being by the hand of John and Richard St. Barbe Baker. One - a note to his eldest son - urges him to follow the words of King David, as delivered in Psalms:

Boy you are going to school! "Yes, sir" I replied – "Will you promise me something" – "yes Sir, if I can" Will you promise me to learn Proverbs I.10 "My son if sinners entice thee, consent them not". "Yes, Sir." And that text has been a shield to me through life – Learn to say "no" [double underline]²²⁹

Sending his oldest son away to school must have been a significant event for John Baker. Although his brothers were soon to follow, the image that had been created and communicated widely by the publication of *Tom Brown's School Days* by Thomas Hughes must have had some impact on the idea of what such an institution might be like. Indeed, in *Tom Brown's Schooldays*, Tom's father, the Squire, sends his son off with similar words of wisdom:

"And now, Tom, my boy," said the Squire, "remember you are going, at your own earnest request, to be chucked into this great school, like a young bear, with all your troubles

²²⁸ US, The R. St. Barbe Baker Papers, fonds B. XI, 7: A/1/26.

²²⁹ US, The R. St. Barbe Baker Papers, fonds B. XI, 7: A/1/26.

before you – earlier than we should have sent you perhaps. If schools are what they were in my time, you'll see a great many cruel blackguard things done, and hear a deal of foul bad talk. But never fear. You tell the truth, keep a brave and kind heart, and never listen to or say anything you wouldn't have your mother and sister hear, and you'll never feel ashamed to come home, or we to see you."²³⁰

The significance of each father encouraging his son to resist the prevailing atmosphere of school and hold true to the values of their home is important. In the case of the fictional Tom Brown, his struggle and eventual triumph to lead a good Christian life at school represents the narrative thrust of the novel. Moreover, in Baker's case, his father very clearly makes paramount the necessity to resist sin. Again, the imminence of salvation would not have been far from his mind and quite possibly made his son a more reclusive and quiet pupil at Dean Close School than the other boys whose names populate the school's magazine with its reports of the students' various academic and sporting successes.

Recognising the negative space in an autobiographical narrative is essential; there are swathes of Baker's life which are accounted for in only a few paragraphs of text, leaving much behind. Baker was not a man to linger on the psychological details of his childhood and adolescence. The matter-of-fact descriptions of even his most spiritual episodes are practical and mystical and belie a more eccentric experience in his youth. One wonders, considering his even-handed recollections of events, how he felt when rereading the papers in the folder of family documents. They are unusual, undated, and unsigned – but clearly by his hand. Sketches which describe mystical, magical, and spiritual events and which suggest significant time spent in the South of France, in the same region his father had in his adolescence, unmentioned in his published autobiographies.

Titled, 'A Personal Story' and '2 or 3 True Stories', they read more like notes than letters, the content immediate and otherworldly. 'A Personal Story' recounts a nightmare-like series of events in which Baker goes to find an English woman who was being held against her wishes in a Catholic-run hospital. The scene-setting is eerie, with gatherings of priests sat in dark rooms, large wards inhabited by spectral figures, and a sense of unease:

²³⁰ Thomas Hughes, *Tom Brown's School Days*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989) p.72.

Round the table sat about 12 priests – the light of day was carefully excluded & a candle burning – I do not know why – the young priest assured me that no such person was there & all the other priests confirmed what he said, most emphatically – Presently he lost his temper “find her if you can” he cried – I went upstairs into a long ward (about the size of our M. Hall) near the bottom a woman was sitting on the bed dressed, I saw at once this was the woman I wanted – I asked her name and said it was Cameron – but then whispered “we are watched – spies are everywhere” she took me into a small room and asked me have you seen a young priest who speaks English – he has just left me he said, he asked me to renounce the Protestant faith & become a Catholic – I said “no”.²³¹

There are more stories in the second document than just the two or three that the title suggests, and they too are concerned with otherworldly events. They place an emphasis on resuscitation and triumph over death, and begin with a very strange occurrence where a man survives being eaten by a fish:

When I was a young man a great fish was killed & in it a living man who had evidently been there some days. For a short time he was in a London Hospital & I used to read with interest the list of the great Doctors who went to see him as he was slowly recovering – There is also a well authenticated similar case about 200 years ago. How is it that fools make fun of Jonah & believe it is a made up story – The Saviour’s words regarding the event are quite sufficient.²³²

The eerie nature of these stories is striking. In one, an old woman is about to be buried in the local Botley churchyard but wakes up in her coffin. Another features a rich woman who returns to life as her finger is being sawn off by gravediggers. Another tells of two nurses who refuse to believe their patient had died and, after blistering his skin, spend hours resuscitating this man who had been left for dead. The last story in the collection tells of a night spent in Hyères in the South of France (the same place as the rescue described in the first document) where disturbances in the night create a sense of panic and alarm, and Baker has a role in helping to diffuse the situation. Nothing really happen and ‘all’s well that ends well’ is the last line on the paper.

²³¹ US, The R. St. Barbe Baker Papers, fonds B. XI, 7.

²³² US, The R. St. Barbe Baker Papers, fonds B. XI, 7.

These two uninhibited and strange documents, albeit without date or provenance, are demonstrative of some of the evangelical literalism, prejudiced Protestantism and mystical beliefs of the young Richard St. Barbe Baker. Conjecture is something that diminishes the quality of historical studies such as this, but in light of John Baker's connections with the South of France in his own youth it appears that the Baker family chose to send their oldest son to spend some time in the same area. With connections to a local evangelical community as well as a flourishing Mediterranean plant trade with the town known as Hyères-les-Palmiers, and a place of long-standing popularity with the English, Hyères may have offered a supportive and restful – yet otherworldly - environment for the young Richard.

One wonders, with Baker's tendency to describe at length many of the episodes of his life, whether the decision to make little of his school days or his visits to France hold any meaning. Might the brisk paragraph represent a less than happy chapter in his childhood, away from the bosom of his family, or perhaps the lessons of that time – being schooled in Evangelism - were to manifest in other ways in later life, rendering their instruction at school redundant? The enthusiasm with which he described his attraction to Canada and the impact of that adventure on his life is diametrically opposite, setting the tone for an engaged, dynamic can-do representation of life that has much more in common with the man he became.

Through the Dean Close Memorial School newsletter, it is possible to get a clearer picture of the environment in which Baker was educated. Far from having just two isolated introductions to the idea of missionary work and settling the British Empire, the ideas of Empire, spiritual service and the romance of being a colonist was embedded in the school's philosophy. Indeed, Baker's view of the romance of spiritual leadership was something he was attuned to from an early age. When describing the speakers who came to West End, he referred to his admiration of the 'athletic type', and that vigour in delivery was 'a valuable asset in a preacher'.²³³ The image of a valiant and righteous missionary – something that he was later to employ in his tree campaigns – is captured in a motto that he sets out in *I Planted Trees*, and suggests a macho and ambitious attitude towards capturing the faithful, part of a prevalent philosophy at the time:

To set the cost above renown,
To love the game beyond the prize;

²³³ Baker, (1944), p.16.

To honour, while you strike him down,
The foe that comes with fearless eyes.²³⁴

Baker's education at Dean Close School ended in 1906 when he was seventeen. It was to be three years before he went to Canada, and yet his autobiographies often condense these three years into a much more vague period. In *I Planted Trees*, Baker's introduction to Bishop Lloyd occurred when Baker was seventeen and was followed by a discussion with his parents as to whether it was the right direction for him to take. Having settled on Canada, he then spent 'a few months' in intensive training, getting ready for life overseas.²³⁵ This chronology was repeated in *My Life, My Trees*, but with the added detail that the inspiration provided by the collar-tearing missionary (who by that time had been demoted to just being 'a man') had been coupled with the knowledge that his father had been selling off land to pay for his school fees.

'BASIC' TRAINING

Baker then equipped himself for life in Canada. He improved his carpentry skills and learned how to make horseshoes but left no more clues than this as to how the years between his leaving school in 1906 and departing for Canada in 1909 were spent. He may well have returned from school to the practical and spiritual life of West End, helping in the nursery and Mission Hall, with few incidents to document in his autobiographies. However, despite the scant evidence of his other activities, one encounter was to have a defining influence upon him: The summer of 1907 or 1908 was spent with a customer of his father's, a fruit-grower in Hampshire, whose 'basic' Christianity was to have a profound influence on Baker.

I begged this young man to allow me to go and camp with him and help him lay out his property – I wanted to sleep under the stars and get fit for the work in Canada that lay ahead of me. After the day's work was done we would put on boxing gloves. In those days I rather fancied that I could punch hard – young Roberts was a fine specimen of muscular Christianity and although I had a longer reach he made me hop around.²³⁶

The reference to muscular Christianity is the only one in *My Life My Trees*, but Baker's school days at Dean Close Memorial School would have been saturated with the idea. It was an international vision (as transmitted throughout and beyond the British Empire) of capable,

²³⁴ Sir Henry Newbolt, quoted in Baker, (1944), p.16.

²³⁵ Baker, (1944), p.24.

²³⁶ Baker 1970, p.18.

sporting, spiritually and socially active young men who lived virtuous lives, with a notable example in the form of the American President Theodore Roosevelt who was brought up in a household that espoused these value of connecting faith with a virile masculine body. This vision was also reflected in literature at the time, such as *Tom Brown's School Days* by Thomas Hughes. The impact of Hughes' novel was considerable, not only because it was one of the most commercially successful novels of the nineteenth century, but because it articulated a philosophy which brought together ideals of physical, social and spiritual service. The fruit farmer Baker spent time with was a vegetarian, keen on Bernard Macfadden (the American health-proponent and publisher of *Physical Culture*) and Eustace Miles (a successful tennis player and author of *A Boy's Control and Self-Expression*, 1904). Baker credited Miles with bringing him over 'to his way of thinking,' which included the self-improvement found in boxing, sleeping outdoors, and holding small services for friends and neighbours, as well as discussions on what they termed 'basic' Christianity.²³⁷

The identification of Baker as the type of man who fits the muscular Christian trope also creates the opportunity to examine him in respect of the term 'muscular Christianity'; although not being one that the original proponents of the philosophy originally intended. Indeed, Thomas Hughes was already making manifest his utopian community at New Rugby in Tennessee when he wrote *Tom Brown's School Days*, embodying the Christian socialist ideas of cooperation and participation that he articulated in his novel. The issue of primogeniture in England was a decisive factor in Hughes establishing a new colony in the United States, where he saw the potential of an agricultural alternative to the colonial or military service of many second sons. That the three Baker brothers were already facing a diminished inheritance from their father, and with the family's land continually subdivided and sold off, meant that the attraction of this type of new life in the Americas must have been an appealing alternative, and this romance is what saturates the tales of Old Decanians in the Colonies.

Muscular Christianity and Christian socialism were readily conflated after the term 'muscular Christianity' was used for the first time by T.C. Sanders in *The Saturday Review* in relation to Charles Kingsley's *Two Years Ago*. The critic derided and sought to 'fiercely pummel the ethos as altogether, without distinction, a morally priggish, sexually repressed, anti-intellectual and social

²³⁷ Baker, 1944, p.24.

Darwinist embarrassment, whatever power might be claimed for it in the defeat of Napoleon or the moral fuelling of Empire.²³⁸ The tension manifest in the Colonial and Imperial legacy of Christian socialism and muscular Christianity deserves greater scrutiny because of its wide-ranging impact on societies around the world. The perceived paradox of socialism and Christianity has resulted in a lacuna of study, making it easier 'to burnish one's own post-imperialist badges while attacking conservative scholars who hold out for some merit in the historical record of England's 'civilising mission'.²³⁹

By approaching Baker's attraction to settlement in Canada with this tension in mind, it is possible to understand some of the more opaque circumstances in which he was drawn to settlement overseas, as well as evangelical missionary work. The two activities, as well as his studies at Emmanuel College at the University of Saskatchewan, and the tone with which he remembered his experience and later promoted it to young men in England, were of their time. Baker retrospectively cast his school days and early life as a solitary adventure of Christian service, action and thought, but the wider impact of muscular Christianity and Christian socialism can be seen in the events and activities in which he participated, rather than led.

Bruce Kidd, writing about the influence of muscular Christianity in Canada, focusses first on the man chosen as the country's 'Greatest Canadian', the democratic socialist and politician, Tommy Douglas (1904-1986). Douglas, like Baker, was a man of strong Christian faith who had grown up in Saskatchewan and whose early life was defined by his athleticism and boxing prowess. In later life, he created public corporations to manage public resources and infrastructure, build housing, champion organised labour and a powerful advocate for the introduction of the Canadian health insurance system known as Medicare. In this, 'his entire career', including his platform rhetoric against monopolists and profiteers, could be considered an emulation of Tom Brown standing up to Flashman, the tyrant and bully fictionalized by Hughes at Rugby School.²⁴⁰

Baker's later involvement in the creation of the Ministry of Health offers some parallel, but more specifically, both Douglas and Baker had experiences of delivering services to prairie

²³⁸ John J. MacAloon, 'Introduction: Muscular Christianity after 150 years' in *Muscular Christianity in Colonial and Post-Colonial Worlds* ed. by John J. MacAloon (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), p.xii.

²³⁹ MacAloon, p.xiv.

²⁴⁰ Bruce Kidd, 'Muscular Christianity and Value-centred Sport: The Legacy of Tom Brown in Canada' in *Muscular Christianity in Colonial and Post-Colonial Worlds* edited by John J. MacAloon (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), p.2.

congregations: Douglas as an ordained Baptist and Baker as a lay preacher whilst at Emmanuel College. Douglas's socialism is interpreted as being closer to the Methodist model than Marxist; his philosophy shaped by the time he spent as a minister 'embraced the interventionist ideas associated with the Christian social gospel' with an 'evangelical commitment to social justice in the here-and-now' and formed during the hard days of the depression. In this, there is the possibility of seeing Baker as offering an ecological parallel, with the same Province, social conditions and Christian commitment to social justice in the present being manifest in his activities whilst in Canada between 1910 and 1913 and in his later representations of the period, as presented in the following chapter.

It is not clear whether Baker thought that he himself embodied muscular Christian values, but it seems likely given his desire to go to the colonies and live on the frontier. Through hunting, building, and farming – as well as the spiritual service that he offered - he would have been seen in others' eyes as a capable, practical and exemplary young man. Some sense of this was provided in the correspondence that continued between Baker and the young fruit-grower, with the latter recalling:

Not only did you cook for me, but you did the washing up and you carted the fruit by horse and van, besides rushing about in the middle of the night and scaring that Mr. Miles who came down and slept in the tent with us, grinding the corn and making bread in that coal stove in the shed? Not only that, do you remember taking your little harmonium out in the Burrige Road and conducting a service each Sunday? You have always been a wonderful chap, full of good deeds and personality, and one could never keep you down.²⁴¹

This positive affirmation about Baker was also reflected in the estimation in which Mr Roberts held his parents, describing him as coming 'from a line of saints', and that if Baker had pursued an evangelical path he would have made a great success of it. Retrospectively, it is tempting to compartmentalise events such as these, but Baker's entire experience in Canada – and the three years' impact on his thinking – becomes all the more interesting when understood in the wider picture of muscular Christianity, British Imperialism and the settlement of the Canadian Prairie.

²⁴¹ Baker, (1970), p.19.

6. Reinvention on the Prairie

He spoke with weight and power of the great open spaces, and told of the settlers, who, many of them of English stock, were struggling to wrest a livelihood on their farms and homesteads. On Sundays, he said, they would ride on horseback, or drive in the sleighs in winter or buggies in summer, long distances to attend divine service held in one of the homesteads. He spoke also of their longing to build churches of their own in which they might worship.²⁴²

In later years, Baker would look back upon the three and a half years he spent in Canada as being formative in his understanding of the interrelation of soil and trees. He retrospectively claimed to have seen ‘a desert in the making’ that could only be countered by the sustainable integration of agriculture and forestry in such sensitive landscapes.²⁴³ In Baker’s books, the period he spent in Canada is elevated to a much higher position than the sparse recollection of his school days. The perfunctory nod to his years at Dean Close School contrasts with the rich adventure and activity of his life on the Canadian prairie, which is much more in keeping with the positive and practical home life that he remembered of his childhood.

Is it possible to see here the metamorphosis of Baker from a quiet and rather invisible student into a dashing, independent and capable young man? As with all periods of Baker’s life, the balance of original source material is uneven. There are no letters or diaries to refer to, and his autobiographies are colourful and fantastic but read more like a story in the *Boy’s Own Paper*. Yet by framing the events, places, institutions and figures that he mentions within the period of Canadian history in which he participated, it is clear that Baker was a young man, far from home, shapeshifting between his identity as a servant of God and a servant of Empire.

As is often the case, even spurious connections like the tone of Baker’s writing about his youth and a publication such as the *Boy’s Own Paper* yield interesting results: the Religious Tract Society published the magazine before the Lutterworth Press - later Baker’s primary publisher - took it on. He was also a contributing author to the magazine, and so actively participated in the

²⁴² Baker, (1944), p.22

²⁴³ Richard St. Barbe Baker, *Man of the Trees: Selected Writings of Richard St. Barbe Baker*, ed. by Karen Gridley (Willits, California: Ecology Action, 1989), p.8.

perpetuation of the values of the publication, those of God-fearing and adventurous young men.²⁴⁴ Baker reinvented himself in a far-away land as a kind of silvan David Crockett:

frontiersman, farmer, student, horse-tamer, carpenter and forester in the making. In these guises he manifested his aspirations for a fulfilling life, but also navigated the wishes of men like Bishop Lloyd dreamt of young men like Baker settling the Canadian prairie, bringing the Church of England to the British colonists, and maintaining an English hegemony in the Dominion.

Life in Western Canada was not easy, and the successful settlement of Lloydminster contrasted with the hardships and ingenuity demonstrated by the settlers from across Europe who were moving into the provinces of Saskatchewan and Alberta; the flatter grasslands before the continent rises with the Rocky Mountains. This wide expanse of land, and the generous free acreage which the Canadian government was offering, was based on a system of sub-division called the Dominion Land Survey. A grid taking in the measurements of longitude and latitude and starting at the border with the United States in the South - and only fading out where the contours of the ground became too steep - meant that an enormous expanse of the territory could be mapped, assessed, and offered for settlement to those keen to start a new life there.

The Dominion Land Survey was established in 1882 and represents an extraordinary application of geometry to a landscape; a scaled up version of the acts of enclosure that had transformed the British countryside. Visible from the air, the grid - the lines of which thin as they converge at the North Pole - marches straight through bodies of water, natural drifts of trees and vegetation, and all other organic and irregular forms it meets. It had also been a point of significant conflict between the different waves of settlers in Canada; a conflict in which Lloyd had also played a part and that is central to Baker's portrait of him.²⁴⁵ Baker offered no further details of this conflict that took place in 1885, but his readers would likely have known about the events as it was widely reported in the British press at the time. Moreover, the cultural and political nuance of the conflict holds some significance to the relationships that Baker was to develop in Saskatchewan in the years he was in the country.

In the mid-1880s Louis Riel and other members of the Métis people led the Riel Rebellion, also known as the North-West Rebellion or Resistance. The rebellion was sparked by the application

²⁴⁴ Richard St. Barbe Baker, 'Forestry as a Career', *Boy's Own Paper*, (London: Lutterworth Press, January 1945).

²⁴⁵ Baker, (1944), p.23.

of the Dominion Land Survey to their existing patterns of land settlement, which were defined by thin ribbons of agricultural land that are part of the ‘seignorial’ or ‘long lots’ division of land alongside a river, a French system that allowed equal access to the water. The land survey ran roughshod over this geometry, and the Métis found their claims to the land unrecognised by law, with areas sold off without any understanding of their existing occupation. It can be understood in the context of Imperial expansion in the late nineteenth century, with events in Canada echoing those of Afghanistan, Sudan, Vietnam and Cambodia.²⁴⁶

The Riel Rebellion was an important marker in the colonisation of Canada by the British as it cemented British dominance in Canada and weakened the influence of the French in the administration of the country. How much of a preoccupation and subject of conversation during the time in which Baker was in Canada is impossible to glean from his accounts. However, his friendship with members of the Cree tribe, who lived outside of Saskatoon on a reserve, would have meant that he was aware of the processes of dispossession that were taking place for the indigenous and non-British settlers and their descendants. Indeed, the events were international news in the years before Baker’s departure for Canada, with the violent revolt – ending in Louis Riel’s execution - demonstrating the potency of racism and faith in legitimising ownership of the prairie:

It may be remembered, although little campaigns are liable to be forgotten, that the Red River rebellion subsided even before Wolseley could arrive to suppress it, and that Riel, fleeing across the frontier, remained quietly in exile until the Saskatchewan half-breeds, tired of petitioning their rights to their own farms, invited Riel to come back and put himself at their head... Riel, as the old half-breed accurately said, got the confidence of the people by pretending to have supernatural powers, claiming to be the red man’s Messiah and adopting the name David, describing his visions of men and guns arriving from the United States, declaring himself in his Messianic capacity superior to Popes and Bishops, whom he deposed, and proclaiming a Republic of the Saskatchewan with himself as President. We know the result – the little settlement of Frog Lake massacred, a general loot and destruction of farm houses, and four of five battles, winding up with the hanging

²⁴⁶ Geoff Read and Todd Webb, ‘The Catholic Mahdi of the North West: Louis Riel and the Metis Resistance in Transatlantic and Imperial Context’ *The Canadian Historical Review*, 2012, Vol.93 (2), pp.172.

of Riel for treason and the granting of half-breed rights which, coming a few months earlier, would have prevented the whole trouble.²⁴⁷

The tensions of settlement and land rights are largely absent from Baker's account and may show him to be a more active agent of colonization than he later wanted to appear. But as well as Lloyd's vision of the British wheat belt, were there other articulations of this vision of a new life overseas for the British with which Baker might have been familiar?

THE COLONY OVERSEAS

The romance of overseas settlement was strong in Britain in the nineteenth century, and it was seen as a key part of the social reform that was imagined by William Booth, founder of the Salvation Army. The influence that Booth had on Baker's thinking, if just understood from Baker's writing alone, could be seen as being limited to his attitudes towards evangelical ways of spreading the gospel and outdoor services. However, his interests in the British Empire and the potential it held to offer sustenance and salvation to the 'deserving' urban poor of Britain is key. The leader of the Salvation Army's thinking about spiritual, social and agrarian reform intersects with Baker's philosophy; not least the way in which Booth communicated his ideas of salvation.

The same firm who reproduced the German image of piety - *The Broad and Narrow Way* - printed the image that Booth used as the frontispiece in his book, *In Darkest England and the Way Out* (1890). Booth's image is the more alarming of the two. Occupying the lower half of the print is a swirling mass of cold dark water, in which the urban poor are drowning in vice, temptation and danger. In the top corners are two pictures of virtue: a man working at a furnace, and a woman washing textiles in a steaming bucket. Their clothing is white, with pale grey tones and just a few hints of pink. Below these two figures is an archway, emblazoned with the message 'Salvation Army Social Campaign: Work for All', which in turn rests upon pillars whose pedestals are inscribed with the words 'crime', 'drink', 'shame', 'destitution', 'despair' and 'death'.

Wrapped around each column are banners detailing the statistics of urban prostitution, misery, criminality and more, which in turn stand upon foundations capped with the statistics of suicide and death. These are carved with a litany of sins including gambling, unrighteousness, hatred,

²⁴⁷ 'The Canadian North-West', *The Times*, 27 December 1906.

and pride. Yet these details are merely the frame, and the real drama unfolds beyond the arch: the three R's of the Evangelicals: ruin, redemption and regeneration. These three words are understood within a Christian sermon as meaning the ruin of Adam and his sin in the Garden of Eden, redemption through the sacrifice of Christ, and regeneration through the power of the Holy Spirit.

In Booth's image, the three R's are not explicit, but the inference is clear: in the bottom third of the image the salvationists, spread alongside the shoreline of a dark and tumultuous sea, are pulling people from the depths. The piece of land they stand on extends into a peninsula upon which stands a lighthouse that proclaims in its light the 'City Colony'. Using ropes and their bare hands, the Salvation Army are pulling people onto the land. Nevertheless, for all those clamouring to get out, many more float behind. The realities of poverty forming the waters from which they cannot escape. Again, literalism wins out, and the swells and breakers are labelled with words like drunkenness, beggary, wife desertion, slavery, and starvation.

Those lucky enough to be saved from the waters join a queue of people filing up towards future safety, as illustrated by several smaller images containing depictions of redemptive future possibilities, occupations and housing in the City Colony. Huge edifices of housing are ready to welcome their new inhabitants: a 'poor man's metropole', 'lodgings for single women', and a 'boy's industrial home' amongst them. As well as somewhere to live, the skills which would allow them to move on are depicted: cobbling, carpentry, construction, and baking, as well as temporary work in the countryside. Resting within clouds, each image of redemption gets closer to a new life beyond the city the higher it sits in the pane. Cloud edges become hedgerows, and the path from the city becomes defined. First comes the 'suburban villages 12 miles from town', as well as the 'permanent work in the provinces'; followed by a whole new world of farms, haystacks, hedgerows, cooperatives and – if that's not enough – the possibility to embark for the Colony Across the Sea, behind which the sun is setting.

The Colony across the Sea is made up of three landmasses: one labelled the 'colony' – Booth's vision for an official Salvation Army colony – a second representing the British territories, and another 'foreign lands'. Passage is by boat, with different routes for domestic servants, for those immigrating to the Army's colony, or for immigration to other parts of the British Empire or other countries. Here is the possibility of regeneration; that a life overseas would rewrite all of the ills of the city and the travails of the urban poor. Although Baker never mentioned *In Darkest England*, his recruitment work for the Land Settlement Department of the Canadian Pacific Railway, and Ministry of Labour, to encourage boys and young men to settle in Canada

has a strong parallel and demonstrates his strong belief in the transformative potential of colonialization.²⁴⁸

Baker later mirrored Booth's dramatic image when writing about the realities of life in Britain in the depression of the 1920s: no work, no food, and people stuck on the dole with no way out. Yet for Baker there was the possibility of being redeemed and regenerated by life in a country like Canada where young men could strike out on their own and regain their confidence and agency. Writing in *I Planted Trees* about an encounter with a young man whom he had helped settle in Canada, the extent of Baker's belief in the power of a life of hard work, close to nature, is clear:

What a marvellous contrast, I thought, to the boys he had left behind in Wales! He was from the same stock. He had come from those sordid surroundings. Surroundings – yes, that was it. Environment – what a difference environment makes! He had caught the spirit of Canada. The country had entered into his very being. He had come back to the land; this time on a new continent, but, after all, it was the land that had called him. It was in his blood, for, way back in England, it was upon the land his grandfather had worked before he had been tempted by big money to the mines.²⁴⁹

A practical vision of training and coordination needed to be manifested by the Salvation Army, and in 1891 in the Essex village of Hadley; the first Farm Colony was established. The intention was that the deserving urban poor could first demonstrate their interest and aptitude in one of the Army's City Colonies. From there they would progress to the Farm Colony where they would be schooled in the realities of running a smallholding and becoming adept at market gardening, brickmaking and construction skills. There was then the promise of moving on to the Overseas Colonies, where their training would be put to use. The scheme was not without controversy, not least because many in the dominions were concerned about unskilled workers emigrating, and in doing so exporting the problems that were manifest in British cities at the time.

Much like his enthusiasm for a new life in Canada was helped and facilitated by men like Bishop Lloyd, Baker recognised his own potential as a coordinator of this kind of colonisation. Indeed,

²⁴⁸ Baker, (1944), p.153-169.

²⁴⁹ Baker, (1944), p.161.

when Baker wrote about the economic pressures on British society in the twenties, he saw the potential of the Empire for providing an income and occupation for those who had been left behind, especially given the development going on in other parts of the world that he had just visited in the early 1920s:

Here was this great Empire, offering millions and millions of acres to those with sufficient courage and initiative to avail themselves of the new life which was theirs for the taking. There were all the freedoms which have since been expounded in the Atlantic Charter, and yet poor, unemployed wage slaves were clamouring for higher unemployment pay two million of these poor deluded souls, with their spirits sapped by the workshop of false values. Money-money-money. Where was the spirit of adventure shown by our grandfathers who were the early pioneers in Canada?²⁵⁰

Saskatoon - where he was to spend much of his time in Canada - was originally intended to be a temperance colony, but the division and distribution of land meant that it was impossible for any one group to maintain a majority hold on the ethos of a growing conurbation. The economic interests of the railway companies and other institutions meant that Saskatoon had become a much more diverse city than its founders had intended, and it quickly became a significant place in the province of Saskatchewan when Saskatoon - and not the more Southerly city of Regina - became the site of the Provincial University.²⁵¹

When Baker emigrated from England to Canada, he did so on the basis that there was a growing theological training taking place in Western Canada. In the years leading up to his arrival, Bishop Lloyd – by then Principal of Emmanuel College, a divinity school in Prince Albert – was busily trying to establish a permanent base for his seminary; a place he envisioned being a Canadian hub for spreading the influence of the Church of England in the Western provinces:

The position is this. I am endeavouring to persuade the Colonial and Continental Church Society in London to train all their men for the Ministry here with us instead of in the Divinity Colleges down East, or over the water. A large number of men will be wanted for the new Mission fields opening up in the next five years in North and Northwestern

²⁵⁰ Baker, (1944), p.154.

²⁵¹ US, 'University of Saskatchewan History: A Brief Chronology' <<https://library.usask.ca/archives/campus-history/history-chronology.php>> [accessed 19 Nov 1919]

Saskatchewan, in Northern and Western Edmonton, and a large number in the Athabasca and Peace River districts.²⁵²

Establishing a permanent base for the college was important, and the correspondence relating to the placement shows how easily it could have been in Regina, rather than Saskatoon, depending on where was chosen as the site for the Provincial University. Emmanuel College was founded in Prince Albert (a place Baker was later to spend time as a lumberjack) in 1879, as a training college for 'native helpers'. Although it was given the charter of a University in 1883, its growth was slow due to the lack of development in the North Western Territories. Bishop Lloyd proved to be the catalyst for the next stage of its extension. In 1907 he brought sixty men to join the College in Prince Albert and coordinated Emmanuel College's move to Saskatoon in 1909. In 1912, after a period in which the accommodation and teaching space were in temporary timber buildings, the first stone building on the University campus opened. The College provided three qualifications: a Pass Course leading to the Testamur, a Course leading to the Licentiate in Theology, and a Course leading to the Degree of Bachelor of Theology.²⁵³

Saskatoon and Emmanuel College were in a state of construction when Baker arrived. Much of his account relates to the practical use of his time in helping to erect buildings on the campus; clearly efforts in which many people were involved. The annals of the college describe the urgency with which it approached the matter of training men from the Anglican Church for the British settlers in Canada, seeing its main aim as being to 'provide an educated Ministry to the thousands of Church of England people settling in the Canadian West. To train men who will be reciprocal in their relations to other Christian bodies, and make for harmony and if possible a reunited Church.' This was undertaken in challenging conditions, with students housed in shacks for lack of accommodation, five men living in a building only 16 x 20 feet in size, and the chapel and dining room being used as lecture halls.²⁵⁴

The unifying power of the Christian church was the primary mission of the College, which was at odds with the establishment of Christianity in the United States where no overarching national Church existed. This divergence in North American ecclesiastical history is significant, because

²⁵² US, President's Office, W.C. Murray, RHG 2001.1, 43, Emmanuel College (1909-1937).

²⁵³ US, President's Office - W.C. Murray RHG 2001.1, 43, Emmanuel College (1909-1937), 'President's File', Emmanuel College.

²⁵⁴ US, President's Office - W.C. Murray RHG 2001.1, 43, Emmanuel College (1909-1937), General Information re Emmanuel College.

it can be demonstrated that the Church in Canada was seen as a means of creating hegemony in the Western Provinces, and it is likely that Baker would have been seen as an excellent tool for realising this project. The accounts of the college were explicit in that regard:

Present Appeal: First, to Canadians to support their own work; Second, to England the source of much of our immigration and the Motherland of the Church of England; Third, to friends of Christian work and educational work everywhere.

Importance. Now the strategic time. Settlers pouring in each year. Work now done without loss. A few years hence too late. The key of our Missionary situation in the Canadian West supplying the greatest need – M E H.²⁵⁵

This sense of ‘mission’ was much the same as the mission work undertaken by John Baker in West End, but more formally tied to the institution of the Church of England and the Missionary Society. Dr Eugene Stock, the friend of John Baker who invited the teenage Richard to a lecture by Bishop Lloyd, was an active member of the Missionary Society, and was a firm advocate of the need for indigenous missions. Lloyd’s description of romantic hardship and sacrifice of life on the Prairie was something that moved Baker and remained firm in his memory.

DEPARTURE

I was twenty and very young when I reached Canada and in the late summer of 1909 travelled to Saskatoon where I was one of the first hundred students to enroll at Saskatchewan University. Before leaving England I had promised my father that I would continue my studies but I had little money. To earn I had to work; money was needed to finance my schooling. The first lesson a man learns in Canada is to be self-reliant. It is customary for a youth to work his way through college so that when a man he will earn his way through life. The method may be hard but the graduate has learned the art of survival.²⁵⁶

The Baker Papers at the University of Saskatchewan do not offer any great deviation from Baker’s account. Much of the material relating to Canada is from his own hand, and written years later. Evidence of his attendance at Emmanuel College is unavailable, but his version of

²⁵⁵ US, President's Office - W.C. Murray RHG 2001.1, 43. Emmanuel College (1909-1937). General Information re Emmanuel College.

²⁵⁶ Baker, (1956), p.19.

events, when tallied with those of the college, suggests that he would have fitted in very well; the practical necessity of being able to help build the college and to make a living from the land would have stood him in good stead. From Baker's account it does not appear that he made very many friends. However, one exception were the Cree tribe who lived in a reserve near his camp on Beaver Creek. One of the more bizarre documents in the Baker Papers is entitled 'A few firsts' and comprises of a list of things that Baker felt he had been the first to achieve.

Many of the events that comprise the content of his autobiographies are included (with some extras, such as his driving one of the first motor cars before they were legally allowed on the road). However, the list in relation to his time in Canada suggests that whilst it was a period of ecological revelation and personal reinvention, it was also one in which he was, at least in part, a bit of a loner or outsider:

6. Was the first Divinity Student to raise sufficient funds to build a church by holding race meetings near his homestead at Beaver Creek, Saskatchewan.

7. Was the first Student of Emmanuel College, University of Saskatchewan to drive into College with six horses and a load of hay from his homestead 15 miles South and build a barn on the University Campus, sleeping in a tent with night temperature 47 degrees below zero.

8. Was the First among a hundred Students to propose A College Yell. Helped to initiate the Rt. Hon. John G. Diefenbaker, P.C. Q.C. etc. etc. Chancellor of the University of Saskatchewan.

9. Was the First Student to work his way through College by working up in the lumber camps cooking for 75 lumber jacks and by taming and trading wild bronco and writing up Sport for Saturday Press.²⁵⁷

The image created is less of a young man who is part of a happy cohort, but rather someone who was asserting his individuality and competence, possibly at the expense of relationships with his contemporaries. Indeed, in none of Baker's accounts is there any mention made of his fellow students, and little mention of Bishop Lloyd once he had arrived in Canada. What does form the basis of Baker's version of events in *I Planted Trees*, *Dance of the Trees* and *My Life, My Trees* is the

²⁵⁷ US, R. St. Barbe Baker Papers, fonds MG 71, A. I. 3 'A Few Firsts'.

impact of the life that he enjoyed; namely breaking horses, trading with the Cree and watching beavers make dams.

His time in Canada was often defined by his encounter with the beavers of Beaver Creek, south of the growing town of Saskatoon. In this account, his first activity in Saskatchewan was homesteading – living a life of self-sufficiency – 15 miles from Emmanuel College. The impact that the beavers had on the hydrology of the landscape was something Baker observed with awe:

I took delight in watching the beavers at work as they constructed a dam across which I could walk. It was a hundred and forty feet in width, damming a stream which had been less than forty feet wide when they started to build.

The following winter I returned and was delighted to find a large beaver lodge, the top of which protruded three or four feet above the ice. To me it looked like the crater of a miniature volcano with hot air and steam arising from its summit, around the fringe of which the snow had melted, to freeze in icicles. The beaver dam had flooded about twenty-four acres of meadowland on either side of the upper reaches of the creek.²⁵⁸

It would be unfair to suggest that the dominance of beavers and breaking horses was because he retrospectively wished to erase his other activities in Canada. Most likely, in the context of a book that intended to convince his audience of his life-long passion and interest in forestry, moreover his near-anointed manifestation as the Man of the Trees, it was pertinent to revisit his time in Canada with a particularly ecological filter. Baker was particularly fond of one episode in which he broke in a horse that was too wild and wilful for anyone else to approach, let alone mount. The notoriety which he gained from telling and retelling the story, paints a picture of an intuitive young man, able to understand the non-human in a way that those around him were not. This story commanded a whole page of text, whereas his experiences as a lumberjack in Prince Albert in the north of the province of Saskatchewan was much more lightly and briefly sketched, even though it defined the point at which he decided to qualify as a forester, after felling trees in snow-covered ground:

We were clear felling over wide areas, stripping all timber for building purposes. This area had been virgin forest and one evening, as I surveyed the mass of stricken trees littering the ground, I wondered what would happen when all these fine trees had gone. The felling

²⁵⁸ Baker, (1944), p.24.

was wasteful and I felt sick at heart. The first snow had fallen and it was too much trouble to fell the trees below the snow line. They wouldn't bother to push the snow away to reach ground level and the waste of timber was appalling.²⁵⁹

Baker's 'heart was torn to see the colossal waste of noble trees.'²⁶⁰ His aversion to clear felling, first experienced in Canada, was to become an issue to which he would return later in his career, as he refined his ecological vision and it became a tenet of his environmental campaigns. In the case of his experiences in Canada, it proved to be the point at which he decided that he wanted to study forestry, instead of pursuing a career in the church. Nevertheless, this represents a rather tidy revision of the events and chronology and, much like his later assertions that he had seen a 'dustbowl in the making', it appears now that Baker actively participated in creating that very dustbowl, at least in relation to his short-lived attempt at farming near his camp at Beaver Creek.

THE PROVINCIAL ARCHIVE

The archives kept by the province of Saskatchewan hold the records for every occupant of each parcel of land accounted for and allocated by the provincial authorities, as defined by the Dominion Land Survey. The area of land that Baker applied for was the North West quarter section of section number 25, in township 34, range six of the meridian. The folder which holds Baker's application, as well as his declaration of abandonment, speaks of a rather naïve aspiration towards the end of his time in Canada to set up as an independent homesteader. The availability of land may have been an issue, but quite possibly the appeal of the plot lay in the fact that it was close by his early camp at Beaver Creek, and indeed near to the Cree tribe with whom he had traded and made friends. He saw Beaver Creek as a quiet alternative to the intensity of living in a shack on university campus, and having heard about an abandoned homestead up for sale at Beaver Creek, 'borrowed a pony buggy and set off on a Saturday night to prospect the place.'²⁶¹

The idealism with which he set out was not matched by the reality he encountered when trying to farm the landscape. His realisation was swift, with the observations made by the previous inhabitant proving that it was land unsuitable for agriculture. Romance still coloured Baker's recollections, and the disappointment at not finding his dream 'ranch' was mitigated by the

²⁵⁹ Baker, (1956), p.29.

²⁶⁰ Baker, (1944), p.26-27.

²⁶¹ Baker, (1956), p.25.

beauty of the open prairie. Immediacy defines his account, with the journey to the homestead (which necessitated an overnight stay with two bachelors) and his arrival at his allotted plot the next morning described in vivid detail:

The next day I reached the homestead at Beaver Creek. It was worked out and the earth was dry and spent. But the prairies had already worked their magic on me. There was ample compensation in the wonderful sense of freedom of these flat prairies and wider stretches ... I used to camp on the banks of Beaver Creek and spend long vacations from college helping out neighbouring farmers, horse breaking or joining local parties fishing or hunting.²⁶²

Re-reading this account in the context of the fixed dates of the documents in the Provincial Archive, it seems likely that the chronology needs to be reworked, and possibly totally reversed. It also hints at Baker having approached his application to homesteading without a great deal of research and forward thinking. Instead of a triumph of independence and ingenuity, it may instead have been the catalyst for him abandoning his dream of a new life in Canada and returning to his family and studies in England the following year. The previous occupant, William Esson of Toronto, Ontario, stated in his Declaration of Abandonment on the 10th May 1910 that the soil was ‘too light and [the] land hilly – all sand practically.’²⁶³ Two years later, in August 1912, Richard St. Barbe Baker applied for, and quickly abandoned, the same plot, this time stating that ‘My city occupation prevents my performing required duties’, making no mention of the unsuitability of his choice of plot.²⁶⁴ In fact, both the application and the formalities of abandonment are dated 23 August 1912, suggesting that the decision to abandon the site happened almost immediately; a near-immediate U-turn, regardless of how slowly the administrative wheels turned at the time.

By examining the chronology revealed by the archives, a more subtle and human experience of his three-and-a-half years in the country can be understood, and its impact on his ecological understanding – even if only apparent to himself in years to come – can be determined. To do so does not mean being highly sceptical of Baker’s account, but to critique and contextualize it in

²⁶² Baker, (1956), p.27.

²⁶³ Saskatoon, Saskatoon Provincial Archives, (SPA), Homestead records: 2134848. Department of the Interior, 1910, Saskatoon, NW 25-34-6.

²⁶⁴ SPA, Homestead records: 2134848. Department of the Interior, 1910, Saskatoon, NW 25-34-6.

such a way as to illustrate Baker's love of retrospectively adding meaning and direction to events in his life which were in reality much more haphazard and human.

I was twenty and very young when I reached Canada and in the late summer of 1909 travelled to Saskatoon where I was one of the first hundred students to enroll at Saskatchewan University. Before leaving England I had promised my father I would continue my studies. But I had little money. To earn I had to work; money was necessary to finance my schooling. The first lesson a man learns in Canada is to be self-reliant. It is customary for a youth to work his way through college so that when a man he will earn his way through life. The method may be hard but the graduate has learned the art of survival.²⁶⁵

One of the scraps of paper in the archives in Saskatoon sketches a short chronology of Baker's time in Canada, listing his occupations there as follows: 1910, Emmanuel College, University of Saskatchewan; 1910, Homesteading, Beaver Creek; Lumber Camps; 1911, Catechist incumbent of three parishes, Alberta; 1912, Agricultural research on shelterbelts, prairies.²⁶⁶ How formal was the agricultural research on tree planting that Baker undertook on the prairie? The idea of shelterbelts – as manifest in the work of the Civilian Conservation Corps and his passion for the Green Front – gripped him for the rest of his career. He saw the strategic planting of trees as a means to lessen the impact of agriculture and provide a more balanced relationship between the growing of crops and the protection of the soil and water table. Early settlers in Western Canada would likely have found the prairie to be a wide-open and inhospitable place. The land, when cleared for their farms, would have afforded very little shelter and there would have been little useful timber. The emergence of tree planting for shelter, timber and the demarcation of property would have been noticeable. These protective tree plantings would have shielded houses and barns from the worst of the winds, but the scale of the fields – as well as the difficulty in establishing trees in the prairie soil – would have meant the work was hard.

The Forestry Farm Park, established in Saskatoon in 1913, the year after Richard St. Barbe Baker left to return to England, continued work that had begun in Indian Head, in the south east of the province, in 1901. Baker does not explicitly mention the names and locations of the agricultural research and tree planting that he undertook, but it is possible that the experimental farm and

²⁶⁵ Baker, (1956), p.19.

²⁶⁶ US, R. St. Barbe Baker Papers, fonds MG 71, A. I. 3. 'Condensed Sketch of R. St. Barbe Baker's Life' 1977.

tree nursery at Indian Head was the place at which he engaged with and participated in this work. These institutions demonstrate that there was a wider concern about the need for tree cover and the understanding of the prairie soils. Nevertheless, the efforts of the tree-planters in Saskatchewan were surpassed by the more short-term agricultural practices across North America that resulted in the catastrophic dust bowl of the 1930s.

Baker did not dwell on the subtleties of the landscape in Saskatchewan. The territory, as a whole, is defined by two distinct typologies: the open prairie in the south, and the Boreal forest in the north. The prairie is not a continuous and flat area of grassland; instead being undulating and irregular, with large and small rivers and enclaves of smaller trees like poplar and willow. *The Times*' Special Correspondent captured some of the qualities of the landscape:

Even the Eagle Creek, however, has cut out for itself a quite respectable valley, in whose shelter the poplar, cottonwood, willow and birch attain a growth far larger than any you meet on the plains above. The spot where the trail crosses the creek has been chosen for the site of a post-office and store kept by a Scotch Canadian from Ontario. A paper, fastened to the wall of the post-office giving notice that at the end of 60 days the homestead rights granted to Mr. So-and-so will be cancelled, is a reminder that this, though a land of promise, is a land where the promise has to be kept on both sides. The country gives the settler his 160 acres, but not outright and at once. Before he can have the decree made absolute, he must have lived on his farm at least six months out of the twelve for three years, and must have put five acres a year under cultivation.²⁶⁷

The lumber camps that Baker worked on in the north would most likely have been harvesting timber for the construction of the larger towns in the south of the province. A town like Saskatoon did not have a ready supply of suitable timber for the speed at which it was growing. Instead, the evergreen forest would have satisfied its needs. The necessity of the students and academics building shacks and living on campus suggests that many more of them were involved in the construction of the campus, and one wonders if the 'long holidays', in which Baker took up occupations like working in a lumber camp, were in fact partially organised to supply timber for the growing university.

²⁶⁷ 'The Canadian North-West', *The Times*, 22 September 1906.

LESSONS FROM THE CREES

Baker recalls different encounters at different points in his writing, and there is often a more modest figure found in these accounts that are less interested in creating and maintaining the edifice of the Man of the Trees. His interactions with people, and especially his interest in and friendship with the indigenous people of North America, is one of the episodes of his time in Canada that also mirrors his later friendship with the Kikuyu people in Kenya. The relationships that he built up with his contemporaries at Emmanuel College are never reminisced upon with such candour and romance, but the ease of the friendship that he remembered finding in his near-neighbours at Beaver Creek, and the insight it gave him into the balance of nature, was something he recalled vividly:

I spent many nights with the Crees listening with the children to the stories that instil into their minds the knowledge of forest life that makes the world of nature as familiar to them as nurseries are to English children. The tales are told by a squaw when the day's work is done and young people gather around the camp fires. The logs are pushed together and the narrative is taken up where it halted the previous night, for these are serial stories.²⁶⁸

This indigenous pedagogy was something he relished, and in the account in *Dance of the Trees* Baker went on to recount the details of the landscapes – the wayfaring – embedded in the stories:

When the journey begins, every detail of the landscape is described, the way the father teaches the boy to get his bearings, the manner of progress in forests, on mountains, over lakes and prairies and the crafts of combating forest fires and sheltering from storms.

Lessons on the birds of the wilds, the herds of buffalo and other wild life are woven into the emergent epic by the story-teller. All the arts and crafts of the men of the forests are highlighted.²⁶⁹

Baker had himself been an early member of the Boy Scouts attending the first experimental camp on Brownsea Island. When he profiled Robert Baden-Powell in *Tall Timber*, describing himself as one of Baden-Powell's 'early devotees'. In 1913, after Baker had returned to England, he led groups of Boy Scouts on woodcraft expeditions in Epping Forest, whilst based

²⁶⁸ Baker, (1956), p.22.

²⁶⁹ Baker, (1956), p.23.

in Bethnal Green, as well as Scouts from Cambridge. Baden-Powell - founder of the Boy Scout Movement and author of *Scouting for Boys* - had developed his interest in scouting whilst in Africa. The British American author of *The Birch Bark Roll of the Woodcraft Indians*, Ernest Thomas Seaton, further influenced him. Baker's loyalty to the Scouts was no doubt won around the campfire on Brownsea Island, and his later description of himself as being like a 'dreamy scoutmaster' echoed the figure of Stephe (as Baden-Powell was known) as he addressed the young men around him, vividly brought to life by Tim Jeal in his biography:

When Baden-Powell stood by the fire each evening his boys crowded around him eagerly. Places like Matabeleland and Ashanti featured in the works of Haggard and Henty, but it was immeasurably more exciting to be told true-life 'yarns' about being hunted by Zulus in the Matopo Hills than to read fictional adventures. With experiences culled from all over the world and three small wars, not to mention a big one, Stephe was in an unrivalled position to entertain his youthful audience. Within a decade professional sportsmen and film actors would usurp the glamour of the military hero, but in 1907 he still reigned supreme, nowhere more so than on a small island off the Dorset coast during that first week of August.

This heady mix of adventure and wilderness impacted Baker's work for the rest of his life. In relation to the way in which he wrote about his time in Canada the romance of indigenous ways of life is rife, but there is also a myopia evident in his account. The rights of the indigenous Canadians to continue their traditional practices – so lauded by Baker – are something that exists in a separate realm to the colonisation and settlement of North America. The idea of the continuation of the Cree's traditions - separate from that of the emergent Canadian culture that had settled them on reservations - is conjured in his text that describes the children's appetite for the tales told around the campfire:

The story does not end there because the children, tireless in their appetite for stories, wish to know more about the fox and hunters. To-morrow night and the next night and forever the narrator may invent new episodes and the tale will go on – thrilling, delighting and teaching the rising generation of Indians to live simply and to be at home in the wilds, self-supporting on their own reservations.²⁷⁰

²⁷⁰ Baker, (1956), p.24.

By no means does Baker come across as a man who was seeking to exploit or usurp the Cree way of life, and it is very possible that he formed stronger and more meaningful relationships with them than many other settlers did. He described feeling at home, and that he was accepted as a member of the family. Indeed, on his return two decades later, the image created is one of homecoming; old friendships renewed. His return took place at the same time as an annual event that Baker had initiated – a joint picnic and horserace between the Cree and the homesteaders:

Twenty years later when I returned to Beaver Creek, I arrived, by a happy chance, in time to take part in it again. Renewing old friendships and dancing with girls I had dandled on my knees as babies was the greatest fun. Twenty years is a considerable time and I had long been given up as dead. My old home had become the Wild Life Reserve.²⁷¹

The appearance of accounts covering his years on the Prairie can perhaps be understood as being part of a retrospective realization on the part of Baker that his time in Canada had coincided with a significant milestone in the ecological consequences of colonization. His participation in tree felling and tree planting seem less radical if one takes into consideration the speed at which agricultural and urban settlement was taking place in Western Canada. Doubtless, his experiences with the Cree people, as well as his quiet observations of the beavers, gave him touchstones of environmental insight; giving him his first insight into ways of life that would have been very different to the world he had grown up in on the outskirts of Southampton.

His selective memory, coupled with the paucity of sources relating to Baker in the period, mean that the markers provided by the histories of institutions like Emmanuel College and the Indian Head Tree Nursery demonstrate that Baker was less the trailblazer and possibly more of an outsider than he cared to suggest. In *Saskatchewan Heroes and Rogues*, Baker is celebrated alongside other interesting and unusual denizens of Saskatoon, even though he only lived in the province for a few years. Baker never made false claims about his education, and his studies at Emmanuel College - although referenced in his books - were never formalised with a claim to have gained any qualification. One wonders at what point in his studies Baker dropped out, and if it was a

²⁷¹ Baker, (1956), p.24.

lack of finances or a clash of interests which was the catalyst for Baker not attaining any academic qualifications.²⁷²

Bishop Lloyd's absence from Baker's later descriptions of his time in Canada presents a mystery that, although it cannot be explained through the evidence left in the archives, can be sketched in such a way so as to offer alternative scenarios for Baker's time in Canada. In one of his later sketch autobiographies Baker lists himself as having been 'apprenticed to a Bishop.'²⁷³ This could suggest that he was seen as having a long and significant career ahead of him in Western Canada, but at some point this relationship and ambition broke down, and Baker then spent the years in which he was far from home engaging in altogether more fun and practical activities. There is no sense of failure or disillusionment in his account. It is always framed in the context of his wanting to study forestry (although that was something he wasn't to take up until after the First World War almost six years later) and which was something that he was unable to pursue in North America:

It was then that I decided to qualify myself for the work of a forester. I discovered that the training would be long and arduous, and that it would be necessary to devote years of research to equip oneself to become an expert. In those days there were no forestry schools in Canada, but candidates would enter for their forestry studies at Seattle, Washington. To me it seemed a long way off, and I was drawn by the tradition that my people had been at Cambridge for generations. I had now been three and a half years in the north-west, and I had a natural longing to see my people again.²⁷⁴

Another more ambiguous account of this time is represented in some notes that would have informed an autobiographical review of his time in Canada. Written in the form of a numbered list, it seems that his religious activities – at least in this account – were more prominent than he later chose to mention:

6. Canada's Call. The call to Canada, baptism.
7. Alone on the prairie. Pioneering with ponies.
8. Student catechist, Means of Grace.
9. Morman neighbours.

²⁷² Ruth Wright-Millar, *Saskatchewan Heroes and Rogues* (Coteau Books: Regina, Saskatchewan, 2004).

²⁷³ US, R. St. Barbe Baker Papers, fonds MG 71, A. I. 4.

²⁷⁴ Baker, (1944), p.27.

10. Beaver Creek – a Race meeting for a church.
11. Apprenticed to be a Bishop.
12. The greatest of these is love.
13. Winter in Alberta.
14. Back to College
15. The Ecclesiastical Ladder.²⁷⁵

Much of the list needs little explanation, but there is some novelty provided by the introduction to Baker's Mormon neighbours - who are not mentioned elsewhere - as well as his choice of a line from Corinthians which falls at the end of this passage; 'the greatest of these is love.'²⁷⁶

Love, in this context, is not of a romantic nature. The oldest versions of the text are in Greek and use the word *agape*, and the King James Version, which would have been the version in use around 1910, would have used the word *charity* as opposed to the word *love*. 'Agape' describes a selfless and spiritual love, at odds with sexual desire, and its translation from *agape* to *charity* was the standard before and after the King James translation. It appears that Baker wrote the list in the 1950s, when the translation of *agape* from *charity* to *love* was more commonplace. To read the passage and interchange the words *charity* and *love*, whilst keeping in mind that neither is a truly accurate translation, and the conjecture as to what it meant to Baker in relation to his time in Canada, results in no concrete answers. One wonders if it was a part of the Bible which he held close to his heart at more lonely times, seeking comfort and succour in the recognition that the hardships that he was enduring, and the good works in which he was engaged, were all in keeping with the Christian faith he was practising and preaching.

Navigating the shifting sands of Baker's accounts is made all the harder by the lack of firm evidence. Basing a biography upon accounts written decades later is demonstrably unreliable, but what becomes even more interesting is where the account is muddied by the firm and factual contribution made by the surviving evidence of the Baker family's activities in Canada. What material might finally destroy the image of Richard St. Barbe Baker as a solo pioneer overseas, going where his fellows dared-not tread? At least one could assume that he was the only of his brothers to go to Canada, but even that is demonstrably untrue, based on the evidence in the archives.

²⁷⁵ US, R. St. Barbe Baker Papers, fonds MG 71, A. I. 4. 'Some Notes For Autobiography' (late 1950s)

²⁷⁶ Corinthians 13.

CROSSING AND RE-CROSSING THE ATLANTIC

The information available from censuses and logs of transatlantic crossings is both exacting and vague. On one hand, there is precise information rooting people in a certain place and time; on the other is a more hurried snapshot of a world in motion. Combing the census for mention of the Baker family yields certain results, but searching the crossings databases produces a much more ambiguous cache of possible dates during which the Baker brothers were in Canada. The St. Barbe Baker name is instantly recognisable, but was it possible for the Baker brothers to gain anonymity using just their surname? Alternatively, were the harried administrators who were taking the names of every person boarding a ship given to asking for just the bare minimum of information? The ambiguity in Richard St. Barbe Baker's account is a case in point: it is not possible to find a precise point of departure from England to Canada, whereas there are a couple of vaguer entries that show a Richard Baker crossing.

On the 11th June 1909 an R. Baker, a labourer, made a crossing as a single passenger. There is no age given, and he travelled second class from Liverpool to Quebec.²⁷⁷ On March 13th 1910, Richard Baker, aged 22, (the man's name written in shorthand as Richd Baker) embarked at Liverpool for St John in Newfoundland, Canada.²⁷⁸ Lastly, in 1912, on a more complete passenger list, a Richard Baker, aged 24, was listed as travelling from England to Canada. The entry describes him as an Englishman, eligible for an English Bonus (deducted) whose previous occupation was a farmer, a profession he intended to continue with in Canada, and who was heading to Ripley, Ontario, North-west of Toronto.²⁷⁹ The best fit of the three is the first listing, as the second two do not tie in accurately with Baker's age. However, Baker's enrolment at Ridley Hall in 1914 recorded his year of birth as being 1890, as opposed to 1889, and, when asked about his previous employment, he stated 'none but Mission Work' and that he had been 'in charge of different prairie parishes for 3½ years.'²⁸⁰ On the same document, he listed his education at the University of Saskatchewan and Emmanuel College, but without claiming any qualification, or ever having applied to any other Theological College.²⁸¹

²⁷⁷ Library and Archives Canada; Ottawa, Ontario, Canada; Series: RG 76-C; Roll: T-4783, Ancestry.com. Canadian Passenger Lists, 1865-1935 [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2010.

²⁷⁸ Ancestry.com. UK, Outward Passenger Lists, 1890-1960 [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2012.

²⁷⁹ Ottawa, Library and Archives Canada; Series: RG 76-C; Roll: T-4783. Canadian Passenger Lists, 1865-1935.

²⁸⁰ Cambridge, Ridley Hall (RH), Admissions Register 1914.

²⁸¹ RH, Admissions Register 1914.

In 1911, James Scott St. Barbe Baker – then aged nineteen – was living in Gloucester as a lodger whilst studying electrical engineering.²⁸² Less than a year later, he had emigrated to Canada, and in 1912 was registered as J.S. Baker and working as a meter reader for the Electrical Department for the City of Saskatoon. Within the archives of the City of Saskatoon is a letter written on the 18 January 1913 from E. Hanson, the Electrical Engineer for the City of Saskatoon, stating the J.S. Baker and another employee, A.J. Wheaton, were both terminated from the City Electrical Engineering office for ‘inefficiency.’²⁸³ What is more concrete is that a ‘J Scott S. Barbie [sic] Baker’ made an application on 26 August 1912 for Homestead Number 470274, being the southwest part of Section 36, Township 34, Range 6, west of the third meridian, in Saskatchewan (now in the Rural Municipality of Dundurn 314). This was made three days after his brother’s application and abandonment. James Scott was listed as being 20 years old, having been born in Southampton, England, and listed his previous occupation as electrical engineer.²⁸⁴ Unlike his older brother, there was no immediate abandonment of the claim. It appears that James Scott stayed longer on the land, as his claim only lapsed after he failed to return from the First World War.²⁸⁵

There is even more room for conjecture based on the knowledge that the second-oldest brother was also in Saskatoon. Was the relationship between the two older brothers competitive? One son guided by their father to follow his life of faith; the other more practical, trained as an electrical engineer and firmly rooted into the city of Saskatoon. His dismissal by the City of Saskatoon happened after he had applied for a homestead, so maybe the journey into town was too long, and he was distracted by his new life. The aspect that makes it most mysterious is that the two half-acreages that the brothers applied for were next to one another. As Richard described, the plot was close to the road leading to Beaver Creek, and the same man, W. Essen, had previously occupied both. Essen’s application for the plots that James Scott and Richard were to claim was on May 9th 1910, but only Richard’s file contains the reason for abandonment. Other options include the possibility that Richard lived with his brother on the second plot, and that they worked it together until the older returned to England. However, there are many questions unanswered. Not least, what were the ‘great trials’ that John Baker saw his son go

²⁸² TNA, Census Returns of England and Wales, 1911, Class: RG14; Piece: 15292; Schedule Number: 15.

²⁸³ Saskatoon, City Archive of Saskatoon (CAS), City Electrical Engineering Office.

²⁸⁴ SPA, Homestead records, 2155325. Department of the Interior, 1910, Saskatoon, NW 36-34-6.

²⁸⁵ SPA, Homestead records, 2155325. Department of the Interior, 1910, Saskatoon, NW 36-34-6.

through? Moreover, if Richard was the first to go to Canada, did he appeal to his brother to come join him and for them to start a new life together? There is one concrete piece of evidence: on the 19th December, 1913, R. E. St. B. Baker boarded a passenger liner in New York, bound for Plymouth and Southampton; a student, aged 25, whose place of residence had been Canada, and whose intention was to live in England once again.²⁸⁶ These dates match perfectly Baker's description of returning home in 1913 in time for Christmas, his ship sailing all the way into his home port.

²⁸⁶ TNA, Board of Trade: Commercial and Statistical Department and successors: Inwards Passenger Lists.; Class: BT26; Piece: 573.

7. An Army in the East End

My boat arrived at Southampton on Christmas Eve and I was met by my father in his pony trap. I was so glad to see him that I didn't mind his embracing me. He was an emotional man and had a habit, when deeply moved, of throwing his arms about us, which in my younger days used to embarrass me. We drove back to West End and I spent a wonderful Christmas with my family.²⁸⁷

The happy return to West End that Baker experienced when arriving back at his family home seems to have been brief, or at least it was clear that he was going to continue his studies as soon as possible. This period is not covered in the Baker family's correspondence, and so the account of the debates and discussions only exist in his published accounts. What is expressed in them is that the pull towards forestry was, at least in the year before the First World War, temporarily dampened. *Dance of the Trees* conveys some of the tension in the choice of following a path of faith or one of practical forestry; a choice in which (at least retrospectively) it was possible to see a parallel between the two directions his life could take:

After the excitement of the journey back, I began to have doubts about my future and I discussed this with my father. Was I choosing the right path? I was being torn in two directions – I had a sense of mission towards the Church and I had a sense of mission to the earth itself, to help restore the tree cover and play some part in halting the march of the deserts. Although a grower of trees, my father was inclined towards the Church. Both my grandfather and great-grandfather had been parsons. My mother came to my help and pointed out, with her good logic, that by helping healing the scars of the earth I might also be helping my fellow men.²⁸⁸

Finding connection between these two divergent ambitions was not something that Baker was able to manifest, and his father's argument must have eventually won out. On the 22nd April 1914, Baker applied for residency at Ridley Hall in Cambridge, an Evangelical seminary for the training of young men for service in the Church of England.²⁸⁹ Nevertheless, before – and possibly alongside - his studies in Cambridge, Baker had continued his independent mission

²⁸⁷ Baker, (1956), p.30.

²⁸⁸ Baker, (1956), p.31.

²⁸⁹ RH, Admissions Register 1914.

work that he had practiced on the colonial prairie in Canada with a friend of his fathers, the Reverend John Edwin Watts-Ditchfield (1861-1923), in the East End of London.

Watts-Ditchfield does not feature in either of Baker's two major autobiographies, *I Planted Trees* (1944) and *My Life My Trees* (1970), but he does appear in *Dance of the Trees* (1956), the autobiography he wrote for a younger audience. His description is brief, introducing Watts-Ditchfield as an old friend of his father's, someone with whom Baker volunteered in the holidays, helping him with a men's club of 3,000 members that Watts-Ditchfield had formed in Bethnal Green.²⁹⁰ Indeed, when Baker made his application to Ridley Hall, he stated that his place of residence was Ridley House, attached to St. James-the-Less in Bethnal Green.²⁹¹ The influence of the Watts-Ditchfield can be seen as a significant social and spiritual influence upon the young evangelical, although not expressed explicitly in Baker's writing. Watts-Ditchfield's obituary, published in *The Times* in 1923, demonstrates what an unusual and charismatic figure he cut within the Church, and Baker's later activities with the Men of the Trees could be seen as having some parallel with this appealing man:

In the first Bishop of Chelmsford (Dr. J.E. Watts-Ditchfield), whose death at the age of 61 is announced on another page, the Church loses an unconventional Prelate of great pastoral zeal and fervour, with a remarkable record of work among artisans and men in general. Although the Bishop lacked something in the discipline of early study, he was conscientious in acquiring necessary information on subjects, such as the Ecclesiastical Courts, with which he had to deal in public.²⁹²

The Watts-Ditchfield's career was remarkable, as he had entered the Church of England as an outsider. His father was a self-made man and committed Methodist who had started working in a Lancashire cotton mill at the age of eight and progressed to the position of Headmaster of Patricroft Higher Grade School. And much like the more simple name given to John Baker, Watts-Ditchfield was born John Ditchfield and later changed his name; although he used more formal channels than Baker's father had done. His father, who had a keen interest in social problems and the issue of temperance, took the young Watts-Ditchfield on pastoral visits. He had been brought up a Wesleyan, but there were few opportunities to preach as a Methodist, and

²⁹⁰ Baker, (1956), p.31.

²⁹¹ RH, Admissions Register 1914.

²⁹² 'First Bishop of Chelmsford', *The Times*, 16 July 1923, p. 14.

so Watts-Ditchfield was confirmed in the Church of England at Manchester Cathedral in 1888. After studying at St John's Hall in Highbury he was ordained in 1891 and appointed curate at St Peter's in Upper Holloway, North London, in 1892. His approach there was distinct from that of other evangelists, with his priority being the engagement of men, rather than women or children, and he believed that that engagement was best made through activities that suited their needs and interests. His profile in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* sets out the ways in which his unconventional approach was at odds with the prevailing attitude of his peers:

Many churchmen of the time saw the Sunday school as the chief means of evangelism, on the assumption that the child, once captured, would remain in the church. Watts-Ditchfield disagreed: he believed that the church was seen as something fit only for women and children, and argued that if the church got the man, it got the whole family. He instituted a men's service at St Peter's, and, by adroit publicity, eye-catching and provocative titles for his sermons, and careful attention to pastoral work, built up a regular attendance of several hundred. He also instituted several thrift and benefit societies, besides clubs for rambles and sportsmen, and a reading-room.²⁹³

From Holloway, Watts-Ditchfield was appointed to St. James-the-Less in Bethnal Green, and it was there that his reputation as a distinctly different type of Evangelical became manifest. The role enlightened him in the realities of life in the slums of the nation's cities. This was the most important field of spiritual and social activity at the time, with the deprivation of London's East End holding the greatest notoriety. In this context, Watts-Ditchfield has been recognised as the leading evangelical in the home missions of the East End, alongside the Anglo-Catholics and Broad Churchmen who were also active in the area. But why was this area so significant to the nationwide activities of the Church of England?

MISSION WORK IN EAST LONDON

The slums of East London had developed upon the open fields and villages of places like Stepney Green and Aldgate, which were still rural in the time of Chaucer, and which urbanised and grew as the wharfs of the Thames brought industry and jobs. Immigration was also a factor, with many of the new arrivals in the years following the Civil War settling in Whitechapel and Mile End; the Jewish people re-admitted after a 300-year banishment; French Huguenots

²⁹³ C. J. Bearman, 'Ditchfield, John Edwin Watts-' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* <<https://doi-org.sheffield.idm.oclc.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/47655>> [accessed 26 June 2018].

escaping persecution; and Irishmen who found work on the river, making the docks the focal point of life. The population grew steady from the mid-seventeenth century, where the changing tides of economic expansion and contraction in the late eighteenth century served to make the area one of the most crowded, dilapidated, and impoverished parts of the capital.

One of the main factors in the expansion and disintegration of the first communities of the East End had been the changing practice of loading and offloading cargo on ships, as well as the change from sail to steam-powered vessels that necessitated deeper water to dock, rendering many of the old wharves obsolete. As well as providing critical employment, the water was also a focal point for the criminal element in the East End. In this context an enormous slum developed, with a reputation for both prostitution and child-abandonment.²⁹⁴ The slums already suffered a dual lack of employment and housing and, through an effort to reduce theft from Thames cargo ships, new dockyards with high walls were built to regiment and control the movement of goods. This in turn necessitated the demolition of housing, with no alternative accommodation built for the residents of the East End. Coupled with this was the construction of railways into the City through areas that already had to house those displaced by the docks. The third factor were the 'reprehensible' activities of the Metropolitan Board of Works, whose top-down planning caused great destruction:

Beginning about 1840, the Board supported the construction of new streets and the widening of others throughout London. The two-mile long Commercial Road, the broadest artery in East London, was cut through hundreds of tenements in order to provide an easy access to the East and West India Docks. But many of the Board's projects lacked such a clear rationale... Certainly the new roads were deliberately planned to break up the worst of the slum areas ... but all the policy did was to ensure even greater crowding in the areas which had already become slums.²⁹⁵

The East End of London quickly became an object of fascination for Victorian society, with numerous accounts and parliamentary enquiries into living conditions in the slums. These enquiries brought to wider attention to the conditions in which people were living, with a typical example describing one domestic situation in which a building's ground-floor residents were

²⁹⁴ David B. McIlhiney, *A Gentleman in Every Slum: Church of England Missions in East London, 1837-1914* (Allison Park, Pa: Pickwick Publications, 1988), p.3.

²⁹⁵ McIlhiney, p.4-5.

described in anthropological detail: ‘The front parlour contains two women, half covered with soot. A bed, as black as the women, stands in the corner, in which an infant is sleeping, with its little face looking pale even under the dirt, and its head lying lower than its legs. Six other children, belonging to the same parents, are playing somewhere about in the inky puddles [outdoors]...’²⁹⁶

Yet this poverty did not wholly define the community within the East End. Instead, there was an identity and respectability that the Cockneys (as the residents of the East End became known) cultivated and maintained. Furthermore, the novel nature of the area – for all its density and deprivation – was more to do with monotony of the demographic, with the novelist Walter Besant (1836-1901) remarking that there was ‘no centre, no fashionable quarter, no representative body, no mayor, no public or high schools, no bookshops and no periodicals’.²⁹⁷ For a period, there was little external immigration into the East End and the burgeoning population was because of the growth of families already resident in the area, cementing the identity of the place.

The social mission in the area had been magnified by depressions in the late nineteenth century that resulted in a greater awareness of life in the East End. The phenomenon of ‘slumming’ emerged as a sort of finishing school for upper class young men and women; their education complete when they resolved to address the poverty and inequality. The East End, however, was not unique and was more likely just the best known of the slums in London and across Britain, rather than the most deprived. The phenomenon boomed alongside - as Charles Booth noted - organisations ‘aimed at the amelioration of the conditions of life in East London, and the moral and spiritual advancement of its people.’²⁹⁸ This coupling of the poverty as a practical issue alongside the spiritual health of the populace makes the work of the church, and specifically of the home missions, so pertinent to this study.

Britain was also facing profound shifts in the entrenched ideas of divine order. Industrialisation and urbanisation drew people from the countryside to the cities. This disrupted the belief that the poor were destined for a life of poverty and should, in the proper order of things, be entailed to an estate. This, coupled with the mistrust and dislike felt towards the clergy in the East End,

²⁹⁶ John Hollingshead, quoted in McIlhiney, p.7-8

²⁹⁷ Walter Besant, quoted in McIlhiney, p.9.

²⁹⁸ Charles Booth, *Life and Labour of the People* (London: Macmillan, 1902), p.11.

meant that the idea of actively working in the area – manifesting good works for the social and spiritual good of the people – had not been a priority of the Church at the point at which Victoria ascended the throne. A caricature of ‘fox-hunting parsons’ may have been an exaggeration, but the indifference of the predominantly non-residential clergy to their densely inhabited slum parishes meant that the people of the East End lived in the absence of the Church’s influence. The incumbent ministers were not resident in their parishes and tended to only venture from their homes in other parts of London to take Sunday services. It was often the young curates who did the leg work, with the rectors largely absent: ‘as late as the eighteenth-fifties, the Rector of St. Matthew’s, Bethnal Green, lived at his other parish in Cheshire, whilst the Rector of St. Dunstan’s was rarely seen in his medieval church.’²⁹⁹

The Evangelical Revival, in which John Baker played a part, was critical to a change of focus for the Church; a period of renaissance for the ideals and integrity of the faithful, which resulted in the training and ordination of a new generation of gentleman clerics. They had a profoundly different attitude to the ‘lax and indifferent’ men who had preceded them in both the evangelical and Anglo-Catholic movements. These two religious revivals swept up high and low churchmen, and the universities fostered young men who emerged fired up with a ‘clerical idealism’ that had not been present in the Church of England for over a hundred years.³⁰⁰ This spiritual momentum gained speed after the Religious Census of 1851, which brought together statistics of church attendance in Britain, in addition to the normal census information. Although there were inaccuracies in the recording of information, the intention was that on Sunday 30th March 1851, the congregations of every church and chapel in England and Wales was to be counted.

The results shocked the nation, as they suggested that the majority of the population of eighteen million did not attend any form of religious service, with Horace Mann, the agent in charge of the census, estimating that more than five million able-bodied people chose not to go to church. Within the metropolitan area of London, the statistics were even more revealing, with less than a third of residents in the East End attending worship, and the majority participating in ‘dissenting churches. These statistics constituted ‘a call’ for idealistic young clergy to attend to the spiritual

²⁹⁹ McIlhiney, p.14.

³⁰⁰ McIlhiney, p.15.

life of people in the slums; ‘The Establishment, no less than the vision of a Christian nation, was at stake.’³⁰¹

CHARLES BOOTH: STATISTICS AND SOCIAL REFORM

Following the religious census, Henry Hyndman, founder of the Socialist Democratic Federation, published statistics in the Pall Mall Gazette that suggested that one in four of the population of Britain lived in poverty. Charles Booth (1840-1916), a Unitarian shipping magnate from Liverpool who had toyed with the idea of entering politics, wanted to challenge and disprove Hyndman’s findings . However, instead of disproving the evidence, he was to begin a project that led to his great contribution to social reform. Booth, along with a number of volunteers, collected data from the School Board’s reports, as well as undertaking interviews and published his research in a volume titled *Life and Labour of the People* in 1889 to create a more accurate picture than Hyndman’s survey. In this work he established that the number of people living in poverty was higher than the previous estimates of 25% made by the Socialist Democratic Federation, instead putting the rate at 35% of London’s population. What made the East End special within this appraisal of the city was that it was the area with the highest proportion of poverty per capita, with fifty percent of the population living below Booth’s ‘poverty line.’³⁰²

There were three editions of *Life and Labour*. The first, *Life and Labour of the People*, was published in 1889. In 1891, the scope was extended to cover all of London and the second edition, titled *Life and Labour of the People in London*, was spread over nine volumes. A third edition emerged over a decade later in 1902-3; it was made up of seventeen volumes and covered religion and culture. Booth’s work was seminal in its objectivity and depth of engagement, especially in his observations of the various religious groups in the last edition. However, one aspect that marked Booth’s enquiry was the lack of strategies for addressing the poverty that he had mapped and surveyed so thoroughly. Indeed, his diffidence seems to demonstrate a man who understands his own limitations, whilst aware that much more than simply bringing to light the lives of the poor was required:

³⁰¹ McIlhiney, p.17.

³⁰² Charles Booth, quoted in McIlhiney, p.13.

Perhaps the qualities of mind which enable a man to make this inquiry are the least of all likely to give him that elevation of soul, sympathetic insight and, and sublime confidence which must go to the making of a great regenerative teacher. I have made no attempt to teach; at the most I have ventured on an appeal to those whose part it is.³⁰³

Booth had hoped that the Church of England might manifest change in the East End, but the study that he made of 'religious influences' on the area found that although the Anglican Church was thriving in middle class areas, it had little to no influence in the poorer areas. Indeed, this lack of influence was directly connected to much of the waning passion and integrity of the Church in the mid-nineteenth century, which had created the fertile ground for the emergence of the Evangelical Revival across Britain. In many respects Booth was more the cartographer of poverty in London, rather than offering any solutions for the destitution that he witnessed. He categorised levels of society from A-H, with different colours on his maps of London to demonstrate where the different echelons lived, although the more subtle gradations were not lost on him:

It is to be remembered that the dividing lines between all these classes are indistinct; each has, so to speak, a fringe of those who might be placed with the next division above or below; nor are the classes, as given, homogenous by any means. Room may be found in each for many grades of social rank.³⁰⁴

The classes with which he was most concerned were at the beginning of the alphabet. Class F was made up of the highest class of labourers, those who supervised others but held no organisational roles in industry or trade: 'not a large selection of the people, but it is a distinct and very honourable one.'³⁰⁵ Class E was deemed the most populous of the working class, bringing in a regular income; Class D were poor and with less regular earnings but, together with those in Class E 'form the actual middle class in this district [the East End]'.³⁰⁶ Class C was defined by men whose work was intermittent and tied to short-term labouring on the docks in

³⁰³ Charles Booth, *Charles Booth's London: A Portrait of the Poor at the Turn of the Century, Drawn from his "Life and Labour of the People in London"* ed. by Albert Fried and Richard M. Elman (London: Hutchinson 1969), p.xxxvii.

³⁰⁴ C. Booth, (1969), p.24.

³⁰⁵ C. Booth, (1969), p.19.

³⁰⁶ C. Booth, (1969), p.18.

more physical roles: 'a man will very quickly earn 15s or 20s, but at a cost of great exhaustion, and many of them eat and drink freely till the money is gone, taking very little of it home'.³⁰⁷

Class B made up eleven percent of the population of East London, and Booth identified this grouping as having incomes tied to the docks. He felt that 'the labourers of this class B do not, on the average, get as much as three days' work a week, but it is doubtful if many of them could or would work full time for long together if they had the opportunity.'³⁰⁸ And the fatalism of Booth's appraisal of this group is apparent: 'Class B, and especially the "labour" part of it, is not one in which men are born and live and die, so much a deposit of those from mental, moral, and physical reasons are incapable of better work. Class A was made up of those whose income and lifestyle put them below class B: 'the lowest class, which consists of some occasional labourers, street sellers, loafers, criminals, and semi-criminals... Their life is the life of savages, with vicissitudes of extreme hardship and occasional excess. Their food is of the coarsest description, and their only luxury is drink.'³⁰⁹

Booth's solution for the problem was dramatic, with his feeling being that the existence of Classes A and B threatened to 'drag down' the more secure working class above, and that the best means of preventing this downward spiral into poverty was to remove them from society. He thought this was best undertaken through labour camps - removed from the rest of society - where the residents would be taught under 'strict supervision.' If the people failed, 'they would be sent to poorhouses and their children taken from them. If they succeeded, they would be allowed to re-enter civilization.'³¹⁰

This extreme measure complemented the state socialism that Booth believed already existed in the form of jails, asylums and workhouses that would allow the rest of society to follow a progressive individualism. The solution was secular, not spiritual, and the study that Booth made of religious and cultural activities in London - especially those administering to the poor - is evidence of his mistrust and dislike of those methods and its efficacy. He felt that missionary activities were emotionally manipulative, debauched, superficial and hysterical, and that much of

³⁰⁷ C. Booth, (1969), p.15.

³⁰⁸ C. Booth, (1969), p.13.

³⁰⁹ C. Booth, (1969), p.11.

³¹⁰ Fried and Elman *Charles Booth's London* (1969), p.xxix.

the charity work of the missionaries exploited the weaknesses of the poor.³¹¹ However, although Booth likened the Salvation Army to a band of ‘Ethiopian minstrels’, to read his notes on his study of the Salvationists in greater detail is to reveal how compelling he found their ideas and methods.

WILLIAM BOOTH: STRATEGY AND SALVATION

William Booth (1829-1912) founded the Salvation Army in 1865 and so when he published *In Darkest England and the Way Out* in 1890, he had already been active in the field of evangelical mission work for twenty-five years. He was born in Nottingham into a family of relative prosperity, but his family’s circumstances changed, and they became impoverished, with Booth’s father apprenticing William to a pawnbroker. During his apprenticeship, Booth converted to Methodism, and later became an evangelist. He did not succeed within the formal Evangelist community and ended up setting up his own independent ‘Christian Revival Society’ with his wife, holding meetings for the poor and destitute in the open fields and abandoned buildings of East London. In this time, he had experienced and witnessed the realities of poverty first hand, whilst also formulating his solution to the problem, articulated in the work the Salvation Army undertook and expressed in his own words in *In Darkest England*.

The opening passages immediately engaged his readers and set out why he was appropriating and adapting the title of Sir Henry Morton Stanley’s book *In Darkest Africa* (1890). Booth thought that the exoticism and otherworldly nature that had thrilled Stanley’s readership could be found much closer to home. He asked, ‘As there is a darkest Africa, is there not also a darkest England? Civilisation, which can breed its own barbarians, does it not also breed its own pygmies? May we not find a parallel at our own doors, and discover within a stone’s throw of our cathedrals and palaces similar horrors to those which Stanley has found existing in the great equatorial forest?’³¹² ‘Pygmies’ and ‘barbarians’, part of the sensational story told by Stanley, were drawn from the text by William Booth to describe the conflict within the forest; the violence and slavery meted out upon the vulnerable. However, this violence and exploitation was something that he saw taking place in the cities of Britain, and what served as a description of life in the West African forest could be an allegory for the realities of life in the slums of Britain:

³¹¹ Fried and Elman *Charles Booth’s London* (1969), p.xxxv.

³¹² William Booth, *In Darkest England and the Way Out* (London: International Headquarters, 1890), p.11.

The lot of a negress in the Equatorial Forest is not, perhaps, a very happy one, but is it so very much worse than that of many a pretty orphan girl in our Christian capital? We talk about the brutalities of the dark ages, and we profess to shudder as we read in books of the shameful exaction of the rights of feudal supervisor. And yet here, beneath our very eyes, in our theatres, in our restaurants, and in many other places, unspeakable though it may be to put a name to it, the same hideous abuse flourishes unchecked.³¹³

Shocking immediacy defines the way Booth presents the problem of poverty. The first chapter is titled ‘the slough of despond of our time’, another ‘the cab horse ideal of existence’, and another ‘Lazarus on the Embankment.’ He was direct in setting out the facts, rather than exaggerating them, as his intention was to ‘demonstrate the practicability of solving the problem, [not to] magnify its dimensions’.³¹⁴ The portion of the population that he identified as living in ‘Darkest England’ are almost identical to those identified by Charles Booth, and defined in much the same way:

Who are the lost? I reply, not in a religious, but in a social sense, the lost are those who have gone under, who have lost their foothold in Society, those to whom the prayer to our Heavenly Father, “Give us day by day our daily bread,” is either unfulfilled, or only fulfilled by the Devil’s agency: by the earnings of vice, the proceeds of crime, or the contribution enforced by the threat of the law.³¹⁵

The swirling and dark waters in which the poor struggled and drowned formed the frontispiece of *In Darkest England and the Way Out*. The visceral nature of their peril, combined with the seeming obliviousness to poverty and pollution, is grimly evoked: ‘Can anything be done for them? Or is this million-headed mass to be regarded as offering a problem as insoluble as that of the London sewage, which, feculent and festering, swings heavily up and down the basin of the Thames with the ebb and flow of the tide.’³¹⁶ Booth’s text was not just a catalogue of urban ills, but also a manual for social change; albeit a manual with an appeal limited to those interested in salvation. His vision was that the structure of the Salvation Army could intervene, and through an institutional and administrative structure, create a path from poverty to self-sufficiency for the people who were otherwise seen to be without hope.

³¹³ W. Booth, p.13.

³¹⁴ W. Booth, p.17.

³¹⁵ W. Booth, p.18.

³¹⁶ W. Booth, p.23.

The hypocrisy of Victorian society was not lost on Booth, with the industrial exploitation of the poor through sweated labour for the profit of the wealthy which accorded a social standing that masked the viciousness of their practices which would ‘grind the faces of the poor, and who rob the widow and the orphan, and who for a pretence make great professions of public-spirit and philanthropy, those men nowadays are sent to Parliament to make laws for the people. The old prophets sent them to hell – but we have changed all that. They send their victims to hell, and are rewarded by all that wealth can do to make their lives comfortable.’³¹⁷ Much as Charles Booth mapped poverty, William Booth believed that the environment was part of the perpetuation of the situation that people found themselves in; an environment which he saw – literally and metaphorically – as being degraded and degrading:

Many of this crowd have never had a chance of doing better; they have been born in a poisoned atmosphere, educated in circumstances which have rendered modesty an impossibility, and have been thrown into conditions which make vice a second nature. Hence, to provide an effective remedy for the evils which we are deploring these circumstances must be altered, and unless my scheme effects a change, it will be of no use. There are multitudes, myriads, of men and women, who are floundering in the horrible quagmire beneath the burden of a load too heavy for them to bear; every plunge they take forwards lands them deeper; some have ceased even to struggle, and lie prone in the filthy bog, slowly suffocating, with their manhood and womanhood all but perished.³¹⁸

Booth saw the urban environment as determining the lives of its inhabitants, a fate that would not have occurred – in his mind - to such a degree in the countryside, and he used visceral analogies from nature to describe the consequence of the conditions in which the impoverished were forced to live.

Charles Booth had continued to publish volumes of *Life and Labour*, and in the third series, published in 1902 and 1903, the Salvation Army features. The Army’s activities in London by that point were the centre and headquarters of a world-wide organisation. Moreover, Booth and his fellow investigators felt that ‘no religious phenomenon of our day is more remarkable than this development.’³¹⁹ The evolution from the initial Gospel mission into a religious community,

³¹⁷ W. Booth, p.14.

³¹⁸ W. Booth, p.86

³¹⁹ Charles Booth *Life and Labour of the People of London, Third series: Religious Influences, Volume 7* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1903) p.323.

and then into an organisation for social work was, in Booth's mind, remarkable. Militaristic language was what set the salvationists apart from other groups, something 'which should arouse attention and strike the imagination, something that the most ignorant could understand, the most besotted feel, and the most hardened be able to unignore [sic].'³²⁰ Parody was commonplace, with their activities 'coarsely ridiculed at harmonic meetings in the public-houses, and in music-halls, and were parodied on the march by 'skeleton' armies of *habitués* of tap-rooms of the lower order.'³²¹

Although generally despondent about the potential for religious influences to really affect the conditions of life in London, Charles Booth appears to have felt a grudging respect for the simplicity and potency of the Salvation Army. This, despite their sometimes risible methods: 'The prolonged parody of military terms, as in speaking of prayer as 'knee drill' and 'volley firing,' of 'barracks' and of 'citadels,' of 'war cries' and 'ammunition,' of 'attacks – strategic and frontal.'³²² However, despite the organisation failing to create a snowball of momentum, Booth felt that their delivery demonstrated a 'genuineness and honesty' in bringing the Gospel 'freshly and simply to the notice of all, and especially to the notice of the classes standing aloof.'³²³

One area of activity that Charles Booth demonstrated a particular interest in was the Salvation Army Farm Colony in Essex. Much as Charles Booth himself had proposed a form of labour camps to civilize the lower echelons of society, he also noted with interest the manifestation of one of the elements of William Booth's vision for 'the way out.' Much as 'Whitechapel by the Sea' was to remain a dream, this was one place where the Army put into practice its 'interesting and valuable experiment.'³²⁴ The farm featured in the 'Illustrations' section of the sixth volume of *Life and Labour*, extracted from note books and not intended to be seen as anything other than snapshots of the experiences of the investigators. Mixing social work, salvation and socialism, the site had been purchased in 1891 at a point of low land values and had been developed into a brick works and poultry farm, as well as a space for grazing and fruit and vegetable growing. Around two hundred and fifty people lived there, and it was connected to London by the water, which afforded a cheap way of getting the farm's goods to the city.

³²⁰ C. Booth, (1903), p.324.

³²¹ C. Booth, (1903), p.325.

³²² C. Booth, (1903), p.326.

³²³ C. Booth, (1903), p.326.

³²⁴ C. Booth, (1903), p.341.

The esteem in which Charles Booth held the farm is apparent, describing it as ‘a very complete and remarkable undertaking.’³²⁵ Although his report clearly stated that the visit took place on a day when the weather was ‘brilliantly fine,’ the charms of the site itself and of life there made an impression. The impression was that ‘many of the views are even beautiful, the most striking feature being the river in the distance, almost an estuary here, with great ships passing up and down the highway to London.’³²⁶ The reality of the economics of the Colony could not be passed over, however, and the balance between experienced outside and the untrained colonists was also remarked upon, with the brickfields yielding one example of the necessity of balancing commerce and charity. ‘It is not to be supposed that an establishment of this kind can be made profitable.’ So ends the illustration of Hadleigh Farm, in which the substantial material investment was judged never to be profitable, but which the Salvation Army understood as being a question of either ‘making money or making men.’³²⁷

Profitability, or worldly benefit, was to become – and remain – an issue in the life of Richard St. Barbe Baker: how could individuals and governments be persuaded to plant trees for a monetary benefit that would not be seen for decades, possibly not within their lifetime? How could the social and environmental contribution of trees be more widely celebrated? Moreover, key to Baker’s early activities in Kenya, how could programmes of tree planting be instigated at low cost? The Farm Colony was seen by Charles Booth as ‘a very useful institution, and as an experiment its value has been even greater, justifying all the money and zeal expended on it.’³²⁸ Similarly, programs like the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), part of President Roosevelt’s New Deal in the United States in the 1930s, were only feasible because of high levels of funding from government, rather than through private finance. Here, the social restoration of the population through the Salvation Army’s industrial and agricultural activities has a parallel with the social and environmental restoration work carried out by the Roosevelt’s CCC. Nevertheless, how does Baker’s story connect with that of Charles and William Booth? The answer lies with a remarkable vicar in the East End, the Reverend John Edwin Watts-Ditchfield.

³²⁵ Charles Booth, *Life and Labour of the People of London*, Third series: Religious Influences, Volume 6: Outer South London (London: Macmillan and Co., 1902), p.179.

³²⁶ C. Booth. (1902), p.180.

³²⁷ C. Booth. (1902), p.181.

³²⁸ C. Booth. (1902), p.181.

THE REVEREND WATTS-DITCHFIELD IN BETHNAL GREEN

The Reverend Watts-Ditchfield was appointed Rector of St. James-the-Less by the Bishop of London in 1897, close to the publication of the first volume of Charles Booth's *Life and Labour*. Over the following years, Watts-Ditchfield's activities in the East End were to result in his parish appearing in the latter volumes covering religious life in London. Situated in Bethnal Green and close to Victoria Park, St. James-the-Less sat in an area marked by dilapidated tenements, yet close to the growing suburbs of South Hackney across the marshes. The parish had around 11,000 inhabitants and the locals were mainly employed at the docks as casual labourers or pieceworkers. Residents lived in dilapidated and unhealthy conditions, with little provision for recreation. Much of the employment was provided through 'sweated' industries, and the 'cumulative distress' created an environment of heavy drinking, domestic violence, and a difficult relationship with organised religion. However, 'if the church could succeed in evangelizing Bethnal Green, it could succeed anywhere.'³²⁹

The energy and activity that marked Watts-Ditchfield's time there was quickly manifest. Adept at raising money, he quickly secured funds to improve the cold, badly lit and generally unwelcoming church and the grounds around it. Within three and a half years he had 'refurbished the Church, constructed a large parish hall with a gymnasium and small classrooms, and created a parish garden, complete with tennis courts, a band stand, and a cycle path. The girl's school was converted into a medical mission, while three neighbouring houses were bought and made over into the "Working Men's Hotel."³³⁰

As well as the restoration of St James-the-Less, Watts-Ditchfield also oversaw the conversion of a second disused chapel into a mission to ensure that distance from the parish church would not dissuade anyone from attending services. He held numerous services, with the Men's Service being the best known, as well as prayer meetings, Communion, and two services on a Sunday. This practical aspiration for changing the environment of his parish went hand in hand with Watts-Ditchfield's interest in the spiritual salvation of his parishioners, which he went about with zeal, making it his mission to attract and retain a strong congregation, starting with the men. His approach involved simple services, open air preaching, tours of the parish with a brass band, and

³²⁹ C. J. Bearman, 'Ditchfield, John Edwin Watts-' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* <<https://doi-org.sheffield.idm.oclc.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/47655>> [accessed 3 July 2018].

³³⁰ McIlhiney, (1988), p.79.

the establishment of numerous clubs and services whose aim was to improve the day-to-day lives of his parishioners:

Billiards, bagatelle, draughts, chess, and some forms of card games were held each night in the parish hall, with the twin restrictions that there be no alcohol and no gambling on the premises. The Men's Club also organised several other societies all aimed at promoting thrift: a "Sick, Burial, and Annual Division Society", a Coal Club, a Loan Society, a savings club, and a Christmas Club.³³¹

Alongside the activities of the Men's Club, there was a children's guild, lads club, girls club, Bible reading classes, athletics teams for the young men, and home-making classes for young women. Although the spiritual efficacy of Watts-Ditchfield's new institutions is doubtable, his zeal as a social reformer was unparalleled in the East End. A description of his mode of delivery, when giving sermons, goes some way to demonstrate the comradery and community that he had fostered:

The vicar ascended the pulpit [at the Men's Service] and gave an address on the relations between the sexes. He was certainly earnest in his delivery, but I am bound to add the sermon itself contained no originality of thought, no very glowing inspiration to the higher life, though it frequently made the audience laugh audibly. But the fact remained that it was one of the largest, one of the most attentive congregations that I had ever seen, with apparently every desirable element present except, as far as I was able to discern, that of spirituality.³³²

However, the entrenched social structures of Victorian London limited the impact of the Reverend's work. The swelling congregation, marked by the silk top hats and bonnets of their owners, may have been a sign that he was presiding over a period of upward social mobility, or that many of the attendees of his services were coming from middle class areas.³³³ It was also an institution that had caught the attention of Charles Booth:

I have twice attended Mr. Watts-Ditchfield's Sunday afternoon men's service at St. James-the-Less. On the first occasion it was "Question Sunday." The body of the church was full of men, not less than five hundred, I thought. Looking at them from my seat at the back I

³³¹ McIlhiney, (1988), p.81.

³³² Raymond Blathwayt, quoted in McIlhiney, (1988), p.86.

³³³ McIlhiney, (1988), p.91.

took them to be mostly above working-class level, but studying them later as they left the building one could see that a large proportion were either artisans or the sons of working men employed as clerks.³³⁴

Booth was interested in the demographic behind the numbers of men that Watts-Ditchfield had attracted at St. James-the-Less. His eye was tuned to the differentials between the inhabitants of London, and he thought they looked like they were men whose position was to some extent improved compared to that of their fathers (moving from a labouring background to clerical employment), which may have indicated some of the successes of Watts-Ditchfield's programme of social mobility. A few years later a young man, newly returned from Canada, joined the Reverend, upon whom the parish of St. James-the-Less and its innovative methods of congregation and community building were to have a lifelong influence.

WATTS-DITCHFIELD AS TEACHER AND LEADER

The impact that Watts-Ditchfield had upon Richard St. Barbe Baker is less evident in his development as a spiritual leader, and more on his development as an effective administrative churchman. Baker's later work in establishing the Watu aa Miti in Kenya and then the Men of the Trees in Britain and overseas would see the same skills of communication, delegation and organisation deployed by Watts-Ditchfield. The appeal that Watts-Ditchfield exerted upon the evangelical community beyond his parish, as well as the support he found within it, demonstrates that he was a man who was able to maximise the resources available to him, and to draw upon the attributes of those around him to deliver the greatest social good. Indeed, upon his appointment to St. James-the-Less in 1897 the Archdeacon informed his congregation:

... he is a man of so much zealous energy, that if you do not help him, he will soon wear himself out. In this parish there ought to be five curates; but this is impossible. We cannot aim at such a high ideal. If your Vicar should have two curates it is as much as we can expect, but he should find among you many helpers.³³⁵

However, this ideal was met and superseded. Fifteen years later, Watts-Ditchfield had a permanent staff of five curates and fifteen lay members of staff, as well as numerous part time volunteers, including the 24-year-old Baker. In the spring of 1913, the Watts-Ditchfield was

³³⁴ C. Booth, (1969), p. 239-240.

³³⁵ Ellis N. Gowing, quoted in McIlhiney, (1988), p.79.

delivering lectures in pastoral theology to the Divinity Schools at Cambridge; lectures that were later published in a volume called *Church in Action* (1913). Introducing the volume, the Vice Chancellor of Magdalene College, S.A. Donaldson, described the appeal his lectures held for the students, ‘whom he attracted and retained from first to last: and small wonder: for the lectures were not only full of deep spirituality and true earnestness, but were also eminently practical, sane, wide-minded, enriched with apt illustrations and humorous anecdotes.’³³⁶ The passionate nature of the delivery of the lectures is clear, with the integrity of purpose – the zeal with which work within the church needed to be undertaken - spelt out for the young men, and the masculine Christian spirit is strong:

Every Christian is a member of the Church Militant. There is no other Church on earth, for the Church of God on earth is the fighting army of the Lord. She is the Church Militant! The Church in Action! She must be militant or die. She must be fighting or belie her Lord. She must be the Church at war or leave unfulfilled her task of conquering the world for Christ. Her spirit must be that of aggression and never that of mere defence. Her Lord says, “Go,” and go the Church must – in spite of the principalities and powers, both of earth and air, she must ever march on and on, until she can lay the whole world as a trophy of victory at the feet of her Lord and King.³³⁷

Near-mandatory participation in life in mission work was also something that Watts-Ditchfield was keen to impress on his audience, with the links between Cambridge University and institutions and missions within the East End and elsewhere being clearly signposted. He recommended that between their university studies and ordination, men should spend time in a Settlement. Watts-Ditchfield felt that this was the way in which the next generation of clergy would become ‘acquainted on the spot with the inner life of the people.’ Such opportunities also afforded study of the ‘best methods of Social Reform’ and were available at Oxford House and Ridley House in Bethnal Green, as well as other sites in London.³³⁸ Ridley House was connected to St. James the Less, and it is perhaps no more than coincidence that Baker was to volunteer with Watts-Ditchfield - quite possibly at Ridley House - and then studied at Ridley Hall,

³³⁶ S.A. Donaldson in J.E. Watts-Ditchfield *The Church in Action: Lectures delivered in the Divinity School of the University of Cambridge in 1913* (London: Robert Scott, 1914). p.vii.

³³⁷ Watts-Ditchfield, (1914), p.1.

³³⁸ Ellis Norman Gowing, *John Edwin Watts-Ditchfield, first Bishop of Chelmsford* (London: Hodder & Stoughton), p.87.

Cambridge. Both institutions are named after a Christian martyr and former Bishop of London, Nicholas Ridley.

Church in Action also allowed Watts-Ditchfield to communicate the attitude and ambitions of his parish: that if the men were recruited, then the entire family came to God. This was at odds with the prevailing wisdom that prioritised the ‘saving’ of children primarily, but which had limited impact. The fourth in the series of lectures addressed the way in which effective programmes and practices could be implemented to attract and retain a congregation. First, the activities for men took priority, but following that, the support for women and activities for children were addressed. He saw clubs for working men, coal-buying cooperatives, and loan provisions as integral to the mission. He also believed that activities for young people must be delivered, and that listed Sunday Schools, Children’s Services, Children’s Guild, and ‘The Church Lad’s Brigade’ were vitally important groups, with the Boy Scouts being held up for its particular merits for having ‘captured in a few years the imagination of the boy life of the nation as no movement has ever done before.’³³⁹ The patriotic values of the organisation, the importance of honouring vows, and their imperative to help those around them were key in Watts Ditchfield’s eyes.

Baker’s experience in leading the Bethnal Green scouts in Epping Forest became one of his strongest memories of his time at St. James the Less. Furthermore, the spirit with which Watts-Ditchfield appointed such leaders was key to maintaining a spiritual hegemony within the groups, making sure that there was always a dominant presence from the Church within the structure. Watts-Ditchfield, ultimately, had a vision for how this attitude towards a parish and community would manifest. The strength of this vision, and the clarity with which he conveyed it, can be seen as analogous with Baker’s later communication for ‘a world made green’ through tree planting, and all the manifold benefits that come with such efforts. Redemption in this life, not the next. Such was the domestic bliss that Watts-Ditchfield hoped to bring into being:

Thus men must be sought, and thus men can be found. It is a difficult task, and one which demands whole-hearted devotion, but it is essentially a happy sphere, for there is no joy more real or lasting than that begotten of a visit to a home happy in the love of God, where one is greeted by a wife cheerful and bright, surrounded by her children when but a few months back – that house was desolate, that wife was hopeless, those children were practically fatherless, and now this mighty change, this wonderful twentieth century miracle

³³⁹ Gowing, p.145

has been wrought by the Christ of Bethlehem and of Calvary, through the Ministry of the Men's Service.³⁴⁰

WATTS-DITCHFIELD'S INFLUENCE UPON BAKER

Much as Bishop Lloyd receded in Baker's retelling of his time in Canada - with the British colonizing imperative felt by Lloyd being unapparent in Baker's account - Watts-Ditchfield is also only lightly sketched. However, in relation to his time in Bethnal Green - and although written decades after his time there - the impact that the living conditions in East London had upon his ideas of social work and overseas settlement is evident. For Baker, the greatest impact upon him was the method with which Watts-Ditchfield administrated his parish, recounted with typical immediacy:

"Now St Barbe if you would please look in at the clubs that are meeting in the various church halls to-night and explain that I may be just a little late, that will be a great help." There were committee meetings of the Wood Carving Club, The Cabinet Makers, the Window Box Club, The Scouts Camping Club, etc., etc. "Yes, and would you answer these letters for me. Miss Smith will type them for you. I have pencilled on each "yes", "no", "Thanks", "Consider", indicating the line to take. And there's that Bible reading Class, get them started and hand over to the Chairman and Secretary. If the doctor calls, here is a list of sick people I want him to visit. I will be telephoning my Study later. Keep in touch and let Miss Smith know where you are. Thank you, St Barbe. You are ever so good to me."³⁴¹

The picture created of Watts-Ditchfield is of a man capable of engendering great energy and activity, as well as the presence of mind to delegate to others the running of such activities to facilitate even more activity. The hands-on nature of Watts-Ditchfield's method of spiritual and medicinal care is also deftly sketched in one of Baker's collections of autobiographical notes, which demonstrates the pull that Canada still had upon him. The notes were written as prompts for a longer and more literary autobiography and have been rendered cryptic with the passing of time:

³⁴⁰ Watts-Ditchfield, p.108.

³⁴¹ Baker, 2010, p.175.

16. Bethnal Green. Dispensary. Dispensing doctrine before medicine. The two bands. Men's clubs. Scots. Minor Prophets. | Matchbox | 4d lodging houses. | Yukon or London³⁴²

These notes are fleshed out in *Tall Timber*, creating an impression of the impact that ministering to a parish with as much poverty as there was in Bethnal Green had upon Baker:

I was calling on a family of Matchbox makers. The whole family working together made only twelve shillings and sixpence a week! I put a shilling on the table for samples of twelve different kinds of boxes they were making. The eldest girl snatched it up and went out and in a few moments returned with six bloaters! The children grabbed them and tore them to bits and ate them raw. Bethnal Green was a parish where you could get a lodging for fourpence a night. You lay on straw and it was crowded. Backhouse a curate from New Zealand and I would spend a night there to get to know the "other" man.³⁴³

The observations that Charles Booth made of the institutions that 'dispensed doctrine before medicine' had an air of resignation on the part of those needing treatment, and although benevolent were ineffectual in the delivery. Describing such dispensaries, Booth noted that 'those who seek medical advice first have to sit through a half-hour's religious service. They make no objection to this. It is very kindly meant and is doubtless better than sitting in sadness and silence as they might have to do anywhere else, but I conceive it to be absolutely futile as a means of "spreading the Gospel"'.³⁴⁴ It is quite a different picture to that painted by Baker, but there was also an element of doubt in his recollections of his time in Bethnal Green. The imperative to save souls as well as making a practical difference in their lives – illustrated by such activities as the spiritual dispensary – was ultimately fruitless, and that was something that Baker later reflected upon, wondering how effective his efforts were, but ultimately deciding that his life had been 'enriched' by working with Watts-Ditchfield.³⁴⁵

Canada still had a hold upon Baker, and although it is not something suggested in his writings, it could be suggested that one scenario which Baker was entertaining at the time was to complete his training at Ridley Hall and then to return to Canada in the style of Bishop Exton Lloyd with his own band of settlers. Moreover, given the widespread knowledge of William Booth's vision

³⁴² US, R. St. Barbe Baker Papers, fonds MG 71, A. I. 1 'Brief Personal Notes'.

³⁴³ Baker, 2010, p.175.

³⁴⁴ C. Booth, (1969), p.172.

³⁴⁵ Baker, 2010, p.176.

of the 'Colony over the Sea', might Baker's activities have sat within a similar ideological vision of the retraining of people from the urban working class and extending the British hegemony in their overseas territory? Again, the influence of his father is apparent, but also Baker's emerging use of his own experiences as the evidence and justification for the activities he proposed:

I would give a lecture on Canada illustrated with pictures I had made in the lumber camps and on prairie farms. They were entertained but when I asked them if they would care to come out with me and settle there? That was quite another matter. They would not dream of leaving their little part of London however sordid.³⁴⁶

BADEN-POWELL AND THE BOY SCOUTS

The time that Baker spent in Bethnal Green was brief and there is no evidence of any continuation of the relationship between Baker and Watts-Ditchfield after 1914. However, other connections and experiences were to endure. Most notably, Baker's involvement with the Boy Scouts for whom Baker deputised for Watts-Ditchfield and took to Epping Forest. Indeed, the organisation itself forms a useful blueprint for the Men of the Trees, where the group structure resulted in a great deal of autonomy for each patrol. Indeed, Baden-Powell, the Founder of the Boy Scouts, intended that the literature that the Scouts produced would mean 'that anyone, even without previous knowledge of scouting, may be able to teach it to boys – in town as well as in the country.'³⁴⁷ That Baker had experience of life in Canada, as well as his own practical upbringing, and had been brought up in an environment where leading services and administering to the local community were second nature, would have made him an ideal fit to lead a patrol.

Baden-Powell developed a structure for the delivery of instruction to a new group of scouts, with evening and daytime activities and instruction. The first evening could include an address on 'Scoutcraft' with a summary of the history of the organisation and its beginnings in the Siege of Mafeking, 'accompanied by demonstrations or lantern slides'. This would be followed, on another day, with hoisting and saluting the Union Jack, scout games, practicing salutes, songs, and the drawing of signs. Integral to the scheme was the instruction that the scouts should be

³⁴⁶ Baker, 2010, p.175.

³⁴⁷ R.S.S. Baden-Powell, *Scouting for Boys: a handbook for instruction in good citizenship* (London: Horace Cox, 1908), p.5.

sent out ‘independently or in pairs to do a “good turn,” to return and to report how they have done it.’³⁴⁸ The oath that scouts must swear on their honour reinforced the dutiful and conscientious Christian values of the organisation: ‘1. To be loyal to God and the King. 2. To help other people at all times. 3. To obey the scout law.’³⁴⁹ And on top of that, scouts needed to pass tests on woodcraft, campaigning, chivalry, saving lives, endurance and patriotism. The scouts’ contribution to the continuation of the British Empire was left in no doubt:

People say that we have no patriotism nowadays, and that therefore our empire will fall to pieces like the great Roman empire did, because its citizens became selfish and lazy, and only cared for amusements. I am sure that if you boys keep the good of your country in your eyes *above everything else* she will go on all right ... If you take up scouting in that spirit you will be doing something; take it up, not merely because it amuses you, but because by doing so you will be fitting yourself to help your country. Then you will have in you the true spirit of patriotism, which every British boy ought to have if he is worth his salt.³⁵⁰

In describing the right and wrong types of food available in Britain, Baden-Powell cautioned that ‘English people as a rule eat more meat than is necessary, in fact they could do without it altogether if they tried, and would be none the worse. It is an expensive luxury.’ In ‘Camp Fire Yarn no.22 on religion, thrift and how to get on’, Baden-Powell spelt out to the instructors why these values underpinned the most important work in the scheme, giving them the ‘opportunity for doing really valuable work for the nation.’³⁵¹

Baden-Powell believed boys running riot and being used as wage-earners by adults caused unemployment.³⁵² The Boy Scout movement provided the opportunity for instructors to contribute to their future paths by talking to each boy in their troop privately about their future, and to help map out a path and find a trade. Presumably Baker offered such council, and it is likely that life on the land would have been something he championed as he was later to do with the Civilian Conservation Corps. Furthermore, and in line with the limitations of the *Scouting for*

³⁴⁸ Baden-Powell, p.8

³⁴⁹ Baden-Powell, p.20.

³⁵⁰ Baden-Powell, p.29-30.

³⁵¹ Baden-Powell, p.259

³⁵² Baden-Powell, p.259.

Boys manual, each instructor's 'own experience or imagination will probably provide many more.'³⁵³

Militarism became a strong theme in Baker's later work - manifest in his vision of the 'Green Front', of the Watu wa Miti, and the Civilian Conservation Corps - yet that vision must be considered within the activities of the men considered in this chapter, of which the militarism that is evoked is a central part of imperialism. Baker never explicitly set out his ideological family tree, but in the work of William Booth, Watts-Ditchfield and Baden-Powell, it can be seen that the ideas of a mobilised force for good (be it the Salvationists or the Scouts) were something that later had an iteration in the vision that Baker had for the world. Indeed, the paradoxical nature of peaceful militarism that was expressed by Baden-Powell presents a useful point of reference to Baker's militaristic attitude towards galvanising the world's armies to fight the desert; recognising that there are foes more terrifying than mortal enemies.

... when an eminent public school man wrote to me that I ought not to teach boys soldiering because, as he puts it, "he hates war like the devil," I felt bound to reply that had he actually seen anything of war himself, he would, like most soldiers, hate it *worse* than the devil. It is for that very reason that officers almost without question urge upon their fellow countrymen to be prepared to defend their country. It is not that they wish to make the men bloodthirsty, but it is that they may avert from our own land the worst of all modern anachronisms – the horrors of war...³⁵⁴

Taken together, the vision of William Booth, the social reform of Charles Booth, and Watts-Ditchfield's 'Men's Services', create a blue print for the ideas of armies undertaking ecological restoration work, and that army being primarily made up of men. The identification in this study of cross references between Charles Booth's and William Booth's texts, demonstrates the curiosity felt by the social scientist for the salvationist, and suggests that the values and vision of the Salvation Army were something that Charles Booth found compelling, despite his secular interest in poverty. In this respect, is it possible to look at Baker's value-laden ecological credo in such a light that demonstrates a compromise between these two methods of social science and salvation? Baker's brief experiences in the East End gave him a blueprint for the creation of a congregation, following his experience of church building on the Canadian Prairie, which was

³⁵³ Baden-Powell, p.259.

³⁵⁴ Baden-Powell, p.342.

going to stand him in good stead when he was to establish the Watu wa Miti ten years later in Kenya.

Baker's later reiteration of this idea of militarism and manliness is best expressed in an article entitled 'Opportunities for Optimists', in which he describes the resolution that a public meeting of the Men of the Trees made calling for 'Universal Training Camps.' These would emulate the work archived by the Civilian Conservation Corps, instigated by President Roosevelt in 1933, to undertake 'forestry and other work of national importance connected with the land.'³⁵⁵ Here, Baker's desire to create 'a trained and disciplined body of young men ready for all eventualities' manifested a force for world peace. He hoped that 'sooner or later we shall realise that the real issue facing the world to-day is not whether this or that political system dominates, but whether humanity will agree to unite to conserve the natural resources of the world, or fight each other for the few that remain.'³⁵⁶

Watts-Ditchfield died in 1923 whilst Baker was working in Africa and there is no evidence in the papers that Baker left behind to suggest any communication between them at the time, although he was fondly remembered, with Baker saying that when 'Looking back on those vacs. from Ridley, Cambridge, I sometimes wonder how effecting my efforts were but I am sure that my own life was enriched by working with their wonderful Vicar, Watts-Ditchfield.'³⁵⁷ However, Baker's reflection on his efficacy was in keeping with the more general successes of the spiritual missionaries of the East End:

However quixotic or hopeless the task they had set themselves, the clergy of the Victorian East End tried to bridge the gap between two nations. That they were so often unsuccessful should occasion no surprise. What is more notable is the tenacity and the verve they brought to their work. Even if they had failed utterly, and at least in their own parishes they did not, there would still be a dimension of nobility in their efforts. Whether one takes the view of a cynic or hagiographer, theirs was still a remarkable ministry.³⁵⁸

Watts-Ditchfield's appointment after his time at St. James-the-Less as the First Bishop of Chelmsford was seen to be at the expense of 'better scholars and men more experienced in

³⁵⁵ Richard St. Barbe Baker, 'Opportunities for Optimists', *TREES Journal of the Men of the Trees*, June-July (1939), Vol. 3, No.5, p.141.

³⁵⁶ Baker, (1939), p.141-142.

³⁵⁷ Baker, (2010), p.176.

³⁵⁸ McIlhiney, p.109.

ecclesiastical affairs, but they had not attracted general notice.³⁵⁹ The distinction between this innovative and energetic Vicar and his more staid peers is worth bearing in mind when considering the wide-ranging activities and attitude that his young 'Hon General Secretary' manifested when studying forestry at Cambridge after the war. Baker saw social and economic problems amongst his peers as something to address, rather than ignore, and the role of a forester could encompass much more than just cutting down trees. Baker, in his later years, expressed much the same mixture of admiration and sympathy for the unglamorous and unrelenting work of the Salvation Army, but he did not go into detail and so one is left to wonder what the more nebulous influences were that he was to draw upon. In the case of the Salvation Army, it could be concluded that in their simplicity of service there is a commonality with his own simplification of complex knowledge and understanding about trees and ecology that he was able to make accessible and palatable to a wider audience.

³⁵⁹ 'First Bishop of Chelmsford'. *The Times*, 16 July 1923; p.14.

8. Man at War

He joined King Edward's Horse, the King's Overseas Dominions Regiment and completed military training. Two days before the 1914 War he volunteered for Overseas Service, was given a commission from the ranks, served in command of a battery, suffered the wounds of battle, did light duty at Cork, at the Royal Horse and Field Record Office, Woolwich, where he had his first office experience in charge of 300 uniformed clerks, after making a remarkable recovery was transferred to the Remount Service and from Southampton made 58 crossings of the English Channel in 1917, conducting 18,000 horses and mules to France, without a single casualty, was invalided out in 1918.³⁶⁰

Written in the third person, this snapshot of Baker's service during the war covered all the essentials. The brief sketch does not provide any context, but the following passage alludes to the challenges faced by British society in the immediate aftermath of the war, and the point of departure from which Baker went from being a soldier to a social advocate. His war service is presented as a facet of his diverse professional experience, and one that helped him manifest the shift he was to make towards a career in forestry after dabbling in public health:

Realising that in Great Britain we were losing more from ignorance of the health question and bad factory conditions than on all the War fronts together he devoted himself to interesting Captains of Industry in Welfare work, clubs and playing fields for their employees, and persuaded Managing Directors of companies of the importance of pre-natal clinics and health centres. As soon as the Ministry of Health came into being he returned to Cambridge to complete his forestry training.³⁶¹

Baker appears capable and affable; confident in his role as emissary, and ready to help change the form and fabric of society for the better. One wonders how compulsive getting the ears of 'Captains of Industry' was. Baker's version of events has him as mouthpiece for this forward-looking activity and it seems it must have been exciting to be heard. Both self-centred and aggrandising, the innovation and enterprise that he demonstrated in this short period consolidated the burgeoning list of qualities and experiences that he amassed over the course of

³⁶⁰ US, R. St. Barbe Baker Papers, fonds A.I.1. 'Personal Notes – June, 1960. by Sydney Walton'

³⁶¹ US, R. St. Barbe Baker Papers, fonds MG 71, A.I.1.

his twenties. The only admission of real vulnerability is that he suffered the ‘wounds of battle’, along with the fact that he was later

invalided out of the army, the suggestion being that it was his physical injuries that resulted him being discharged. Might the war, though, have taken a different kind of toll?

In 1918 the young and eager student of forestry at Cambridge was invited to give evidence before the Reconstruction Committee on Forestry. Perhaps the eloquence of his arguments had their part in the creation of the Forestry Commission. In between lectures in 1919 he designed and built the first popular de-luxe caravan trailers from aircraft material, thus giving employment to a number of aircraftsmen and helping to pay his way through college and equip himself for his first appointment as Assistant Conservator of Forests in Kenya Colony. That was 1920.³⁶²

Young and eager? By the time that Baker returned to Cambridge after the war he was twenty-nine, and behind him were the years in which he had sought adventure and meaning: his studies and homesteading in Canada; practical forestry work; the home mission in the East End; and service during the First World War. However, was his wartime experience as straightforward as these accounts suggest? In addition, given Baker’s later use of militaristic language when extolling his vision for desert reclamation, what in his years of military service might have contributed to this idea of armies healing the scars of the earth? Was Baker’s experience during the First World War something that contributed to his vision for the Green Front, or was his presentation of the events of the conflict coloured by a more vulnerable and humane experience of an epoch-defining war?

OUTBREAK

The huge number of men serving in the armed forces during the First World War necessitated a great deal of administration. Forms would have slowly populated their service files: auditing age, occupation, place of birth, their health, their recovery from injury, stress, and the collateral of life in the trenches. Baker’s service record - closed after his death in 1982 - offers an administrative and objective view of the young army Captain that does not exist in his published works or collected papers. In this context, Baker is just one of the thousands of young men who volunteered at the outbreak of war. Consistent criteria needed to be covered on the ‘Army Form

³⁶² US, R. St. Barbe Baker Papers, fonds MG 71, A.I.1.

A. 45.: the rank of the subject of the medical board, their unit, age, length of service and home address. The folder also contains Baker's certificates of commission into the Army, as well as the notification that it was rescinded in 1918 owing to ill health.

On 1st June 1914, when Baker enlisted in the King Edward's Horse, the Overseas Dominion Regiment, he was 24-years and five-months old. He stated his trade as 'Divinity Student' and his place of birth as the Parish of West End, Southampton. An oath was taken by each recruit on attestation, and Baker swore that before God he would 'be faithful and bear true Allegiance to His Majesty King George the Fifth, His Heirs, and Successors ... against all enemies, and will observe and obey all orders of His Majesty, His Heirs, and Successors, and of the Generals and Officers set over me. So help me God.'³⁶³ His appointment for a commission in the British Army on the 2nd December 1914 required less information, but provides some details, such as whether he was of 'pure European descent' (answer: yes) and whether he was a British born or naturalised British subject. The spectre of Empire is present here, as well as the practicality of the information about him: whether he was serving or had previously served in any Governmental Department (either Home, Indian, or Colonial), and whether he could ride. All of this tallies with Baker's accounts, yet also gives a sense of the numbers of men who were recruited and administrated in this way; the optimistic chivalry of the early part of the war when cavalry charges were still thought of as a viable tactic.

The third chapter of *I Planted Trees* threw his readers immediately into the conflict, with Baker declaring that he had 'scarcely got to Cambridge before the Great War came.'³⁶⁴ Although this is an oversimplification of the years, it served the purpose of continuing the adventurous narrative of the Canadian chapter, where his desire to study forestry in England eclipsed his new life on the Prairie. As he expressed it in 1944, 'It was then that I decided to qualify myself for the work of a forester...and I was drawn by the tradition that my people had been at Cambridge for generations.'³⁶⁵ *Dance of the Trees*, Baker's account of his life for a young audience, condenses the events into a single paragraph. Yet he does so after prefacing them with a description of the turmoil he felt upon returning from Canada, where he felt torn between the 'sense of mission towards the Church and ... a sense of mission to the earth itself.'³⁶⁶ In the 1956 version of

³⁶³ TNA, WO, 339/36844, 'Army form B.92'.

³⁶⁴ Baker, (1944), p.30.

³⁶⁵ Baker, (1944), p.27.

³⁶⁶ Baker, (1956), p. 31.

events, Baker included the detail that he was studying Theology at Cambridge when the war commenced, but declined to mention at which institution. His activities with the Watts-Ditchfield are also mentioned, along with the aside that he had been ‘offered a title’ by the Bishop of London during his work in the East End.³⁶⁷ The events described in *Dance of the Trees* are much the same as *I Planted Trees*, only more brief:

Then war was declared. At Cambridge I joined King Edward’s Horse, the King’s Overseas Dominions Regiment. Later I took a commission in the Artillery and after three trips to the Front, I finally was invalided out in April, 1918 and went back to Cambridge, quite certain at last that it was forestry for me. Much of my savings had been needed at home so I had to work my way through college again.³⁶⁸

Unlike his accounts of Canada in which he presented himself as a solitary figure, in *Horse Sense* Baker rather unusually brought his brothers into the narrative with an entire chapter dedicated to their experiences of Canada and the First World War. It flies in the face of Baker’s image of himself as a trailblazer when suddenly it is revealed that all three were in Canada in the years preceding the war. Baker claimed that his brother Tom had ‘followed’ him to Canada, and with no assistance from the family had become foreman of a mine in Ontario at the age of sixteen. This rapid promotion had come about because of Tom Baker being struck by a foreman, and then Tom responding by knocking him down. The pride in his brother’s achievement, and admiration for the standing in which he was held by his co-workers, is evident in Baker’s prose, describing his brother subduing a man twice his age and size and going on to be elected foreman of the mine.³⁶⁹ Indeed, Tom appears to have landed in St. Albans, Vermont, in 1910, aged fifteen. Curiously, there are two entries for his name.³⁷⁰

One wonders what had prompted the fifteen-year-old Tom to travel to Canada. Richard had waited until he was nineteen before leaving. Thomas appears to have remained in Quebec, and later joined the first regiment of that province, before joining the Canadian Scottish Regiment as

³⁶⁷ Baker, (1956), p.31.

³⁶⁸ Baker, (1956), p.31.

³⁶⁹ Baker, (1962), p.19.

³⁷⁰ The National Archives at Washington, D.C.; Washington, D.C.; Series Title: Index to Alien Arrivals at Canadian Atlantic and Pacific Seaports; NAI Number: 3000080; Record Group Title: Records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, 1787-2004; Record Group Number: 85. Ancestry.com. U.S., Index to Alien Arrivals at Canadian Atlantic and Pacific Seaports, 1904-1944 [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2015.

sergeant.³⁷¹ However, Baker's other brother, James Scott, settled much closer to his older brother Richard in Saskatoon, having become an electrical engineer working on the track for the street trams of the rapidly expanding city. James Scott had joined up in the 5th Western Cavalry Regiment and, through the 'arduous training to which he had submitted', qualified to be drafted for the first contingent of Canadians from the Middle west and Saskatchewan.³⁷²

Baker's third autobiography - *My Life, My Trees*, published in 1970 when he was eighty-one years old - brought the events to life in a much more immediate way, perhaps surprising in a volume that covered eight decades of experience. The same rehashing of the years is evident, but with a different attitude towards war. Prefaced with a brief summary of his time in Canada, the same events were covered but with interesting irregularities; not least that in this instance he identified the theological school that he attended, Ridley Hall, which is not itself part of the University of Cambridge. Baker set out his reasons for returning to Cambridge and continuing his studies (that it was something that his forebears had done) to either become ordained or to enter academia. However,

Into the peace and seclusion of Ridley Hall came the threat of war. I had taken to heart the Sermon on the Mount and sought the guidance of my tutor, for whom I had the greatest possible admiration. If the teachings meant anything and if we were to take up His Cross and follow Him, it would mean throwing up my cavalry training in King Edward's Horse - the King's Overseas Dominions' Regiment - and becoming a conscientious objector to war with all the deprivation it would entail.³⁷³

This admission of his doubt and the conflict between his Christian faith and patriotic duty presents an interesting change of approach to the lead-up to the war. Rather than the confident young man taking on the role of army captain, another Baker emerges: someone having a deep crisis of conscience. Baker's tutor at Ridley Hall counselled him that the Sermon on the Mount 'was a council of perfection', and that Jesus himself had fought the moneylenders and 'steel themselves for the fight against evil' meaning that Baker would not be compromising his faith by joining the armed forces.³⁷⁴ Confusion and pessimism coloured this version; Baker described himself as having been 'bewildered', and that he made up his mind 'that the best way to die was

³⁷¹ Baker, (1962), p.20.

³⁷² Baker, (1962), p.20.

³⁷³ Baker, (1970), p.23.

³⁷⁴ Baker, (1970), p.23.

in a cavalry charge'.³⁷⁵ Here was a young man with a romantic death-wish and a fantasy of how the war might have unfolded; quite at odds with the reality of the mechanised and dug-in conflict that it was to become.

BAKER'S WAR

Although studying in Cambridge, Baker was camping near Canterbury with King Edward's Horse - the voluntary cavalry regiment - when war was declared. The conflict had been anticipated, and Baker had been enthusiastic in his participation in the ostensibly ceremonial regiment, inspired by their Major who commanded four troops from Oxford and Cambridge. A Major who (recounted with typical immediacy by Baker) exhorted his men to ready themselves with words like "Chaps, there's a war coming; now is the time to choose the pals you want to die with." Baker described recruiting friends and dedicating himself to early drill practice.³⁷⁶ Baker's first role was to commandeer horses for the army and in that role he presented himself as a young man who was fully committed to the cause, with an awareness of his role and responsibilities beyond just being an officer, but also extending to the animals in his care.

After being injured Baker spent a period recovering in hospital having torn muscles in his shoulder, and returned to his unit, who had been stationed near Watford. The woodland setting is described as being 'beautifully treed' and he remarked on the circumstances that led to a second stampede, which was less serious and caused no fatalities: "The hooter of a passing tug, towing a barge on a nearby canal, had been the cause."³⁷⁷ The minutiae of the incident are recorded as if in a diary, rather than an account written thirty years later.

In this version of events, the First World War was defined by horses. Baker's experience at home and in Canada must have stood him in good stead, because when Baker's troop were asked to disband as a squadron and volunteer again, he found himself stationed to Ireland, with the 5B Reserve Brigade Artillery, Ballincollig. Moreover, because the Battery Commander was in hospital, Baker found himself 'in command of the battery, which consisted of eight hundred Irish reservists, six hundred horses and two guns.'³⁷⁸ This administrative task appears not to have daunted Baker, and his first action in the role was to hit upon a solution for misbehaviour

³⁷⁵ Baker, (1970), p.23.

³⁷⁶ Baker, (1944), p.30.

³⁷⁷ Baker, (1944), p.32.

³⁷⁸ Baker, (1944), p.33.

within the troop, as well as the need for fodder for the horses: ‘imposing half an hour’s work on either the chaff-cutter or the oat crusher, ringing the changes on each respectively. With a little boiled linseed added, I soon had my horses fit and sleek. By the time they were in perfect condition “crime” had quite vanished from the battery.’³⁷⁹ ‘Those were happy days’, declared Baker. However, the contentment of balancing his role and responsibilities with the pleasure of hunting, playing tennis, and kissing the Blarney Stone was not to last.

Baker then joined his two brothers in France at the front. Greater detail emerges here, with the rewards and progression on the front line defining his first period in the trenches. Baker described the dynamics of his regiment; that he eschewed playing poker as he had lost a number of games on his way to Canada; and that he turned down a Military Cross and promotion to A.D.C. to remain with his troop on the advice of his superiors, although this is a claim which is hard to verify and inconsistent with the procedures of commendation. Moreover, his admission that his keen observation of the German line resulted in him identifying a German observation post in a church. Baker admitted to ‘feeling a bit squeamish about shelling a church’ and suggested that the General with whom he had shared his sighting used heavier artillery than his own.³⁸⁰ Thus, the church-and-congregation-building young man was spared the task of destroying a holy structure.

Following this incident, Baker spent time on leave back in England before returning to the front. The contrast between the horrors of battle and the realities of life in the army are interspersed: Baker returns and is posted to the 39th brigade ‘under the command of Colonel Wardrop, the famous authority on pig-sticking’ (a form of wild boar hunting with a spear, popularised in India and enjoyed by, amongst others, Robert Baden-Powell).³⁸¹ Baker was asked to participate in the Corps horse show and, having admitted that he had no horse of his own to enter, was invited to ride upon the Colonel’s. This is the preamble to disaster, as the reward given to Baker was the ‘very responsible job of building a fighting post for the Colonel in preparation for the big push.’³⁸² It was whilst building this post that the heavy shelling occurred, which nearly ended Baker’s life. The same account is provided in *I Planted Trees*, but it was embellished with the

³⁷⁹ Baker, (1944), p.33.

³⁸⁰ Baker, (1970), p.25.

³⁸¹ Baker, (1970), p.25.

³⁸² Baker, (1970), p.25.

detail that the identity bracelet, which saved his life, had been on a stronger steel chain because of his home leave.

THE WAR AT HOME

The R. St. Barbe Baker Papers held by the University of Saskatchewan offer another perspective on Baker's war service. It is a period that is lacking in correspondence between the Bakers. However, it is clear from the two letters that did survive that there would have been a flurry of communication between John, Charlotte, and their three sons. What the Papers do hold are two letters from John Baker, and they are notable for the anchoring they give to Baker's published accounts of his service and a counterpoint to the different narratives they represent. The first letter was sent to Baker on his birthday, 9th October 1915, with the year added later. Baker was twenty-six and the war was in its second year. Much like the correspondence that contributed to chapters on Baker's childhood, the content ranges from the everyday minutiae of life to the location of each son. Life at The Firs is communicated, with the cropping of fruit trees and maintenance of the vegetable garden. Presumably the 'improving' is Baker's recovery from his first major injuries, but as there is no address it is not possible to tell where he was when he received the letter.

My own dear boy

Accept your loving father's good wishes for your birthday. I am sorry it is not in my power to send you a real good present but take the sincere desire for the deed. We do trust you are really improving. Dear old Scott is not under shellfire now & this fact is comforting although he is I fear badly hurt we should so like to be able to see him.

Tom ought soon to get a rest, the apple tree you put at 300lbs turned out to have yielded about 350lbs so you were nearer the mark than myself (at 250) I have done nearly all the picking this year and high winds made it a little trying at times as the crop was very thin on most trees just 3 or 4 on the highest branches causing much climbing & ladder fixing yet I am thankful to say when weighed about 3000lbs, our Broccoli & Cauliflower have done well think of pulling out of $\frac{3}{4}$ acre about 42£ in a few months, but labour etc will cost 48£ but I have greatly improved the land & produced something where there was next to nothing. The last 5 years of your life have been preserved through many & great dangers in fact "redeemed from destruction: over & over again it is our earnest prayer that your life so wonderfully preserved may be given to Christ to be His faithful soldier & servant, I am not sending you a card this year, but please read the 1&2nd Epistles of Tim through & ask yourself if the photo given by the Holy Spirit there by St Paul is not true to the life, Today the departure from the faith & apostasy is on us in very deed & as before the flood Men

are saying unto god “depart from us we need not the knowledge of the most High” Job 22

17

With fondest love

Believe me my dear boy

Your affectionate father J R St B Baker

PS many thanks for your letter³⁸³

How perilous had the last five years been? This suggests that Baker had faced many dangers, but whether they were of a spiritual or physical nature is impossible to tell. John Baker’s image of his son as a soldier and servant of Christ is important, his role in the war being second to his spiritual mission. Anxiety about the future of Christianity through the abandonment of the old ways and possible uptake of new faiths and religions worried his father. This contradicts some of the later representation of John Baker as a man who welcomed anyone of any faith to his Mission Hall. The lines from Timothy give a sense of what could be communicated between father and son using the Bible as an intermediary:

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus, 2 To Timothy, my dearly beloved son: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord..³⁸⁴

Written by Paul to Timothy, the lines from the New Testament delivered to Baker the love of not just his father, but also his God. The value of even just seeing one side of the correspondence between father and son during war time is important, and the second of the two letters in the collection is much more clearly a reply to one written by Richard to John Baker. The contents must have been significant, and there is a sense that the letter was expected, if not anticipated. Necessitating privacy, John Baker seems to be indicating that Richard had manifest a change of heart - or possibly demonstrated an assurance that his faith is strong - and this will therefore mean his life imitates that of his great uncle James Baker, who was the relative who settled in Canada. The letter in full:

My own dear boy

You cannot tell, nor can I express, the heartfelt joy & thankfulness your letter gave me

when as requested at 2.PM I opened it in private after prayer. You know I am not very soft

³⁸³ US, R. St. Barbe Baker Papers, fonds MG 71, A/1/30, 1915.

³⁸⁴ Timothy 2, 1.

yet you would have seen tears if you could have had a peep at me, I greatly desire that the Lord may make you such a man as my dear Uncle James (you can read his life after you get home where a warm welcome awaits you) (also a lot of odd jobs)

True happiness is in store for all who 1. Make Him their only Hope 2. Who make His Word their trust 3. For those who seek to live for others.

I have been thinking lately that instead of looking at this awful war only, we should look at the causes read Isa 24. 5&6

We have a sample of civilized man & what [...] Christianity is –

A dear friend is back from Russia where nothing but violence reigns “men of low degree are vanity & Men of high degree are a lie” Ps62 0

It is a hard lesson to learn Isa 2 22

With our fondest love

Believe me

Your loving father

J R St B Baker

PS we have had a happy Easter with your letter & a good time all day & also around the Lord's table where 20 of us “remembered Him

Dear Mother hopes to write shortly but has been hindered³⁸⁵

The second paragraph suggests that Baker's letter to his father had offered some renewed commitment to God; that faith should be his only source of hope; to trust in the Bible; and to live a life of self-sacrifice and giving. One wonders whether this reflects a knowledge or understanding of the crisis of faith and conscience that Baker described in his later accounts, where his recovery brought home the great loss of life around him. In his published works it is presented as a period where he came close to renouncing his Christian faith, yet from his biographical notes it is clear that he vacillated between different faith structures. How much his family knew of this is uncertain, but this letter suggests that Richard's commitment to God was of paramount importance to his father.

John Baker's referral to Isiah makes clear his belief in the senselessness of the war. The verses in full read: “The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore hath the curse devoured the earth, and they that dwell therein are desolate: therefore the inhabitants of the

³⁸⁵ US, R. St. Barbe Baker Papers, fonds MG 71, A/1/31 Letter, 31 Mar.

earth are burned, and few men left.³⁸⁶ This perspective, coupled with the verse from Job in the previous letter, suggest a worldview held by John Baker that was pessimistic in its opinion of human society. He felt that the war was like a flood, sent to purge the world and that only a few would remain. The vision of the wrath of God is terrifying: ‘For the indignation of the LORD is upon all nations, and his fury upon all their armies: he hath utterly destroyed them, he hath delivered them to the slaughter.’³⁸⁷

Baker’s positive interpretation of the Bible is of note here, and offers a direct contrast to his father’s use of Biblical verse. The difference of tone between much of Isaiah and the phrase that Baker quoted most frequently is striking: ‘The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose.’³⁸⁸ Choosing this optimistic phrase when extolling the Biblical precedent for restoring the desert to fertility is far removed from his father’s apocalyptic interpretation of the same chapter. A chapter that, overall, is much closer to John Baker’s reading: one in which a world of sinners is punished for its sin.³⁸⁹

John Baker’s reference to the situation in Russia suggests that it was written in 1917; the year of the Russian Revolution. His friend may well have witnessed the February uprising, in which over one thousand people died. The hard lesson that John Baker felt that everyone needed to learn was: ‘Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of?’³⁹⁰ which was later translated to ‘stop trusting in mere humans, who have but a breath in their nostrils. | Why hold them in esteem?’³⁹¹ That is to suggest that the rule of anyone other than God was of no consequence. As ever, the cheer of the letter’s ending is quite at odds with much of the content: the conveyance of love for example, or the note to say that Charlotte was soon to write to her son. It would be of great interest to have her letters from the period to examine alongside the correspondence between father and son. Again, the absences must be recognised as such: a negative to the positive provided by the surviving papers, which alone gives some sense of what might have been lost.

³⁸⁶ Isaiah 24, 5-6.

³⁸⁷ Isaiah 34.

³⁸⁸ Isaiah 35.

³⁸⁹ Camilla Allen and Robin Hamon, ‘Richard St. Barbe Baker: visionary interpreter of the Bible’, unpublished paper, 2017.

³⁹⁰ Isaiah 2.

³⁹¹ Isaiah 2.

Blending the spiritual with the everyday sets the tone for the majority of the letters, mostly from John Baker and later from Charlotte. They cover such wide-ranging issues as world events, the business of the nursery, what needs mending, what health they are in, alongside biblical passages and references and foretelling of doom and judgement:

The crash of Charing Cross Station teaches us a lesson they say 15 minutes before it happened a warning crack was heard in the roof & one of the Company's servants gave warning but the station was not cleared, soon enough even so God has warned the world of coming judgement yet there seems no earnest desire to escape from the city of destruction to Jesus Christ for safety. Many things are just now happening that are like the warning voice, that the Lord is at hand. This affair in Turkey may be the Lord's way of "drying up the river Euphrates" = (the Turkish empire) that the way for the return of the Jews may be prepared. H. drives the van now, fond love from us all.³⁹²

This tonal leap - from a structural fault causing loss of life in Charing Cross Station to the coming day of judgement, and then returning to the everyday nature of who is driving the van - is consistent across the letters, with the names and numbers of appropriate Bible passages accompanying the text. In the case of the letter above, John Baker signed it 'J.R.St.B. Baker', also adding his date of birth and a reference to four lines from Philippians 4, which in the King James Bible read:

4 Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice.
5 Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand.
6 Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.
7 And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.³⁹³

This application of Biblical passages reinforced the messages he sent to his son, and it is something repeated in the later letters: two sent during the First World War and two during the Second World War. The image created is of a man rationalising the horrors of war with the belief that it is part of what he sees as the destined end of days. During the First World War, one of the relevant passages from the Bible sent to his eldest son was Isaiah 24, verses 4 & 5:

³⁹² US, R. St. Barbe Baker Papers, fonds MG 71, B. I. 1. A/1/23 (1905).

³⁹³ Philippians 4. 4-7.

‘The earth mourneth and fadeth away, the world languisheth and fadeth away, the haughty people of the earth do languish.

The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant.’³⁹⁴

Luckily, the three Baker sons survived. Nevertheless, it begs the question; if you truly believe that the last days are coming and that all the signs are confirming your belief, what happens when the war ends, and the world returns to peace? The real-world parallel that John Baker saw between the Biblical text by which he lived his life and the cataclysm of the First World War must have reinforced all his belief in the imminence of judgement, only for the conflict to be replaced by the challenging decades that followed.

There is a large gap in the correspondence between the two wars, and there is no correspondence between John Baker and his other children. This leaves a gulf in the potential insight into the dynamics between parents and siblings as demonstrated by their letter writing. But in one of the later letters, sent during the Second World War, he writes of his hatred of conflict and this next tide of destruction: ‘I long for this slaughter to stop, I hate war more than ever.’³⁹⁵ The sentiment is not patriotic, but it is humane. Life at The Firs during wartime is conveyed: a quiet and rather cold place, involving day-to-day activities like looking after chicks, mending slippers, instructions for home remedies and growing flowers and vegetables, interspersed with ecclesiastical controversy like the role Calvin played in the execution of Servitus. The practicality and self-reliance is apparent in the last letter from father to son, reassuring Richard of his continued abilities:

You may like to know I am still able to work with my hands if not too hard, can mend things, make bread, change a knife blade from one handle to another etc etc I long to be on wheels once more. It is so nice to have better nights a few light attacks & only one bad one for over a month ago – Things are quite dried up here, we need rain – but our Heavenly Father Knows.³⁹⁶

It is important to note what is absent in these letters – albeit just a snapshot of the family’s correspondence over the years – whilst recognising themes and preoccupations. In the Baker

³⁹⁴ Isaiah 24. 4-5.

³⁹⁵ US, R. St. Barbe Baker Papers, fonds MG 71, B. I. 1. A/1/35.

³⁹⁶ US, R. St. Barbe Baker Papers, fonds MG 71, B. I. 1. A/1/36a.

household faith and scripture was central. There is also the wider social world of the village. The friends and neighbours who drop in are recorded (along with the state of their soul), as well as the letters they have received from around the country. Also evident is an interest in world affairs, albeit through a very religious lens: the desire to find solutions for the troubled world. John Baker suggested that peace with Japan could be brought about by paying for the release of Allied POWs, and that if the government would pursue this idea he would give them his plan for capturing U-boats.³⁹⁷ This is as close to any mention of politics as John Baker makes in the letters stored in the archives, but the sentiment is strong a century after they were written.

CATAclysm

On August 13 the Germans put over forty crumps in five minutes and twenty-seven of us were knocked out. With others, I was carried into a mortuary as dead. The corporal in charge of the burial party was collecting the identity discs, ripping them off the necks of the corpses, but mine was fastened by a solid steel chain to my wrist. He gave a good tug and still could not break it, but the wrench tore my wrist, which started to bleed. He called the sergeant and said: "Look here, Sarge. This corpse is bleeding." Put it on that old Ford," said the sergeant. It had brought up the digging tools to bury us.³⁹⁸

Baker often summarised his war service after this cataclysmic event. He recovered and was reposted to the frontline. Then, after being 'smashed up again,' was invalided out in April 1918.³⁹⁹ The incident that Baker recounted in his autobiographies as being buried alive, and which resulted in serious injuries, defined his experience for the rest of the war. Alongside Baker's version of events, his medical file provides an alternative view of the auditing of the health of fighting men. The dry and sparse notes took into consideration the 'wound or injury' sustained at Bethune on the 12th August 1915. Baker's physical injuries were considerable, and he described his body as having been 'terribly contused', and the damage so severe that he could not speak. Baker was to recall that it was only by 'dint of careful nursing' that he was dragged back to life. It took three months for him to be able to sit up; his speech was affected by an

³⁹⁷ US, R. St. Barbe Baker Papers, fonds MG 71, B. I. 1. A/1/36a.

³⁹⁸ Baker, (1944), p.34.

³⁹⁹ Baker, (1944), p.34.

‘appalling stutter,’ and he had to learn to write again ‘as a child with a copybook, starting with pot-hooks and hangers.’⁴⁰⁰

After sustaining his first serious injuries in 1915, Baker described hovering over his body and feeling no pain. During this period of recovery he started to feel regret for the conflict in which he participated. He felt ‘haunted by the thought of having taken life’, and the feelings of rage that were at odds with the quiet divinity student, or adventurous homesteader of his other accounts. He recalled that in ‘the fury of the war and in retaliating for the loss of so many of my comrades, quite apart from the destruction by my guns I had taken a heavy toll of German officers from the sniper’s post where I would claim my daily turn.’⁴⁰¹

Introspection and regret define Baker’s later accounts, which, although written decades later and are coloured with a particularly heavy dose of sentimentality, reflect a vulnerability and honesty that is absent from his more pompous self-portraits. Baker recalled being unable to sleep, haunted by the spectres of the men he killed. This unsettling time was brought to a close when one of the apparitions was a former comrade of Baker’s, and through his presence provided him comfort and restored his sanity. The effect of this ‘visitation’ upon Baker was profound, and in *My Life, My Trees*, he relayed a poem that he wrote to bring comfort to those dealing with the loss of their loved ones. The poem is in the voice of a young officer who appears to his sorrowful mother, whose ‘heart is seared with grief until he enters her room.’⁴⁰² The poem itself is not of note, but the last lines are relevant to Baker’s ability to put an optimistic spin on the conflict and imagine a peaceful and harmonious society coming into being after the war:

Out of the sorrow, out of the sadness
Spring a new world into birth,
Soon strife shall surely cease
And earth with settled peace, break into song.⁴⁰³

The date of the poem is unknown but in framing it within the conflict and with its ushering in of a ‘new world’, it anticipates the New Age with which Baker was to engage after the war. Similarly, the spectre of a dead officer has parallels to the rise of Spiritualism during and after the

⁴⁰⁰ Baker, (1962), p.36.

⁴⁰¹ Baker, (1970), p.26.

⁴⁰² Baker, (1970), p.26.

⁴⁰³ Baker, (1970), p.27.

war. Whether this is intentional or accidental is impossible to tell. However, the idea of the earth brought together in song is a trope that Baker was to rely upon numerous times in his later writing. This is achieved in the closing passage of his children's book *Kamiti*, where the armies of the world join the fight against the desert after hearing a song of peace that has begun in Africa.⁴⁰⁴

Baker's recuperation from his injuries was described as 'thawing out'; a process more painful than freezing in the first place.⁴⁰⁵ His tendency to add details that demonstrate his social standing is evident here. He describes himself 'as a guest of Lady Clementine Waring', and this name-dropping conjures a picture of the upper echelons of Edwardian society and their contribution to the war effort. It is also the point at which Baker's awareness of the difficulties faced by those other servicemen who had been injured in the war is manifest. He recuperated in the home of Lady Waring, which he described as 'a beautifully wooded property.' Here, Baker's instinct was to proactively help the woodman and fend 'for the other officers who had suffered loss of limb.'⁴⁰⁶

The spring of 1916 saw Baker posted to Ballincollig near Cork, just before the beginning of the Easter Uprising. *Horse Sense* describes the events of the Irish Rebellion, and Baker's sense of his role in it. Baker later had it that he arrived in Cork on the first day of the Sinn Fein Rebellion, presumably having taken the train from Dublin. He immediately noticed the difference between his reception in 1914 and his second secondment, when being the only khaki-clad figure to alight he was ignored by all of the porters waiting at the station. One driver recognised him from his earlier stay and delivered him to the Royal Field Artillery depot at Ballincollig. When Baker arrived, the 112th Battery was preparing to move to Cork to attack the Sinn Fein headquarters there, but Baker was hesitant, 'loath to start firing live shells and high explosive without first being sure that in blowing up the Sinn Fein headquarters [he] would not also kill innocent people and damage the homes of the more peaceful inhabitants.'⁴⁰⁷

What followed, in Baker's account, was a choreographed display of military power. He claimed to have ordered the guns to be filled with a mixture of eighty percent blanks, and the remainder

⁴⁰⁴ Richard St. Barbe Baker, *Kamiti* (London: George Ronald, 1958), p.125.

⁴⁰⁵ Baker, (1970), p.27.

⁴⁰⁶ Baker, (1970), p.28.

⁴⁰⁷ Baker, (1962), p.38.

high explosive and shrapnel. The battery and column proceeded to ‘parade’ along the main street of Cork, then moved to the top of a hill where the troop faced the ‘rabble’, as Baker described them, with Baker carefully checking that as each gun was loaded, and that it was filled with the blank ammunition:

When all was ready for quick fire I ordered battery fire by salvoes. It was good practice for the young officers who were due to proceed overseas and it surprised the hooligans who were intent on rushing the lines of the infantry. Having exhausted most of blank ammunition, I ordered the battery to limber up and led them back to the barracks where they had stables, and the horses were watered and fed. Then I paraded the men and told all who were Irish to go down and see their friends and find out what all the trouble was about.⁴⁰⁸

Baker’s presentation of the Easter Rebellion is remarkable for its bonhomie. Despite someone taking shots at him as he walked back from his dinner that evening, it was not sufficient a threat to tarnish his account of the battle of Cork as having ‘been won by consideration and friendliness and without either battery or infantry casualties.’⁴⁰⁹ This is at odds with the historical account of Easter Rebellion. It is a conflict that cannot be done justice in this study, but it is important to situate Baker’s claims. In other accounts, Baker claimed that it was the execution of Francis Sheehy Skeffington in Dublin that disillusioned him with the war, but if examined in the context of the wider events of the Rebellion, even his account of what happened in Cork was at odds with what happened.

It is true that Cork saw no fighting, but Charles Townsend identified very different reasons for the lack of conflict there. Instead of Baker’s ‘rabble’, the Cork City Battalion (at least in its own opinion) was one of the best organised in the country.⁴¹⁰ Instead of military might, the Cork volunteers were hampered by communication difficulties, a lower turnout than had been anticipated, and a lack of clarity as to the plan. A general policy of ‘wait and see’ was adopted, with many left frustrated by the absence of open battle, yet Cork’s distinct geography may well have played a part. One argument made for the quiet few days does support the presence of a military battery overlooking the city. ‘The official MacSwiney line was (as his sister Mary wrote)

⁴⁰⁸ Baker, (1962), p.39.

⁴⁰⁹ Baker, (1962), p.40.

⁴¹⁰ Charles Townsend, *Easter 1916: The Irish Rebellion* (Plymouth: Ivan R. Dee, 2006), p.234.

that Cork ‘as everyone knows, is built in a hollow surrounded on every side by hills’, and the Volunteer HQ was ‘directly under one of the enemy’s big guns all the week’ ... ‘all egress was impossible.’⁴¹¹

For Baker, Ireland remained a respite from the realities of the trenches. Training officers in Ballingollig meant putting them through their paces on cavalry jumps, undertaking drills in the open countryside, and crossing the Shannon with the gun team. He described the weeks between arriving at Easter and an accident that happened in July 1916, which resulted in another period of recuperation.⁴¹² Whilst out on practice one day, Baker’s horse slipped, leaving his thighbone broken and unable to return to duty until February 1917. It was then that he was given an office job at the Royal Horse and Field Artillery Records at Woolwich, after which he was posted to the Remounts Service at Swaythling.

It is in this short period between February and August 1917 that Baker appears to have started to show signs of emotional exhaustion. On 3rd August he appeared before a medical board, which found that although he no longer had any symptoms of neurasthenia or signs of discomfort in his sacro-iliac joint, he was found fit only for light duties for three months.⁴¹³ There is no date in the section asking whether he had been put on half-pay because of his disability, and the findings of the board were that ‘he still stammers a little, but sleeps normally at night. His nervous system is not however in its normal condition.’⁴¹⁴ In November 1917, Baker was found unfit for military service, but ‘very much improved’; ‘fit enough for garrison duty abroad’ and well enough to carry on his role at Swaything. These two assessments were made in Eastleigh - about five miles away from his parents’ home in West End – and listed his disabilities as concussion and neurasthenia.⁴¹⁵

Between November and December, an incident must have taken place that profoundly shook Baker, something that can be traced in his descriptions in *Horse Sense* of the day-to-day activities of the depot, and the reflection found in his medical assessment in the Fourth London General Hospital on the 13th December 1917. In *Horse Sense*, the event is a discrete episode. It occurred

⁴¹¹ Townsend, p.236.

⁴¹² Baker, (1962), p.41.

⁴¹³ TNA, WO 339/36844.

⁴¹⁴ TNA, WO 339/36844.

⁴¹⁵ TNA, WO 339/36844.

at the end of a successful journey across the channel by boat, then by train from Dieppe to the frontline. Baker had deposited his charges, and was about to start his journey home:

however, just as the horses had been handed over and were moving off, enemy aircraft appeared and swooped low, unloading their strings of bombs on the railhead and horse train with unerring precision, blotting out a working party ... None of my party was killed but a bomb fell beneath my carriage and it was blown to splinters. When I opened my eyes again I was in a base hospital trying to remember what had happened to my horses.⁴¹⁶

On 13th December 1917, Baker's health and activities were summarised in an appraisal that would determine whether he was fit for service. The findings describe a man shattered by war: 'Had shell shock Aug. 1915. Returned to duty May 1916. Fractured hip July, 1916. Returned to duty Feb. 1917. Attached to Remounts and since then has been taking horses to France and carried on till December, 1917 when he broke down due to exposure to cold, headaches, insomnia, hesitancy in speech.'⁴¹⁷ The board declared that it was 'specially desirable' that he should appear before them again. It was felt that he would be fit for general service in five months, and that in two months' time he would be able to undertake home service or active work with troops. At that point he was in an officers' convalescent hospital, 10 Palace Green, and that is where he would remain for two months.

The inconsistency between these two accounts is of note. Baker always stated that a single incident ended his military career, whereas the medical board suggests that it was an emotional breakdown brought on by months of physical and mental stress. This disconnect - between the image of a capable officer and a wounded man - is more apparent if some of the details provided in *Horse Sense* are taken into consideration. Baker rarely touched upon the wasting of trees, landscape, or men in his accounts; possibly all too close and traumatic to describe. He may also have been sparing his readers some of the horrors of war. However, the tragedy of the loss of animal life during the conflict was not something that he shied away from.

Horse Sense: Horses in War and Peace is an unusual book in Baker's canon; one in which he deviated from his normal topic - trees - and instead looked at another great source of joy in his life. It followed the usual autobiographical format, but the focus had shifted and as a result, the major

⁴¹⁶ Baker, (1962), p.62.

⁴¹⁷ TNA, WO 339/36844.

events of Baker's life are shown in a new light. The first chapter, 'Into Battle', covered his childhood, emigration to Canada and the beginning of war, and opens with a statement as to why his life – with all its 'sorrow, joy, despair, remorse, disillusionment, sickness' - was so tied up with his companionship with animals, with the pinnacle being 'the most understanding and tolerant of man's friends – his horse.'⁴¹⁸ Instead of demonstrating his anointed role as Man of the Trees, he instead shapes his identity around his family's equine heritage: he always loved horses, his mother came from a family of horse lovers, and his father was 'inordinately proud of his half-bred Arab mare'.⁴¹⁹

The rhythms of care and co-dependence are descriptively articulated. Baker knew how to care for his horses and he credited his familiarity with horses with making his arrival in Canada much easier, giving him 'advantages over many other young men from London or other towns of England...[and allowing him to] meet on equal terms with the sons of Down East Canadians or ranchers from Montana, Nebraska, or the Dakotas.'⁴²⁰ The detail of Baker's war service does not vary greatly from other accounts in terms of the facts, but is most striking for the more gruesome and angry description of the conflict as meted out to horses. Segueing from his adventures breaking horses on the Canadian prairie – his Haut Ecole – the brutality of two World Wars was something he felt keenly, and expressed through this particular title's lens:

Into this peace and happiness, into the good and carefree life these horses were enjoying, there suddenly burst the nightmare war of Kaiser Wilhelm. No war can, under any circumstances, be anything less than diabolical. In World War II thousands upon thousands of human beings, deprived of every human right and dignity, were driven helpless and terrorized across Europe at the whim of Hitler, and the gorge of every decent man and woman rose in protest. In the First World War one felt the same about the horses; their inability to reason, their dumb, bewildered submission to the agonies of war illuminated their tragedy rather than obscure it.⁴²¹

Later Baker would explore the link between industrialisation, war, and the acceleration of timber consumption as more applications were found for the material, and all of the dire consequences

⁴¹⁸ Richard St. Barbe Baker, *Horse Sense: Horses in War and Peace* (London: Stanley Paul, 1962) p.11.

⁴¹⁹ Baker, (1962), p.12.

⁴²⁰ Baker. (1962), p.13.

⁴²¹ Baker, (1962), p.17.

trees and forests faced as a result.⁴²² Moreover, immediately after the First World War, Baker's ingenuity at intercepting potential timber waste resulted in the invention of the modern caravan. In this context, horses are descriptive of Baker's understanding of the intertwined fate of humans and horses on the battlefield; the role that horses played in transporting men and weapons in a deeply traumatising environment, and the scale of their loss alongside that of the men fighting:

Horses and men, men and horses, they perished together in the mud of Flanders, mud churned by the bursting shells from enemy batteries... The expectation of life of an officer at the front was about ten days; an optimistic estimate in most cases, and one that applied equally well to his horse.⁴²³

Pages and pages of *Horse Sense* are filled with the details of life in the depot and the cross-channel shipments that were made twice weekly: exercising horses; matching officers and their mounts; the songs sung in the dining hall; sometimes transporting men as well as animals. What Baker noticed of the horses he was seeing pass through the depot on their way to France articulated the international demands of the war, in which thousands of horses were sent to the front each week: 'A strange and wonderful assortment they were, from the best hunting stables in Great Britain and Ireland, and sometimes even from racing stables. Horses worth maybe thousands of pounds were commandeered for less than a hundred.'⁴²⁴ Baker saw horses coming from Canada and the United States - the animals who were working farms before the widespread use of the tractor - as well as mules from Spain and Portugal. One exclamation about the toll it placed on those handling the animals illustrates the difficulty that a man so attuned to the natural world must have felt when sending them to France, exclaiming 'How little did they know of what awaited them! To those of us who had returned from the front it was a heart-breaking job to speed them on their way to many a sad fate.'⁴²⁵

Baker was not alone in his love of horses, as the staff at the depot was made up of men who were experienced in working with horses; 'horse-lovers all, and they had proved their worth in the front line of battle and who had been wounded and chosen for their outstanding qualities as

⁴²² Baker, (1948), p.73.

⁴²³ Baker, (1962), p.18.

⁴²⁴ Baker, (1962), P.42.

⁴²⁵ Baker, (1962), p.43.

horse masters.⁴²⁶ The crossing was dangerous, with German U-boats imperilling every journey; a gauntlet that must also have taken its toll. Moreover, as the war continued, and as the human and animal casualties mounted, ‘a new type of animal was coming from the Middle West, and it was obvious that favourite horses were now being released by their owners.’⁴²⁷ Might this animal attachment have been a contributing factor to his breakdown?

A SECOND BREAKDOWN

On the 8th April 1918 Baker was found to have been fully disabled by his experiences.⁴²⁸ His illness was categorised as neurasthenia. In his next assessment, the date upon which the symptoms of nervousness originated is noted as being August 1915, ‘aggravated 1916 and comminuted [sic] 1917 at Dieppe.’ The notes demonstrate the length of recovery after being concussed in the assault in August 1915, resulting in him not returning to active duty until May 1916:

Facts: ‘This Officer was commissioned in Dec. 1914 France March 1915 in good health and carried on till Aug/15. Rendered unconscious by shell and has no definitive recollection until he was in Hospital in France at La Toquet. Evacuated England at end of August. In Hospital 3 months leave and convalescent home till May/16. Then to duty until July/16. Accident horse falling on him when in Ireland during Sinn Fein Rebellion and damaged left sacro iliac joints. Hospital and on leave till Feb.17 Office work at Woolwich till May 1917. Then Remounts conducting horses to France. Invalided to England with Neurasthenia Dec. 17. And is now at Palace Green. Speech difficulty began in Aug/15 got better and then became much worse after the horse accident.’

Baker - then twenty-seven - appears totally deflated, with slow and hesitating speech, ‘memory very defective ever since being blown up [...] Looks very frightened and very depressed – Emotional. Great difficulty in getting to sleep. Concentration improving. No confidence. Prefers to be alone.’ Solitary, restless, insomniac. Rather different to the confident and competent persona presented in some of his more gung-ho accounts.

⁴²⁶ Baker, (1962), p.43-44.

⁴²⁷ Baker, (1962), p.52.

⁴²⁸ TNA, WO 339/36844.

10 Palace Green was, for a time, a significant hospital for the treatment of psychiatric disorders in officers.⁴²⁹ Baker would later claim that it was here that he was ‘rescued’ from Palace Green, ‘a luxurious hospital where [he] was being punished for having resigned [his] Commission.’⁴³⁰ In this version of events, albeit written many years after the event, the politics of Irish Home Rule are brought to bear on his experience of his time in Ireland, although this time introduced in a more moral and political context. Instead of being invalided out of the Army because of his health, he claimed that it was also a way of whitewashing his protest at the suppression of the Easter Rebellion in Dublin and the murder of the Irish writer and activist Francis Sheehy Skeffington:

This I had done when it was reported that Sheehy Skeffington had been shot in Dublin by Captain Bowen Coulthorst, a criminal lunatic who used to drive his own men forward at the point of his revolver and would be trigger happy with anyone who hesitated to take his advice. He had been treated for ‘shell shock’! Then he was given duty in Dublin during the Sinn Fein rising. I knew that this started as a co-operative movement to grow their own vegetables in Ireland instead of having to buy imported supplies from Liverpool. I had been put into solitary confinement and though still being treated for my many wounds the nursing staff had been told not to speak to me.⁴³¹

In *Tall Timber*, Baker also made the claim that he was in the same hospital as Siegfried Sassoon, and that Sassoon ‘was a couple of doors away’. Sassoon was being ‘punished’ in the same way for writing a poem that had upset the ‘brass hats’, and the two men (Baker claimed) were kept apart.⁴³² It is not possible to substantiate whether Baker and Sassoon were in hospital at the same time. Sassoon’s convalescence was famously at Craiglockhart War Hospital, near Edinburgh, and immortalised by Pat Baker in the novel *Regeneration* (1991). However, prior to that Sassoon was likely recovering in a hospital in London after sustaining injuries in April 1917. He wrote his statement ‘Finished with the War: A Soldier’s Declaration’ in July 1917, and soon after was sent to Scotland for the treatment of shellshock, rather than face a court martial.

⁴²⁹ ‘The evacuation chain for wounded and sick soldiers’ *Long Long Trail*
<<https://www.longlongtrail.co.uk/soldiers/a-soldiers-life-1914-1918/the-evacuation-chain-for-wounded-and-sick-soldiers/military-hospitals-in-the-british-isles-1914-1918/>> [accessed 4 December 2018].

⁴³⁰ Baker, (2010) p.15.

⁴³¹ Baker, (2010) p.15-16.

⁴³² Baker, (2010) p.16.

On the 25th March 1918, Baker was again found to be fully disabled by the experiences of war caused by the ‘strain of active service.’⁴³³ Consistent with the other diagnosis, his disability was noted as neurasthenia, the date and place of origin being ‘Dec 1917 in Poperingher’ [sic]. Poperinge is a town in Belgium that was used by the British Army as a major point of distribution to the trenches. Baker does not refer to the town by name, but in *Horse Sense* he ended the chapters on his war service with a description of the event that ended his army career. He had just completed delivery of a number of horses. With the order dispatched, he was awaiting the departure of the cargo train back to the coast when a bomb exploded near the train and he was concussed. His mental and physical health by that point was poor, and the description conjures a broken man; the result of a more gradual breakdown:

He is profoundly distressed by very clear visual pictures of his experiences in firing lines, he lacks self-confidence, is emotional and sleeps badly. His whole mental content is coloured by the emotion of fear. The specialists consider that it is essential to his recovery that he be invalided out of the service. The board concur and recommended that he be invalided out of the service.⁴³⁴

The progress of the war, along with the consequent changing realities of injury and disability, can be seen evolving in the Army’s form. New categories appeared, with more space to record the different periods spent in service at home and abroad, and in which ‘theatre’ of war. The importance of distinguishing ‘between the officer’s statements and evidence recorded in his medical documents’ was impressed upon the people completing the form; additional medical certificates, x-rays, or photographs were to be attached, ‘especially in cases of gross facial deformity’, and the identification and individual listing of each disability was to be highlighted. Section 13 refers just to cases of amputation, asking whether a temporary or permanent artificial limb has been ‘satisfactorily fitted.’⁴³⁵

More and more detail was also required to assess the suitability of those coming in front of the Medical Board, and the Board was under strict instructions not to inform the officer before them of their opinion of his status. It was important that ‘clear and decisive answers should be filled in by the Board to enable the Ministry of Pensions to come to a reliable decision on the officer’s

⁴³³ TNA, WO 339/36844.

⁴³⁴ TNA, WO 339/36844.

⁴³⁵ TNA, WO 339/36844.

claim to pension, etc.’ Vague information was not allowed: ‘Expressions such as “may,” “might,” “probably,” should be avoided.’⁴³⁶ What was the subtext? Baker’s preoccupation after the war with the welfare of disabled ex-servicemen is brought into sharper contrast if one thinks of the interrogations each man would have gone through to ensure that he was entitled to a war pension. On the 10th April 1918, the Board set out the conditions of his discharge:

Sir, I am directed to inform you that the Medical Board by whom Temporary Lieutenant R.E. St. Barbe Baker, Royal Field Artillery, was recently examined at Caxton Hall, having expressed their opinion that he is permanently unfit for further service, it is regretted that there is no alternative but that he should relinquish his commission on account of ill-health. He will however be granted the honorary rank of Lieutenant but such grant only permits him to wear uniform on special occasions when attending ceremonials and entertainments of a military nature, should he desire to do so.⁴³⁷

Sometimes Baker’s most sparse notes read like poetry. They constitute the most tantalizing and often the most frustrating of all the documents in the archives, lacking the lucid prose that brings such details to life in his books. They often present clues – challenges in a paper chase in which much of the trail has been lost to the winds. There is a cadence to Baker’s experience here, expressed in a list that brings together the highs and lows of those challenging years: The character of a young man with a sense of vocation and an indefatigable enthusiasm for trying to help his fellows. Next, a dizzying ricochet between new and established faith structures that may well have strained his relationship with his family. They suggest an emerging duality in his presentation of his faith: dutiful Christian son when at home, and young man on the vanguard of New Thought whilst in London and Cambridge.

17. Ridley – War looms Spikes and Kuks. / Sermon on the Mount. / Council of Perfection.

18. War Madness / Apparent coldness of Orthodoxy. / Return to Cambridge / Pure Science / Benediction sessions at Union / Mission to wounded undergraduates. / Operation to counteract suicide. / To relieve unemployment. / The Moose Fraternity / Return to Ridley. Like going back to his old school. / The light of love.⁴³⁸

⁴³⁶ TNA, WO 339/36844.

⁴³⁷ TNA, WO 339/36844.

⁴³⁸ US, R. St. Barbe Baker Papers, fonds MG 71, A/I/1.

The list intrigues. Baker's time at Ridley is covered, mentioned alongside the growing spectre of war. Quickly followed by his quandary as to whether to participate or object, and the doctrine that allowed him to serve. The next line is curious, with 'War Madness' and the 'Apparent coldness of Orthodoxy' preceding his return to Cambridge. Perhaps it refers to his family, or perhaps to his religious community. Baker's forestry studies are referred to in the line 'Pure Science.' The importance of his Christian mission to his fellow students is clear, as well as his Canadian friends but there is much that could be better understood by further research into Baker's war experience through the records that his battalion might hold. Baker's account is demonstratively inconsistent, but the fact that he shied away from revealing the intimacies of his mental and physical health is no real surprise as to do otherwise was not in keeping with the spirit of the time.

9. Reconstructing the World

With Percy Alden of the British Institute of Social Service, I devoted myself to work for the Government, calling upon captains of industry to enlist their help and generally paving the way for the Ministry of Health. It was my earnest endeavour to see that the wonderful wartime sacrifice should not be wasted and that out of it should come a new and saner order of things leading to a lasting peace. As soon as the Ministry of Health came into being I returned to my forestry work at Cambridge.⁴³⁹

Baker's last autobiography, *My Life, My Trees*, was the text in which he elaborated most fully on his wartime service and the period immediately after. The balance between humility and aggrandisement at the close of this first chapter is apparent; the very real sense – still felt decades later – that he was lucky to have survived, unlike so many of his generation. Baker praised 'all those to whom he was indebted for his life, declaring that he would love a grand reunion of the doctors and nurses who had nursed him back to health.'⁴⁴⁰ This celebration of the medical professionals who had helped him in his recovery then closed with the revelation that more lives in Britain were being lost through ignorance of health than because of war.⁴⁴¹ For Baker, this realisation prompted action.

However, the same revelation and activity had been described in *I Planted Trees* decades before, contributing a different flavour to the inspiration and connections that made such a contribution possible. In his 1944 account, Baker recounted the influence of another figure on his thinking in the weeks and months after the war, describing an encounter that had happened during his latter period of recovery:

In hospital I had read a book called "British Destiny," which made such an impression on me that I wrote to the author, Daniel Dunlop, to thank him. In reply to my letter he visited me in hospital and invited me to go and stay with him as soon as I was allowed out.

⁴³⁹ Baker, (1970), p.28-29

⁴⁴⁰ Baker, (1970), p.28

⁴⁴¹ Baker, (1970), p.28.

It was at the White House at Wimbledon that I met so many of his interesting friends. His wife, I discovered to my delight, had been a great friend of Walt Whitman.⁴⁴²

The account is almost word-for-word for that which Baker gave later, but here the details of his new acquaintance suggest that Baker was not acting alone in his efforts to reconstruct society, and that in fact he was collaborating with some significant figures in government. Percy Alden was not the only figure Baker became involved with, and it was Daniel Dunlop who connected the two of them:

Talks with Daniel Dunlop opened my eyes to the fact that we were losing more lives through the ignorance of health in our great cities than we were on all the fronts put together. War slew in its thousands, but preventable disease in its tens of thousands. Inspired by Dunlop, who himself had been largely responsible for organizing the Federation of British Industries, I called on industrial magnates, captains of industry, and so forth, and urged them to appoint welfare officers, and create sports grounds to be run in connexion with their factories and workshops.⁴⁴³

Daniel Dunlop (1868-1935) was a cosmopolitan man and, as head of a sociable house, played host to the great and the good; an environment in which social justice and reform were often the subject of conversation.⁴⁴⁴ Dunlop appears as a rather two dimensional character in the account provided by *I Planted Trees*, but the more detailed depiction in *Tall Timber* goes much further to describe the character and influence of this new figure on Baker's life. Indeed, if compared to Baker's previous mentors - Exton Lloyd and Watts-Ditchfield - Dunlop's interests were quite different given his role in the Theosophy Society; with Evangelical Christianity supplanted by New Age Thought, spiritualism, philosophy, and ethics.

Dunlop was a Scottish entrepreneur, whose public-facing persona at the point at which Baker made his acquaintance was that of a man looking to create international consensus on the

⁴⁴² Baker, (1944), p.34.

⁴⁴³ Baker, (1944), p.24-25.

⁴⁴⁴ Baker, (1944), p.34.

creation and use of energy through the World Power Conference. His obituary carried in *Nature*, described the innovative role he had created for himself:

MR. D. N. DUNLOP died on May 30 after a short illness. He was born in Ayrshire, Scotland, in 1868, and served his engineering apprenticeship in Glasgow. After experience with the Westinghouse Company, he became in 1911 the first organising secretary of the British Electrical and Allied Manufacturers' Association (B.E.A.M.A.) and in 1917 his post was renamed Director. He held this position until his death. He took an active part in the foundation of the Electrical Research Association and of the Electrical Development Association.⁴⁴⁵

The BEAMA is a significant counterpoint to the structure and function of the Men of the Trees, with *Nature* carrying a review of its achievements as an organisation. The Association held the view that voluntary and co-operative action 'would go far to meet the economic difficulties which at that time were proving a severe handicap to the development of the electrical industry in Great Britain.'⁴⁴⁶ By the 1930s, the Association included most of the electrical manufacturers in the UK, and it was remarked that they had achieved 'excellent work in introducing order into the commercial relations between its members and its customers.' The organisation was able to effect legislation, and it was credited with promoting 'far-reaching policies of research and standardisation benefiting engineering in general.' Moreover, Dunlop was the person who defined the outlook and ethos of the organization:

The principle behind the Association's activities has been co-operation without the sacrifice of individual initiative. It has succeeded in linking together the manufacturing interests with the leading professional engineering institutions. Mr. D. N. Dunlop has been the director of the Beama since its start and much of its success is due to him. It has done excellent work in providing for the education in Great Britain of students from all countries, particularly from the Dominions. In 1920 it founded a research association which has done excellent work. During the past few years electrical manufacturers have begun to increase their exports to Europe, a sign of competitive efficiency. The Association took a leading

⁴⁴⁵ 'Mr. D. N. Dunlop, O.B.E', *Nature*, vol. 135, pages 1065–1066, 29 June 1935.

⁴⁴⁶ 'The British Electrical and Allied Manufacturers' Association ('Beama')', *Nature*, Vol 132, page 23, 1 July 1933.

part in encouraging the World Power Conference and also in encouraging the National Grid Scheme, the largest electrical achievement in the world.⁴⁴⁷

The echoes are profound: co-operation coupled with individual achievement, connecting diverse interests, furthering research, connecting to a global market, and supporting the education of students from across the world, and especially the British Colonies. To each of these points it is possible to find links to Baker's later work: the Men of the Trees as a society, bringing together diverse people interested in trees, his passion for research as demonstrated in the University of the Sahara, his advocacy for trade, and his expression of a vision of international education for foresters in *Kamiti*.

This profile stands in contrast to the picture created by the *Irish Dictionary of National Biography* - his only full biography - which charts Daniel Dunlop's esoteric journey from rural Ayrshire and the island of Arran to the position of industrialist. Dunlop spent his childhood and adolescence in Scotland. His father was a Quaker architect whose wife died when Daniel was five years old. Dunlop's biographer felt that his life story was in two parts. Firstly, an early life in which he developed his personality through 'certain far-reaching spiritual experiences of his youth and intensive studies of occult and mystical literature', and a second part in which he used that character 'to accomplish acts of world-wide significance – all forces of personality are ever more strongly put at the service of the 'world' as such.'⁴⁴⁸

Alongside his conventional education, Dunlop studied philosophical, historical and esoteric literature. At around 1888-89, he spent a year in the United States in which he became involved with a proponent of Swedenborgian mysticism, Thomas Luke Harris (1823–1900). He returned to Europe and settled in Dublin, where he ran a vegetarian restaurant that had been established by devotees of Harris, whilst also working as a clerk and then general secretary of various businesses in the city. Dunlop joined the Dublin lodge of the Theosophical Society, a place where the close study of Madame Blavatsky's text *The Secret Doctrine* (1888) was a central activity. Blavatsky had popularised Theosophy, an esoteric form of Christianity, the name of which is a

⁴⁴⁷ *Nature*, 1933.

⁴⁴⁸ Thomas Meyer, *D.N. Dunlop: a man of our time* (London: Temple Lodge, 1992), p.3.

conjunction of God and wisdom: 'theo' and 'sophia.' Her particular form of Theosophy drew upon Buddhist and Brahminist ideas of spiritual progression and reincarnation and in 1875, she founded the Theosophical Society in New York. Dunlop's activities within this spiritual and psychic community may strain ideas of credulity, however, given Baker's later assertion that his woodland rebirth set him on his path to becoming the Man of the Trees, it seems that ideas of spiritual revelation were also critical to the story of his mentor:

He formed a close friendship with George Russell (qv), whom he may have met in Scotland or Ireland prior to his American sojourn, and with whom he shared a deep interest in mystical experience and speculation. For several months in 1891 Dunlop resided with Russell and other TS members in the lodge's quarters at 3 Upper Ely Place. One night during this period, Dunlop and Russell experienced parallel psychic visions, described as a 'mingling of natures' by Russell, and interpreted by him both in universal terms and as a dramatisation of Dunlop's personal spiritual crisis: a choice between Harris or Blavatsky as teachers, and between a life of worldly self-indulgence or a renunciatory quest of truth.⁴⁴⁹

In this context, Dunlop also became friends with the poet William Butler Yeats and was acquainted with the writer James Joyce. Dunlop's contribution to the Lodge was considerable as he edited the *Irish Theosophist* and it was through his theosophical connections that he was employed through one of Blavatsky's successors in America. He was commissioned to write about the practical uses of electricity that positioned him to be recruited by George Westinghouse in the US, and he was then posted to London where he remained for much of the rest of his working life. Dunlop was later to leave the Theosophical Society in favour of Rudolf Steiner's Anthroposophical Society, although that occurred after establishing a friendship with Baker.

Baker attested that it was upon reading *British Destiny* that he was compelled to contact its author, Dunlop. By this point Dunlop had authored *Protean Man* (1912), *Symbols of Magic* (1915), and *Studies in the Philosophy of Lorenz Oken* (1916) and was credited with editing the *Irish Theosophist*.

⁴⁴⁹ 'Dunlop, Daniel Nicol' by Lawrence William White in *Dictionary of Irish Biography* (2013) <http://dib.cambridge.org.sheffield.idm.oclc.org/quicksearch.do?jsessionid=63E2CE3D1998542F4AB3BA99DC CC0713> [accessed 11 November 2018].

Although sometimes prone to quoting from his own correspondence in his books, Baker does not elaborate on the content of the letter he wrote from his hospital bed, but it must have been compelling. Indeed, Dunlop was moved to visit Baker in hospital and invited him to recuperate in his home. Here, the dual identity of Dunlop as a man of industry and esoteric philosopher become of interest. Baker, in most of his texts, refers to Dunlop simply in the former context as a man of industry. However, in his later book of more lengthy profiles, he elaborates on Dunlop's real significance. In this context we can appreciate Dunlop's influence upon the spiritual journey upon which Baker was embarking, which culminated with his presentation on Kikuyu beliefs at the Conference on World Religions. This event resulted in Mrs. Claudia Stuart Coles, who began his initiation into the Bahá'í faith, approaching Baker.⁴⁵⁰

T. H. Meyer's biography of Dunlop portrays a man who manifested magnetic and spiritual qualities, and one wonders what his company meant to Baker. There is only one reference to Baker in Meyer's book, but it demonstrates the impact that *British Destiny* might have had upon him:

British Destiny is indeed a remarkable book. Whilst certain pages seem to be directly aimed at economic and industrial specialists (with details concerning prices, taxes, quality of goods, etc.) others are immediately full of the most striking and meaningful observations concerning the spiritual essence of the human being. This spiritual essence is seen as the foundation of all intelligent and responsible actions man can accomplish in this world. From this same conception of man as infinitely comprehensive and generous 'breath of inspiration' issues forth, pervading the whole of this book written as it was in the middle of the war period. Dunlop adopts a positive and totally unchauvinistic standpoint, observing that the British people have an important task and future provided they continue to spread the 'eternal' principle of voluntary co-operation as the vases of a world-wide, future civilization.⁴⁵¹

The influence of this idea of voluntary co-operation and service was to be apparent within a few years in Baker's work with the Watu wa Miti in Kenya. Meyer described the 'new energy and

⁴⁵⁰ Baker, (2010), p.52.

⁴⁵¹ Meyer, p.113.

insight' that his readers would have found, with Baker's story providing 'a moving account of one such case.'⁴⁵² There is little new information in the account of the friendship between Baker and Dunlop, with the established passages in Baker's writings being the only source. However, the parallel of the Men of the Trees receiving Royal patronage under Charles, the Prince of Wales, in 1979 was noted, much as Dunlop had secured the patronage of the then Prince of Wales for the World Energy Forum. There is a parallel in Dunlop's perception of energy as being the medium through which humanity would advance itself and Baker seeing the same potential in trees.⁴⁵³ The attachment was not diminished over time, and, in his later years, Baker gave a lecture at Rudolph Steiner House in which he described the many years that he had spent studying anthroposophy, and had begun his lecture 'with a panegyric on Dunlop...[who] had been to him as a father and shown him the way to his life's work.'⁴⁵⁴

Within *Tall Timber* are other insights into the dynamics of the friendship between Baker and Dunlop. The profile begins with a quotation from Dunlop when he was officiating the First World Congress on Living Religions: 'War will continue until Man's heart is satisfied.'⁴⁵⁵ Baker recognised the international connections of Dunlop's world, describing the 'important missions' he was sent on as result of the network he was a part of 'as a student of Faraday'.⁴⁵⁶ Dunlop also met Abdúl-Bahá (ʿAbdu'l-Bahá), one of the three founding fathers of the Bahá'í faith, along with the Báb and Abdúl-Bahá's father, Bahá'u'lláh. Abdúl-Bahá is credited with spreading the Bahá'í faith internationally and travelled extensively between 1908 and 1914 to raise awareness of this new religion. Although Baker was always clear to state that he came to join the Bahá'í faith in 1924, he may have been aware of the religion much earlier.

One wonders at the family life that Baker entered into when staying with the Dunlops. The daughter, Aileen, was an early exponent of Steiner's rhythmic dance method, Eurhythmy; his son was an artist and conscientious objector during the First World War; and Baker described Mrs

⁴⁵² Meyer, p.113.

⁴⁵³ *Daily Telegraph*, quoted in Meyer, p.115.

⁴⁵⁴ Meyer, p.115.

⁴⁵⁵ Daniel Dunlop, quoted in Baker, (2010), p.51.

⁴⁵⁶ Baker, (2010), p.51.

Dunlop as a practising druid.⁴⁵⁷ Here, a family that was moved to manifest their interest and belief in the esoteric, artistic, moral and occult is clear; quite at odds with the evangelical Christianity of The Firs. However, it is Baker's description of the strength of connection between himself and Dunlop that is of most interest, representing an encounter that saw his purpose strengthened and realigned. He saw Dunlop as a father, a philosophical guide, and a friend. Moreover, although there were other protégés who sought Dunlop's influence and Baker was appreciative of the insight and inspiration he drew from him. He felt that he had 'caught something of the Spirit of the Master whom he loved so dearly, and served so closely.'⁴⁵⁸

In this guise, as father figure and mentor, Dunlop helped Baker navigate an inspiring and novel social and spiritual world in London. Madame Trieux, the wife of a French diplomat, and her daughter helped Baker see the world anew; as a place in which he could make a difference: 'The inspiration I gained from mother and daughter prepared me for the big job that was even then waiting for me; that of paving the way for the Ministry of Health. I saw in the faces of the sad, tired workers and those who could not afford even a bus fare, the people of England I wanted to help.'⁴⁵⁹

There is another way in which the influence that Daniel Dunlop had upon Baker is apparent, in that Dunlop was most remembered as the initiator and innovator behind the World Power Conference. In his obituary in *The Times*, his forward thinking was noted:

It is as the founder of the World Power Conference that Daniel Nicol Dunlop will be remembered. Not many years after the War, he conceived the idea that the engineers and scientists, whose inventions had been so powerful in destruction, should lend their great talents in the rebuilding of the world. Perhaps the proudest moment of Dunlop's life came during the summer of 1924, when at Wembley the Prince of Wales opened the first World Power Conference, in the presence of representatives of about 40 countries. For the first

⁴⁵⁷ Baker, (2010), p.51.

⁴⁵⁸ Baker, (2010), p.51-52.

⁴⁵⁹ Baker, (2010), p. 99.

time at any private international conference of importance since the War Germany had been invited to attend, and fully participated.⁴⁶⁰

Having witnessed the potential of a group of individuals united in a common purpose, whose impact was greater than the sum of their parts, Baker was inspired and this precedent would later inform his vision for the Men of the Trees. The World Power Conference came into being two years after Baker had organised the first Dance of the Trees in Kenya, and it was in 1924 that the British Men of the Trees came into being. Dunlop's vision for the Conference was 'from the beginning ... something much more than a technical organization of the producers and consumers of power and fuel. He saw in it the meeting-place between scientists and engineers on the one hand, statesmen and economists on the other. He placed an ever higher value upon the opportunities for personal encounters which the World Power Conference provided than upon the great technical results enshrined in more than 40 volumes of transactions.'⁴⁶¹

This vision for a cooperative society of interested members bears an even stronger resemblance to the World Forestry Charter Gatherings, which was initiated by Baker from the 1950s onwards. This event aimed to bring together ambassadors from around the world to discuss forestry in their country, with Baker as the event's host and chief orchestrator. These gatherings went on to form the source material for *Green Glory: the story of the forests of the world* (1948). There was much for Baker to emulate in Dunlop's approach. Dunlop was remembered for his tact and charm, with his tone of voice creating 'an atmosphere of practical idealism most favourable for the carrying on of the work of the Conference.'⁴⁶² The gatherings became more than just meetings, in that 'the little group of "regulars" became in the course of years an international family party, with a real unity of purpose.'⁴⁶³ It seems that the convivial nature of the society that Baker created in the Men of the Trees certainly had Dunlop's mark upon it.

⁴⁶⁰ 'Mr D. N. Dunlop' Obituaries, *The Times* Wed 5 June 1935 p.10.

⁴⁶¹ *The Times*, 1935, p.10.

⁴⁶² *The Times*, 1935, p.10.

⁴⁶³ *The Times*, 1935, p.10.

A NEW NETWORK: PERCY ALDEN

The most significant introduction that Baker gained through Daniel Dunlop was with the politician Sir Percy Alden (1865-1945). Alden was a politician and social reformer, and the man who ushered Baker into a new period of achievement and status; one in which he could claim to be one of the instigators of the Ministry of Health.⁴⁶⁴ It is not clear how Daniel Dunlop and Percy Alden came to be acquainted, so it is through Baker's account that we have the clearest evidence of their association. Politically, Dunlop's ideas of international co-operation and development were similar, and it is possible that Dunlop and Alden had crossed paths at the Fabian Society, or some other society function.

In Baker's profile of Percy Alden, a much more colourful first encounter is related, in which Dunlop's enthusiasm for - and faith in - his new protégé is clear. Alden had had over 100 applications for the role; however, Dunlop's recommendation meant that Baker got the job.⁴⁶⁵ Baker's work with the Reverend Watts-Ditchfield was a key part of his resumé, but he also described how the role connected to his sense of loss and need for atonement. He felt that, 'having lost all my best friends...I was determined that the sacrifices made by them should not be wasted, and that out of all the destruction a new and saner order of things must arise. I would help that New and Better World into being.'⁴⁶⁶ The role sought to compensate for the decrease in donations to hospitals that had come about because of high post-war taxation. Baker has it that Alden saw the centralisation of efforts to increase the welfare of ordinary people was the only way forward:

I understand from Daniel that you have had experience in the East End of London, helping Watts-Ditchfield run his Men's Club before the war. You are aware of the poverty and distress of the underprivileged. You must also be aware that the War has been a very costly business and that people are being heavily taxed to pay for it. Many generous souls who supported the hospitals will no longer be able to maintain their annual subscriptions

⁴⁶⁴ Baker, (2010), p.51.

⁴⁶⁵ Baker, (2010), p.267.

⁴⁶⁶ Baker, (2010), p.267-268.

and so industry will have to bear the brunt of the cost. The time has come for a Public Health Service run by a Ministry of Health.⁴⁶⁷

Presumably, Dunlop and Alden saw in Baker a young advocate who could confidently approach heads of industry and further their cause. Baker reduced the weeks or months' activities into a short paragraph in his first autobiography, completely omitting Alden's name as he described the inspiration he gained from Dunlop and recasting the events as if he was the sole agent.⁴⁶⁸ Baker went on to imply under whose auspices this was taking place, but without mention of the key personal contact who got him there: 'I worked hard for the British Institute of Social Service, which helped to pave the way for the Ministry of Health. As soon as the Ministry came into being, I felt it was time to return to my forestry studies and to Cambridge.'⁴⁶⁹ In the same way that figures appear as bit-players in Baker's account of his life, sometimes he appears as a bit-player in theirs, or not at all, as in the case of Percy Alden. However, the examination of material relating to Alden still gives some shape to the kind of work in which Baker participated.

When Baker met Alden in 1917, he was in his late twenties and Alden in his early forties. Alden was born in Oxford. His father was a butcher and he was the third of six sons. Whilst working as a pupil teacher, Alden's potential was recognised by the philosopher T.H. Green, who encouraged him to study at Balliol College, Oxford. After graduating with Thirds in classical moderations, he began theological training at Mansfield College with the intention of becoming a Baptist minister. This study was interrupted when, in 1891, he was appointed the first warden of the Mansfield House Settlement in West Ham, one of a number of 'Settlements' in Britain that had been brought into existence by social reformers like Samuel and Henrietta Barnett. In 1892, he joined West Ham Borough Council, and served until 1901, serving as deputy mayor in 1898.

Alden was widely travelled, and was credited with seeing the greatest potential to positively affect working-class life in the institutional church movement.⁴⁷⁰ After leaving Mansfield House in

⁴⁶⁷ Baker, (2010), p.267.

⁴⁶⁸ Baker, (1944), p.35.

⁴⁶⁹ Baker, (1944), p.35.

⁴⁷⁰ 'Alden, Sir Percy (1865–1944)' M. C. Curthoys and Tim Wales in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004) <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/39606>> [accessed 19 November 2018].

1901 he became a Quaker, although he remained an honorary warden and vice-president of the settlement. Between 1901 and 1902 he edited *The Echo*, the Liberal daily paper. Alden became more involved with national politics and in 1902 was appointed to the National Unemployment Committee as secretary, and in 1903 joined the Rainbow Circle. The Rainbow Circle was a discussion group which included Ramsey MacDonald and was responsible for creating the British Institute of Social Service (later the National Council of Social Service). He was also a member of the Liberal Party and Fabian Society.⁴⁷¹

Alden's contribution to the group included papers on property redistribution, peasant proprietorship, local-government reform and rural housing. And, in 1904, with other members of the Circle, brought into being the British Institute of Social Service, whose 'object was principally to gather and distribute data relevant to social service projects, but which in practice became a coordinating agency for social reformers.'⁴⁷² Alden's role within the British Institute of Social Service is unmentioned in his biography, but that is probably because the organisation, which only published one journal between 1906 and 1912, was relatively short-lived. It appears that its activities and ethos were possibly being incorporated into other institutions and organisations or being overtaken by the pressures of the First World War. It offers, however, a fascinating glimpse into the advocacy and innovation of the immediate pre-war period.

Alden was MP for Tottenham from 1906-1918 and used this role to address his interests in unemployment, issues of civil liberty and international affairs. He was opposed to conscription during the First World War and supported conscientious objectors; an opinion which split the Liberal Party and resulted in a weaker position in the 1918 elections in which he lost his seat. Parliamentary records offer some insight into the advocacy that Alden took in his last year as MP that put international co-operation and health at the top of his agenda, with questions about the formation of the League of Nations.⁴⁷³ Moreover - and pertinent to Baker's role - Alden also brought up the question as to 'whether the Bill has yet been drafted for the proposed Ministry of

⁴⁷¹ Curthoys and Wales, 2004.

⁴⁷² Curthoys and Wales, 2004.

⁴⁷³ Hansard 1803–2005, HC Deb. 14 February 1918. vol. 103, cc267-8, 'League of Nations' <https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1918/feb/14/league-of-nations#S5CV0103P0_19180214_HOC_271> [accessed 19 Oct 2018].

Health; whether it has been approved by the Government; and when it is proposed to introduce it?⁴⁷⁴

THE BRITISH INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SERVICE

The British Institute of Social Services had its offices at No 1, Central Buildings, Tothill Street, Westminster; close to the Houses of Parliament. The President was the Rt. Hon. James W. Lowther, Speaker of the House of Commons, and its Parliamentary Vice-Presidents included the Rt. Hon. H.H. Asquith, M.P. and Rt. Hon. A. J. Balfour. The Parliamentary Committee had eighteen members, including J. Ramsay MacDonald, M.P, and the Vice Presidents (non-Parliamentary) included Joseph Rowntree and the Archbishop of York. Percy Alden was part of the General Council, as well as being the Hon. Secretary. The Institute had a Librarian, Treasurer, Auditor, and Assistant Secretary. The Institute's intentions were set out by Percy Alden in a pamphlet titled *A Clearing House of Social Facts and Figures* that every Government 'should have a Bureau of Social Information which it might consult at a moment's notice without necessitating a special enquiry and special investigators.'⁴⁷⁵ The information, he felt, would be of use not just to Government, but also to social reformers and students of industrial issues. Alden saw it as a resource for employers, legislators, journalists and administrators who may otherwise be at a loss to find material on contemporary issues. The utility of the information was clear:

Facts concerning legislation, municipal methods, philanthropic enterprises, experiments of employers, charities, and one of the innumerable threads that make the warp and woof of our national and civic life are constantly in demand. The British Institute may be, and probably is, the only place where he could obtain the material he requires. In its way it is unique, for it is something more than a library and something better than a charity.⁴⁷⁶

⁴⁷⁴ Hansard 1803–2005, HC Deb, 21 February 1918, vol. 103, cc915-6, <https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1918/feb/21/ministry-of-health#S5CV0103P0_19180221_HOC_206> [accessed 19 Oct 2018].

⁴⁷⁵ Percy Alden, *A Clearing House of Social Facts and Figures* (no date), p.3.

⁴⁷⁶ Alden, (no date), p.4.

The Institute sought to interpret the advances and social experiments undertaken around the world in an apolitical or unpartisan manner, so as to ‘promote the initiation and development in this country of the most beneficial and successful forms of social service.’⁴⁷⁷ Assistance was available to any socially minded organisation, with the aim of encouraging co-operation. The Library was the centre of the Institute’s work, and had a collection of several thousand books, pamphlets and cuttings. Bibliographies were created on topics like labour colonies, the cost of living, open-air schools, infant mortality, housing and town planning, and domestic service, to allow for a quicker line of enquiry.

In eight-and-a-half years, 12,000 enquiries were made and numerous conferences had been organised. One was on ‘Hostels for Women’, and a second on ‘Rural Revival’, which had ‘brought together representatives of more of the societies interested in the land question, and ultimately resulted in the amalgamation of the Land Club League, the Central Small Holdings Association and the Land and Home League, under the title of the National Land and Home League.’⁴⁷⁸ Other questions that were addressed included co-partnership in housing, city beautification, emigration, the industrial position of boys, and ‘The Smoke Evil’.⁴⁷⁹

The scope of the British Institute was set out on the last two pages of the publication, which added sub-categories to the areas of interest. In relation to ‘Industrial Betterment’ were issues of sanitation, factory dressing rooms, dining rooms, social secretaries, and reading and recreation rooms (although no mention of playing fields). In respect of unemployment, a similar outlook as that held by William Booth and Charles Booth was evident, with an interest in labour colonies, work bureaux emigration, and vacant lot cultivation. Sanitation, milk inspection, smoke abatement, and health visiting defined public health. There were also three categories relating to housing and rural life: land, which included allotments, small holdings, rural depopulation and village handicrafts; housing, as related to town planning, overcrowding; and garden cities, which

⁴⁷⁷ Alden, (no date), p.5.

⁴⁷⁸ Alden, (no date), p.8.

⁴⁷⁹ Alden, (no date), p.8.

took a more aesthetic perspective, and included the provision of parks, window gardening, garden villages and garden suburbs.⁴⁸⁰

Alden wrote a pamphlet entitled 'Labour Colonies in England and on the Continent', which was first printed in the *Co-operative Wholesale Societies' Annual* in 1906. He set out the fact that although the idea of farm and labour colonies was relatively new to England, the form had precedent in Germany, as well as the Netherlands under General Van Den Bosch, who had created a Colony of Benevolence at Frederiksoord in 1818 under the motto 'Help the people and improve the land.'⁴⁸¹ Alden's opinion was that the hardship and destitution endured by the unemployed in large towns and cities during hard winters must be avoided, to prevent them becoming 'a danger to the community.'

He also highlighted Britain's reliance on imported food, as well as the country's high rate of land abandonment and the subsequent degradation of that land. Alden quoted a Commander of the Salvation Army who believed that the only solution was to 'put the waste labour on the waste land by means of the waste capital, and thus convert this trinity of waste into a unity of production.'⁴⁸² Ideas of personal and physical improvement - as well as that of the land - combine in Alden's philosophy. Moreover, the fact that it might not have had an immediate return was something he considered. Taking the example of a stone yard, he posited that by approaching the enterprise in a cooperative manner, 'you are effecting a radical change in the physical and moral life of the man, and to some extent at least improving the soil upon which he works.'⁴⁸³

Alden seems not to have been satisfied with the information available to him at the time, and the pamphlet poses a number of questions about the economic potential of such schemes. He wanted evidence of, amongst other things, 'any illustrations of where such men as the colony helps have been made self-supporting', and asked; 'If such results can be achieved in any

⁴⁸⁰ Alden, (no date), p.11-12.

⁴⁸¹ Percy Alden, 'Labour Colonies in England and on the Continent' *Co-operative Wholesale Societies' Annual* (London: 1906) p.3.

⁴⁸² Alden, (1906), p.3

⁴⁸³ Alden, (1906), p.4.

measure are we justified in pursuing our experiments and urging others to make the attempt?⁴⁸⁴ He then categorised the different types of labour colonies for the unemployable (which included those physically or mentally unable to work, criminal and homeless). The context for this was the Poor Law and the Local Government Board, with existing colonies such as Hadleigh Wood receiving little funding, yet still being expected to accommodate men who, instead of being ‘selected for their permanent benefit, are often the hopeless ne’er-do-wells who would cost such Boards a larger sum if they remained in the workhouse.’⁴⁸⁵

Much of this is consistent with Baker’s later work. Indeed, the closing of Alden’s article is consistent with Baker’s vision for the Men of the Trees, and President Roosevelt’s aspirations for the Civilian Conservation:

... It serves as another illustration which may be used to convince the English public that the labour colonies on the Continent and in England, the example, too, of New Zealand in the Land for Settlements Act and the Advances to Settlers Act, together with the experience of the Salvation Army in the United States, all point to the necessity for a thorough examination by the English Government in to the whole question of the relation between the unemployed of our great towns and the decay of agricultural and other rural industries with a view to bringing waste labour to bear on waste land, and thus solve, perhaps, the most complex and difficult problem that any nation has to face.⁴⁸⁶

Moreover, it is through Alden’s involvement with the Rainbow Circle that his engagement with and influence upon the Liberal Party becomes clear, as well as providing a better understanding of the political and social world that Baker was on the periphery of in 1918-1919.

THE RAINBOW CIRCLE

The Rainbow Circle emerged at the end of William Gladstone’s leadership of the Liberal party. It was given added impetus by the Newcastle Programme, which had strengthened the call for more collectivist social reform. This environment had created a schism within the Liberal party

⁴⁸⁴ Alden, (1906), p.4.

⁴⁸⁵ Alden, (1906), p.15.

⁴⁸⁶ Alden, (1906), p.29.

that resulted in many people leaving, later to rally under Labour. Some joined the political activism of the Fabians, and a small coterie of ‘the more reflective representatives’ created a discussion group for the study of social questions within the Liberal Party; the Rainbow Circle. Active for almost forty years, the Rainbow Circle brought together ‘some of the most influential and original social and political thinkers and activists from the liberal and moderate socialist camps’, serving as a place where ideas were tested and where ideology and policy came together.⁴⁸⁷

The group’s name was taken from the Rainbow Tavern on Fleet Street, the second venue for the Circle after the National Liberal Club, where meetings took place from November 1894, which was followed by the home of Richard Stapley. From 1929, when Stapley’s home was demolished, the group moved to Percy Alden’s offices. The Rainbow Circle was notable as a ‘small, cohesive and relatively close-knit group’, and although it did not serve as the starting point for many of the members’ activities, it represented the coming together of significant political and social associations.⁴⁸⁸ The group was made up of a ‘small number of London progressives, whose imprint on the new intellectual and political movements of their times was so considerable, [and who] moved in overlapping and reinforcing circles.’⁴⁸⁹

Baker makes no mention of the Rainbow Circle in his reference to Percy Alden, but the claim that he had undertaken social work as one of his many roles is clearer in the context of the Circle’s activities. There were connections with other groups: the London Ethical Society, the Ethical and Religious Fellowship, and the Union of Ethical Societies, amongst others. The group’s objectives included ‘the collection, registration and dissemination of information relating to social service and industrial betterment, in order to improve and elevate national life.’⁴⁹⁰ In bringing to bear a rational and scientific approach to social reform, the hope was to make it more practical, rather than just undertaking it on an ad-hoc basis. Alden became one of the key

⁴⁸⁷ Michael Freeden, *Minutes of the Rainbow Circle* ed. by Michael Freeden (London: Offices of the Royal Historical Society, University College, 1989), p.235.

⁴⁸⁸ Freeden, p.x.

⁴⁸⁹ Freeden, p.x.

⁴⁹⁰ Freeden, p.5.

members of the Institute, along with Murray Macdonald, John McKillop, and the historian G.P. Gooch.

The point of connection for many members of the Circle was the press, with roles in the Liberal daily *Echo* held by Alden, Crook, Harley and Ramsay MacDonald.⁴⁹¹ These overlapping circles – represented in two cases by professional journalism and the Institute – were the crucible for radical thought and action in London. The Circle was a private discussion group and published a limited number of its talks (and then only in response to the 1909-11 House of Lords crisis). Instead, the expression of the Circle's interests was made in *The Progressive Review*, published for a short period from 1896. The intention of the publication was manifold: 'At no time has so large a body of thoughtful opinion, scattered over the length and breadth of the land, been so powerfully impressed by the need of a genuine policy of drastic reform in the social, economic, and moral conditions of life... Liberal thought and the enthusiasm of social reform are sprouting from a thousand seeds sown by education in a thousand separate spots.'⁴⁹² The *Progressive Review* was short lived, due both to the strain that its publication put on members of the Circle, but also in its expression of contradictory attitudes towards Imperialism, on which the group was polarised.

The list of Rainbow Circle Meetings saw them grouped under themes like 'The Old Manchesterism' and 'The New Radicalism'. The meetings took in topics like 'Political Deficiencies of the Manchester School' and 'The Revolt of the Co-operator against Manchesterism'. Others included 'The New Radicalism, Democracy, 'The Duties of the State to the Individual in the Industrial Sphere' and Imperialism. The scope was historical, philosophical, and topical; a session in 1902-03 looked at the political and economic situations in France, Germany, and the United States, while another session examined the problems presented in India and the British Colonies. In the years before and after the First World War, from the twentieth to the twenty-fourth sessions, the topics covered land reform, foreign policy, 'The War', 'Reform and Reconstruction after the War', and post-War issues. *The Minutes of the Rainbow*

⁴⁹¹ Freedon, p.6.

⁴⁹² 'Introductory' *Progressive Review*, vol.1 (1896), 1-2.

Circle also demonstrate the particular preoccupations of the members who presented talks, and broadens Percy Alden's singular interest in playing fields and social work - as represented in Baker's account – to include labour, land and industry.

At the 181st Meeting, held on the 12th November 1913, the group was addressed by Hobson on the topic of rural wages. The solutions put forward for this issue were that 'Unemployment might be met by small holdings, afforestation schemes, assisted emigration, and training colonies for other work. In short, the question of rural wages cannot properly be considered without considering also the related problems of Rural Housing and Gardens, Small Holding, Development of Crown Lands, credit for farmers and small-holders, security of tenure, transport co-operation, and improvement of science and business of Agriculture.'⁴⁹³ It is interesting to see the position that spiritual matters held within the Circle's interests. At the 206th meeting of the Circle Sir Richard Stapley (businessman, politician and philanthropist) read a paper titled 'Some hopeful spiritual results of the War.' This esoteric position might indicate that Stapley was a man whose interests intersected with Daniel Dunlop, suggesting, as it does, an interest in new forms of spiritual and moral development:

In the comradeship experiences in the struggle, both in the preparation for war & in the field, we can see a unity wh[ich] will operate in the reconstructive activities immediately confronting us. Traditions, worn-out idols & set formulas must make way for something better suited to the growing needs of individuals and communities. We shall realise that the strength & security of a nation come through moral & spiritual growth. Some sort of spiritual explosive generated by war experiences will undermine the doleful doctrines of evangelical Christianity on immortality: we may look not merely for co-operation one with another, on this plane of being, but for co-operation with human entities on planes beyond the boundary line of earth.⁴⁹⁴

Alden's contributions were on much more grounded themes: socialism, co-operation, and the redistribution of property.⁴⁹⁵ Alden also argued in favour of the reform of Local Government

⁴⁹³ Freedden, p.235.

⁴⁹⁴ Freedden, p.262.

⁴⁹⁵ Freedden, p.170-171.

Boards and the laws associated with them, suggesting that the services provided by the Poor Law and Education Boards should be national rather than local, and that an understanding of local governance should be integrated into the curriculum.⁴⁹⁶ Many of Baker's later preoccupations are in evidence here: his desire to address the housing shortage through the building of mobile homes; his efforts to settle people on the land in Canada; his ideas that forestry represented a panacea for many of the ills faced by society and a solution that benefitted both industry and the rural economy.

The requirements of the role were set out in Baker's posthumously-published profile of Alden, where he recalled that he was asked to act as a kind of 'fixer'; introducing himself and the project as the forerunner to Alden making contact with whichever industrialist was on the list. Although unreliable, the colour of Baker's account gives some indication of the transience of his contribution:

“If you agree, your job will be to call upon Captains of Industry. Insist on seeing the Principal of each for me. As soon as you have introduced the subject and find that I am in contact by telephone, excuse yourself and go on to the next one on the list. You might explain, if you think it necessary, that playing fields for their workers makes for better health and that prevention of disease is of course better than cure. Keep notes of your interviews and check the names and telephone numbers of the heads of firms I am asking you to interview. When you have enlisted the co-operation of the Captains of Industry I will ask you to go and see the leading Physicians and get their co-operation.”⁴⁹⁷

One can imagine the spirit with which Baker undertook this task, as well as the effect it had upon him; knocking on the doors of the rich and powerful, anointed as an advocate for change, and relied upon to be a charming and effective agent within the project to bring a new Ministry into being. Whether there was any possibility of Baker pursuing a career in the Ministry of Health is unclear. Documentation in the National Archives that relates to the formation of the Ministry makes no mention of his name.⁴⁹⁸ Similarly, the contribution that Percy Alden made is

⁴⁹⁶ Freedon, p.195.

⁴⁹⁷ Baker, (2010), p.267.

⁴⁹⁸ TNA, MH 78/68 'Proposals for creation of Ministry'.

unmentioned.⁴⁹⁹ Instead, quite a different picture emerges of the creation of the Ministry of Health.

A *Manchester Guardian* article by Charles Addison, in his capacity as First Minister of Health, sets out the beginnings of the Ministry that he was to head. There is no mention of Alden, and instead Lord Rhondda and Sir Robert Morant were credited with leading the campaign to change the Local Government Board into a Ministry of Health, although there is mention of other ‘far-sighted men’.⁵⁰⁰ The remit of the Ministry of Health was far-reaching, with Addison stating that they ranged ‘from measles to milk, from rates to reservoirs, from cottages to canal boats’ as well as ‘Sanitation, maternal and child welfare, industrial hygiene, medical practice, health education, epidemiology, Imperial and international medical work’ and more.⁵⁰¹

That it is impossible to bring any great certainty to Baker’s contribution to the Ministry of Health none-the-less offers a new way of interpreting this period in Baker’s autobiographies. Often grossly simplified, the figures Baker introduces into his narrative in this period convey an entry into a much more sophisticated social and political network; one that Baker was to dip in and out of in his future role as Man of the Trees. The precedent provided by the advocacy of Alden and the other MPs who sought to bring to life the Ministry of Health offers another way of understanding the ambitions and scope of the Men of the Trees more broadly. Tugging at some of the threads in this part of the narrative results in some fascinating and spiralling lines of enquiry, which quickly lose their relevance to Baker: men like Sir Raymond Unwin (1864-1940) who built houses for the working class, brought Arts and Crafts architecture to the masses and was consulted by F.D. Roosevelt on the New Deal.⁵⁰²

The degrees of separation between Baker and Unwin are easily traversed through Alden and Addison’s role as Liberal MPs. Indeed, Unwin and Addison’s shared ambitions and close association formed a central aspect of their professional biographies. Unwin had become the

⁴⁹⁹ Curthoys and Wales, 2004.

⁵⁰⁰ Charles Addison, ‘The Health Ministry’s Birthday’, *Manchester Guardian*, 3 June 1922, p.10.

⁵⁰¹ Addison, 1922, p.10.

⁵⁰² Mervyn Miller, ‘Commemorating and celebrating Raymond Unwin (1863–1940)’ *Planning Perspectives*, Jan 2015, Vol. 30 Issue 1, pp.129-140.

chief town planner for the Local Government Board, hoping to bring into being planning schemes that followed the 1909 Town Planning Act, which furthered the idea of Garden Cities. However, in 1915, he was drafted in as chief housing architect to the Ministry of Munitions. This was the point at which he became aligned with Christopher Addison and formed links with Seebohm Rowntree.⁵⁰³ Unwin represents a better educated, better connected, and better employed figure than Baker, although it is important to note that he was twenty years Baker's senior. However, much of the change that Baker sought to effect in society shadowed the work of men like Unwin. Moreover, although there are myriad connections between the two men, it is through the absence of Addison in Baker's narrative that a clearer picture emerges. Baker's claims that he helped bring the Ministry of Health *and* the Forestry Commission into being are two of his most difficult to substantiate, but Addison's role suggests that the claim is not quite as tenuous as it might appear.

CHRISTOPHER ADDISON

Baker does not appear in the established history of the Forestry Commission. Indeed, the Commission, in setting out its own history, defines the wartime need for timber as the major catalyst for its inception, with centuries of deforestation having resulted in just 5% of land in Britain being covered with woodland. This inability to meet the conflict's demands meant that Britain could no longer just rely on imports, and in 1916 Herbert Asquith established the Acland Committee to address the issue of developing a domestic timber source. In one pared-down account, the 'Committee reported to Asquith's successor, David Lloyd George, in 1918. They recommended a state organisation as being the most effective way of co-ordinating a reforestation plan to meet timber needs for the foreseeable future.'⁵⁰⁴ The Forestry Act came into being in September 1919 and prompted the creation of the Forestry Commission. The main roles of the eight Forestry Commissioners were 'promoting forestry, developing

⁵⁰³ Andrew Saint, 'Unwin, Sir Raymond (1863–1940)' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/36613>> [accessed 7 Feb 2019].

⁵⁰⁴ 'History of the Forestry Commission' *Forestry Commission* (2017) <<https://www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/CMON-4UUM6R>> [accessed 11 December 2019].

afforestation, the production of timber, and making grants to private landowners.⁵⁰⁵ In this account there is no mention of the Ministry of Reconstruction under which the Acland Committee sat. It is now clear that Christopher Addison played a part in shaping the direction and manifestation of the Forestry Commission. Addison's biography makes no mention of forestry, however there is much in his life's work to demonstrate the interrelation of health, housing, and industrial reconstruction in his work.

Christopher Addison (1869-1951) was born on a farm in Lincolnshire, and his upbringing left him with a life-long interest in rural affairs. He would develop into an instinctive 'agrarian radical, rooted in the peasantry of the Danelaw.'⁵⁰⁶ He went to school in Harrogate, and from there to the Sheffield medical school and St Bartholomew's Hospital in London where he graduated with honours, after which he returned to Sheffield as a demonstrator, and then lecturer, in the medical school. By 1897 he had become the first person to hold the Arthur Jackson chair of anatomy, had delivered the Hunterian lectures to the Royal College of Surgeons, and then went on to gain renown as a physiologist and anatomist.

Alongside medicine, Addison had nurtured an interest in politics, and whilst working at Charing Cross Hospital he had become concerned with the link between deprivation and health. His income alone would have prevented him from entering government but having married the daughter of a wealthy shipping magnate, he was able to change career. He campaigned for the Liberals in 1906, and in 1907 became the Liberal candidate for Hoxton in Shoreditch, becoming an MP at the age of 40 in 1910. Addison was a staunch supporter of Lloyd George and was a strong voice in favour of the National Insurance Bill of 1911. This contributed to many doctors supporting the bill who otherwise may have been opposed. Addison was recognised for bringing administrative skills and moral courage to his role, and in 1914 Asquith gave him the role of parliamentary secretary to the Board of Education.

⁵⁰⁵ Forestry Commission, (2017).

⁵⁰⁶ Kenneth O. Morgan, 'Addison, Christopher, first Viscount Addison (1869-1951)' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/30342>> [accessed 27 February 2019].

The outbreak of the First World War shook Parliament, and with it Addison's role. He went from Education to become one of Lloyd George's lieutenants in the Ministry of Munitions; a department which transformed the war through its prolific production of armaments. British Liberalism collapsed during the war, but Addison retained his position in munitions whilst also supporting Lloyd George's bid for a role as the head of an all-party coalition. When Lloyd George became Prime Minister, Addison was made Minister of Munitions in December 1916. In July 1917 he was moved to the newly created Ministry of Reconstruction, whose remit was concerned with the social and economic planning that would come with peace. The remit for the role covered health, the Poor Law, housing, agriculture, and the settlement of returning soldiers. The Ministry was criticised for its overly broad scope, however it is credited with bringing the Ministry of Health into being, which marked the end of the Local Government Board that had preceded it.

In 1919 Addison became the first Minister for Health, moving on from his position as President of the Local Government Board. He swiftly introduced the Housing and Town Planning Act (the Addison Act), which represented an optimistic programme of house building to meet post-war needs. The intention was to subsidise the cost to local authorities of the building of houses, with the Government making up the difference between the capital costs of building, and the shortfall of working-class rent. Housing on the scale initially envisioned by the Act never came into being, but Addison could claim that 210,000 homes were built and it established the principal that providing houses for working people was a social service that should be supplied by government. Upon his death in 1951 Lord Bledisloe, Conservative MP for Wilton, Governor of New Zealand, President of the Royal Agricultural Society (and Man of the Trees), recognised that, although sitting on opposite sides of the house (Addison had joined the Labour party in 1923), he held the former doctor in high regard:

As one who entered Parliament solely as an agriculturalist over 40 years ago I can testify, albeit a political opponent, that, throughout that long period, Britain's most important and most vital industry has had no more consistent, knowledgeable or devoted friend in either House than the truly loveable man who has lately passed to his rest, Christopher Addison. With remarkable versatility he filled with success a great variety of responsible posts, professional, academic, and Ministerial, including those of Minister of Agriculture and Leader of the House of Lords.

He was the son of a farmer; his heart was always in the land and his overriding sympathy was with those who managed it and tilled it. He always strongly deprecated throwing agriculture into the cockpit of party politics and his salutary influence in this respect was widely felt among all parties in the state. He appeared to have made his own Disraeli's famous dictum: "A nation which neglects its agriculture is bound to decay." He will be sadly missed throughout the countryside.⁵⁰⁷

THE MINISTRY OF RECONSTRUCTION

Christopher Addison kept a diary during his role as Minister of Reconstruction, and it is from its pages that the actual contact between the different men and institutions that were to play a part in Baker's life come together; not-least Addison's forgotten role in bringing the Forestry Commission into being. Percy Alden made an appearance, with Addison describing a visit on Thursday, December 31, 1915:

It looks as if future proceedings in Parliament on the attestation of single men will turn a good deal on the actual nature of the proposals themselves. Some of the usual mugwumps are in a dismal humour. Percy Alden came to me at lunch and told me that he had practically decided to emigrate to California. I pointed out I did not see how that was going to assist his country in the present crisis and hoped he would change his mind before long.⁵⁰⁸

Addison's straightforward dismissal of Alden's uncertainty paints a picture of a direct and no-nonsense man, in service to his country and with the expectation that his colleagues in the Liberal Party would do the same. This is the only mention of Alden by name. It is possible to trace the challenges presented by shortages in timber in relation to the war, as experienced at the end of February 1917, with Addison recording that 'Babington Smith's Sub-committee got to work again on Monday evening. On Tuesday, it recommended that we should aim at a total prohibition of timber imports, on condition that the Army in France supplied its own needs from the French forests and that labour could be made available to assist in timber work in this

⁵⁰⁷ Lord Bledisloe, 'Lord Addison, Friend of Agriculture,' *The Times*, 31 December 1951.

⁵⁰⁸ Christopher Addison, *Four and a Half Years: A personal Diary from June 1914 to January 1919*, Vol I (London: Hutchinson & Co. Ltd, 1934), p.157.

country.⁵⁰⁹ There is no mention of German U-boats disrupting imports; instead the debates appear to centre around the Army's needs, and the necessity to ensure that timber that was needed in France was sourced in France, and that there would be additional employment in Britain if forestry was expanded there. The expectations of what the growing scope of the Ministry of Reconstruction would embrace was a matter of concern in September of 1917. Addison voiced his concerns:

‘At present, stimulated by the passage of the Bill setting up the ministry and the general talk, nearly everyone from the makers of lead pencils and printers’ ink to locomotives and blast furnaces, seems to think that the Minister of Reconstruction is the man to deal with all their anxieties as to what is to happen afterwards to be the sort of God of the Machine – whom, by the way, they would rush to blame for everything that was not to their liking!’⁵¹⁰

By 1917, with the end of the war in sight, the reality of what the return of thousands of men would mean to the economy and fabric of Britain preyed on Addison's mind. He worried that only the Demobilisation Committee could offer any answers to the ‘thousand and one personal and industrial and very urgent questions that must arise the very day after the war ceases. Millions of demobilised soldiers, sailors and war workers, as soon as the reaction passes, will want to know what is to be done about pay; traders and industrialists will be wanting to get restarted’⁵¹¹ And the necessity for joined-up-thinking in respect of the needs of industry was something he identified:

Coming back to reconstruction work, it looks as if we shall have to approach the urgent industrial requirements from two directions. Adequate supplies of Materials must be ensured without unnecessary delay and profiteering and holding-up prevented; second, the Special Needs of different industries must be formulated as soon as possible and for this purpose we shall have to induce the different industries to “get together.”⁵¹²

⁵⁰⁹ Christopher Addison *Four and a Half Years: A personal Diary from June 1914 to January 1919* Vol II (London: Hutchinson & Co. Ltd, 1934) p.334.

⁵¹⁰ Addison, Vol II, p.423.

⁵¹¹ Addison, Vol II, p.424.

⁵¹² Addison, Vol II, p.425,

The challenges of implementing the Forestry Commission's proposals represented a distinct part of the broad portfolio of industrial interests that Addison was fielding. The petitioning by figures such as Lord Munro, the Scottish Secretary, demonstrated the implications for a forestry authority that covered all of the UK, describing how 'As might be expected the Scotsmen are up against the proposals of Acland's Committee for a common authority on Forestry. They insist on a special Scottish Board. Later on I saw Francis Acland on the subject, and it is evident that this will be another case of compromises and negotiations before we can get a rational arrangement agreed to.'⁵¹³

Both afforestation and the immediate supply of timber was on the table at the end of 1917. Addison met with Lord Lovat, later the first Chairman of the Forestry Commission, who made the case that the central forest authority should have control over all areas of inspection, training, and research. There was no ambiguity about the use of this timber, with the need to meet post-war housing and industrial requirements paramount. Lovat estimated that, 'if the wood were earmarked in advance there would be home-grown timber available whenever the war ceased for 40,000 houses. He suggested that arrangements should be made through Borden to earmark timber in Canada and that we should examine similar possibilities in Finland.'⁵¹⁴ Indeed, the issues of forestry and housing were intertwined with the necessity of procuring land on which to undertake this. One solution was to approach the Ecclesiastical Authorities and use tithe and glebe lands as the site for soldier settlements after the war.⁵¹⁵

Addison played an active role in mediating between the different agendas of those involved in the Forestry Committee. In January 1918 he finished the Forestry Memo and then presented it to the Cabinet.⁵¹⁶ In June 1919, the Privy Council went over his Memorandum to the Cabinet, with Addison recognising that they did the job 'very thoroughly.'⁵¹⁷ The different perspectives held by advocates of afforestation meant that the process wasn't at all smooth, and on the 23rd October 1918 Addison described having had 'a long sitting with Munro and Shortt, representing

⁵¹³ Addison, Vol II, p. 429.

⁵¹⁴ Addison, Vol II, p.454.

⁵¹⁵ Addison, Vol II, p.468.

⁵¹⁶ Addison, Vol II, p.468.

⁵¹⁷ Addison, Vol II, p.541.

Scotland and Ireland respectively, on Forestry and we agreed that we should put up a Joint Memo. On the present unfortunate position, which I undertook to prepare, and we must try to get Prothero also to back it. It is the same old story of conflicting interests leading to indecision but it will come out all right.⁵¹⁸

Tantalisingly, there is an entry in Addison's diary on Monday, 10th June 1918, in which he described having had 'a call from Mr. Dunlop who is, I believe, the presiding genius of British Manufacturers Association. We shall be able to get a good Trade Committee in the Electrical Machinery Trade without any difficulty.'⁵¹⁹ There is scant detail, but what is apparent is that it left Addison upbeat about the potential of developing the electrical industry in Britain. Might an ex-soldier with an interest in trees have accompanied Dunlop, and were matters other than just electricity discussed? It is plausible that this was what Baker referred to when he claimed to have brought the Forestry Commission into being. There is little that is concrete, but with circumstantial evidence, coupled with Addison's demonstrable influence upon the creation of the Forestry Commission and the Ministry of Health, Baker's account becomes more credible. His friendship with Dunlop and working relationship with Alden might have created the opportunity for the young man with a passion for planting trees to have his story heard by the Minister of Reconstruction.

⁵¹⁸ Addison, Vol II, p.514.

⁵¹⁹ Addison, Vol II, p.541.

10. Men of the Trees

To study forestry at Cambridge after the war had long been my ambition. In the mud of Flanders, and during those long waits for dawn before the expected attack, or before I went over the top, I had vowed that if I survived I would devote my life to forestry. My early feeling of dedication to trees was again strong upon me.⁵²⁰

In *My Life, My Trees*, Baker wrote that he ‘returned to his forestry work at Cambridge’ following his experience in helping to establish the Ministry of Health alongside Percy Alden. Although Baker gave no exact date, it follows having been invalided out of the Army in April 1918, leaving some ambiguity as to the amount of time he spent recuperating. In *Dance of the Trees*, Baker stated that he was finally ‘quite certain that it was forestry’, and that he returned to Cambridge with depleted funds due to the support his family had needed during the war, and the chronology of the same events would suggest that his return happened in 1918, not long after being invalided out. In *Dance of the Trees* there is no mention of Daniel Dunlop or Percy Alden, but the two men do appear in *I Planted Trees*, as Baker recalls how he had ‘worked hard’ for the British Institute of Social Service - which in turn had paved the way for the Ministry of Health - before departing for Canada. However, it is worth considering that by the time he wrote the texts published in *Tall Timber*, the dates had become rather mutable. In that instance, the same chronology (in this case including meeting George Bernard Shaw at the Fabian Society in London) resulted in him returning to his forestry studies in Cambridge in ‘October 1917.’⁵²¹

There is no date, no mention of Addison or the Ministry of Reconstruction, yet the impression of premeditation in his choice to study forestry is clear. Baker’s metamorphosis into the Man of the Trees could finally take place. Although the events and figures appear distinct, there were ways in which these interests and activities overlapped, as is demonstrated in the connections made through the Ministry of Reconstruction. What is even less clear from Baker’s autobiographical accounts alone is how this spirit of rehabilitation and reconstruction extended

⁵²⁰ Baker, (1944), p.35.

⁵²¹ Baker, (2010), p.16.

more generally into post-war Cambridge and the University. Was there any hesitation or nervousness evident in Baker when he returned to Cambridge? An excerpt from another document titled suggests a new facet to this experience; one in which Baker's physical and mental distress created a profound crisis of faith, the result of which was a whistle-stop tour of emerging alternative spirituality. The Christianity of his childhood and family was destabilised, and the transformation afforded by his war service had shaken him both physically and psychologically:

He was brought up in the Church of England. After being wounded three times in [the] World War and having been given up as dead was spared to come through. It was then that his long search for Truth then began in earnest. He first came under the influence of the Roman Catholic Church, then New Thought, Spiritualism, Theosophy, Anthroposophy, and Christian Science and at long last he was led to the Bahá'í Faith by a devoted American Bahá'í, in 1924, and later confirmed by a Persian Bahá'í, Hasan Balyusi, now a Head of the Cause at Haifa.⁵²²

A more grey and sad Cambridge emerges from the archives; one in which returning servicemen struggle with disability and suicidal thoughts. Baker's efforts to help and counter this pervasive atmosphere come across clearly, and possibly the effect it had upon him too. Was he not also one of the survivors? Maybe not as noticeably disabled or disfigured as his contemporaries, but nonetheless at the end of his twenties and at university with young men a decade younger than him who had not directly experienced the war. Did his feeling of remorse remain? The following Medical Board found him to be 80% disabled, with the specific military conditions 'fracture of sacro-iliac joint and shell shock' cited. He had made a slight improvement, but his complaints convey the physical and psychological damage he had sustained: 'Complaints: 1. Lack of concentration and memory. 2. Nervous and emotional. 3. Very easily tired. 4. Is about 2.5 stone under normal weight. 5. Pain in the rt.sacro-iliac joint (which was fractured when buried) especially on sitting down.' His hands were described as steady, his right hip was still tender, and he was found to require dental treatment. One of the more telling notes is that he was 'very

⁵²² US, R. St. Barbe Baker Papers, fonds MG 71, A/I/1. 'Brief Personal Notes'.

emotional.’ There is no detail as to how those emotions were expressed: was it shorthand for his protests about the waste of life in the war? Or his experience of the Sinn Fein Rebellion? Alternatively, it may have simply been an outpouring of fear and sadness.

Baker’s sense of his dedication to trees as part of a broader social and environmental remit becomes clear and he presents Cambridge as a busy and productive time of which he had much to be proud. Indeed, he did not arrive as a scholar, but as a consultant. In his first autobiographical account, Cambridge is the place to which Baker ‘had been sent by the Canadians to investigate the possibility of Canadian officers taking a course in agriculture or forestry, while they were waiting to be repatriated.’⁵²³ In that capacity, he was shown around the University’s experimental farm and had dinner with the Vice-Chancellor, Dr. Ernest Shipley (later Sir Ernest Shipley). In Baker’s account, Dr. Shipley asked the young Captain his opinion of Cambridge’s farm and Baker told him, in no uncertain terms, that he was disappointed, and that his observation was that the research being undertaken on improving manure could be done in Canada ‘in less than a week in test tubes.’⁵²⁴

Shipley’s response was that in the experience of the Dons, ‘Government support means Government control’, but said that he was of the same opinion as Baker and gave him a letter of introduction to see Sir F. E. Middleton, the Director of the School of Agriculture. Three weeks later, Baker was walking past Middleton’s office with a friend and this prompted Baker to ask his friend to make an introduction, so that he could present his letter from Dr. Shipley:

Dear Sir F.E., - This is to introduce Captain Richard St. Barbe Baker, who has been this day to inspect our agricultural and experimental farm. He is somewhat surprised at the paucity of Government support. Of course he views the question from the point of view of a practical agriculturalist and not as a Don.⁵²⁵

A practical agriculturalist? Was this stretching his experience in Canada and his father’s nursery, or did it reflect the breadth of activities in which Baker had participated over the preceding

⁵²³ Baker, (1944), p.35.

⁵²⁴ Baker, (1944), p.35.

⁵²⁵ Baker, (1944), p.36.

decade? Baker claimed that, as a result of the conversation (and after his friend had been asked to leave), the Government allocated a large sum of money to the experimental farm, ‘with the result that they had been able to prepare for a large influx of returning Service men who were anxious to start studying scientific farming.’⁵²⁶ Baker was one of those men, albeit with an interest in forestry as opposed to agriculture. The challenge of returning to university at the end of his third decade was considerable:

It was all very exciting, but very difficult. I had little more than my war pension, which had been reduced to £42 a year. It was with some trepidation that I went into Caius College, for I wondered if I would be able to meet the various obligations that I had taken upon me. However, I treated the whole thing in a spirit of adventure.⁵²⁷

The dilemma of choosing between a simple life of planting trees and the adventure presented by a career in forestry was contrasted with the challenge of returning to education as an ex-serviceman. Baker found it hard ‘to settle down to the grind again, after the years of war, and with the competition of a new generation of students who came straight from the schools.’⁵²⁸ He was to draw upon the therapeutic and practical carpentry skills that he had learnt at Dean Close School from ‘Uncle Page’, the woodwork instructor. The joinery skills that Baker had learnt in Cheltenham stood him in good stead in Canada, and without them he ‘might not have been able to work [his] way through Cambridge’, especially when ‘retrenched from Kenya under the Geddes Axe.’⁵²⁹ The Geddes Axe described a tightening of government spending under Sir Eric Geddes after the investment of the immediate post-war period. Forestry – as a key area of reconstruction in the 1920s – was under pressure to perform economically at home and across the Empire. It was through his knowledge of practical construction skills that Baker turned his attention to the difficulties disabled ex-servicemen faced:

When I went back to Cambridge in 1918 I was still suffering from war injuries. There were a lot of other fellows like me, among whom were many much more seriously handicapped

⁵²⁶ Baker, (1944), p.36.

⁵²⁷ Baker, (1944), p.36.

⁵²⁸ Baker, (1944), p.37.

⁵²⁹ Baker, (1944), p.37.

than myself. There were those who had lost an arm or a leg, or both legs. These were my friends, for we had at least the war experience in common. One was a Double Blue, and I knew what he was suffering in not being able to return to the athletic life of the University.⁵³⁰

In light of this, Baker established a beekeeping society amongst the ex-servicemen; something for ‘those brother officers who were so severely handicapped.’⁵³¹ Baker elaborated upon this in *My Life, My Trees*, describing how one of his fellows ‘had confided in [him] that for him life was no longer worth living’, which led Baker to believe that the man was close to taking his own life.⁵³² The restorative nature of beekeeping was something that Baker understood, with his own experience from the age of sixteen having given him the comfort and reassurance that, whilst he was working in his father’s tree nursery, the bees would be working, ‘hauling in the nectar.’⁵³³ Baker made practical arrangements for setting up the amateur beekeeper’s club; identifying an apiary for sale, finding an orchard for it, and asking Dr. Shipley to become Patron. Nevertheless, the Beekeeping Club was second to Baker’s main claim to fame whilst at Cambridge: the rather unusual achievement that he ‘invented’ the modern caravan.

Baker’s account of his forestry education is typically biased: rich in certain details that were closest to his immediate activities, but often lacking in any meaningful context. Accordingly, Baker’s version of events occurs in a vacuum: he gives little sense of the challenges presented by timber shortages in the war; the debates around timber supplies and afforestation; the linkage made between afforestation and unemployment; or the role of serving and demobilized servicemen in this work.

A CASE FOR FORESTRY

Bernhard E. Fernow’s *A Brief History of Forestry*, published in 1907 in Canada, demonstrates the wider thinking about the role of forestry in society and industry at the turn of the twentieth century. The work was based on a series of lectures that were delivered at Yale to the new

⁵³⁰ Baker, (1944), p.37-38.

⁵³¹ Baker, (1944), p.38.

⁵³² Baker, (1970), p.36.

⁵³³ Baker, (1970), p.36.

students of forestry, and the sense of the discipline as an enlightened science and art are evident. The text contextualises information about forestry practices, alongside ‘brief historical references to their political and economic development and also brief statements of their general physical conditions.’⁵³⁴ Fernow’s pedagogic philosophy is also evident, with his declaration that, ‘the value of studying the historical development of an economic subject or of a technical art which, like forestry, relies to a large extent upon empiricism, lies in the fact that it brings before us, in proper perspective, accumulated experience, and enables us to analyse cause and effect, whereby we may learn to appreciate the reasons for present conditions and the possibilities for rational advancement.’⁵³⁵ The role of forestry in ameliorating the effects of over-exploitation of natural resources is clear:

Forestry is an art born of necessity, as opposed to arts of convenience and of pleasure. Only when a reduction in the natural supplies of forest products under the demands of civilization, necessitates a husbanding of supplies or necessitates the application of art or skill or knowledge in securing a reproduction, or when unfavourable conditions of soil or climate induced by forest destruction make themselves felt does the art of forestry make its appearance. Hence its beginnings occur in different places at different times and its development proceeds at different paces.⁵³⁶

The history of forestry is therefore the history of civilization, with the growth of the practice ‘dependent on economic and cultural conditions, on various economic development and on elements of environment.’ Fernow was clear that the practice could not be separated from the culture that produced it: ‘The development of the art can only be understood and appreciated through the knowledge of such environment, of such other developments as of agriculture, of industries, of means of transportation, of civilization generally.’⁵³⁷

The first edition of *A History of Forests and Forestry* was published in 1907, and 1911 saw an expanded and revised edition. The picture that it paints of global knowledge of forests and

⁵³⁴ Bernhard E. Fernow, *A Brief History of Forestry in Europe, the United States and Other Countries* (Toronto: University Press, Toronto, 1911), p.xi.

⁵³⁵ Fernow, p.1.

⁵³⁶ Fernow, p.2.

⁵³⁷ Fernow, p.2.

forestry shows an industry in its ascendance. Britain, for example, was seen as having no need for any kind of forestry plan as it is 'located so as to be accessible by sea from all points of the compass and with oceanic shipping well developed, can apparently dispense with serious consideration of the forest supply question.'⁵³⁸ Fernow divided the book into sections, with an introductory chapter on the Forests of the Ancients (a term that Baker was to use in his summary of historic forestry practices in *Green Glory*, in 1948). The first country that Fernow examined in depth was Germany, with a description of its historical context and then its developments of forestry methods, and their evolution throughout the nineteenth century. Other European countries followed, including those of the Mediterranean Peninsulas, with Great Britain and her Colonies (including Canada, India and Newfoundland) preceding Japan, Korea, and the United States.

Great Britain is not worthy of merit. Fernow starts his section on the Isles with the observation that, 'It is a remarkable fact that the nation which can boast of the most extensive forest department in one of her colonies, has at home not yet been able to come to an intelligent conception even, not to speak of application, of proper forest policy or forest economy.'⁵³⁹ The image that Fernow paints is caricature, but given the challenges that Britain was to face during the First World War when imports of timber became an imperative, the profligacy of the pre-war attitude to the provenance and use of natural resources is consistent:

Politically, the Englishman is an individualist, jealous of his private interests and unwilling to submit to government interference for the public welfare. Hence, State forestry, which is finally the only solution of the forestry problem, appears objectionable. Commercial and industrial enterprise rather than economic development appeals to him; the practical issue of the day rather than depends of a future and systematic preparation for the same occupy his mind. He lacks, as Mr. Roseberry points out, scientific methods, and hence is wasteful. Moreover, he is conservative and self-satisfied beyond the citizens of any other nation,

⁵³⁸ Fernow, p.2.

⁵³⁹ Fernow, p.365.

hence if all the wisdom of the world point new ways, he will still cling to his accustomed ones.⁵⁴⁰

In the years leading up to the First World War, and throughout the conflict, forestry was to become an increasingly necessary area of investment and innovation. Voices tried to alert the public to the total reliance upon vegetation (both in living and fossilised form), as this article in *The Times* demonstrates:

Not until steam had become the bondservant of man did the people of Great Britain realize the vast amount of energy latent in that accumulation of compressed vegetation which distinguishes the coal measures. They have not been slow to develop these resources. Coal, abundant and accessible, was the chief source of the commercial and industrial ascendancy attained by this country during the nineteenth century; and it continues to be the primary requisite in all our principal industries, agriculture excepted. But coal is not the only material indispensable in every kind of manufacture. It has long been matter of concern to many persons, and appears at length to have been reluctantly recognized by the Government, that the ease and rapidity with which profits can be realized by raising fossil vegetation have brought about utter neglect and disuse of the economic cultivation of the nobler forms of living vegetation – and industry in which, if it is once interrupted, the profits are long deferred.⁵⁴¹

The argument was that Britain was walking blindly into an industrial crisis, where many of the reliable imports of material – such as pit props – were supplied from other countries, when they could as easily be grown and harvested domestically. Britain was also vulnerable to the economic expansion of other European countries, with Germany's longstanding enterprise of scientific forestry meaning that, although the country had provided enough timber for export, the supplies were then needed to satisfy demand at home. *The Times's* correspondent focussed on the quantities and value of the timber imported into Britain, but a new vanguard of educators was emerging, ready to take up the task of afforestation, as well as the identification of suitable land for demonstration plots. Public and private interests were intertwined, with the creation of

⁵⁴⁰ Fernow, p.366-367.

⁵⁴¹ 'British Forestry', *The Times*, 11 February 1908, p.4.

a forestry school at Oxford under Dr Schlich and Professor W. R. Fisher, Dr. Augustine Henry's appointment as Reader in of Forestry at Cambridge, and chairs and lectureships respectively at the agricultural colleges at Cirencester and Wye, in Kent.

Forestry in this context was domestic in its efforts (it was often an offshoot of estate management where forms of woodland management for fuel and timber were traditional), but as a discipline it was evolving into something distinct from other forms of landscape management. However, the tensions between aesthetics and economics were not insurmountable:

Trees – do we not all love them and lavish upon them, as ornaments, greater expense and care than any other nation does? But we do so as arboriculturists, not as silviculturalists – as landscape gardeners and botanists, not as foresters. Not only are the two branches of the craft perfectly reconcilable with each other, but they are mutually indispensable. In a future paper it will be shown how the knowledge we have gained as arboriculturists will serve us in re-establishing the science of economic forestry, without sacrifice of landscape effect.⁵⁴²

Cambridge's School of Forestry was a new enterprise, with a two-year diploma granted to those who had shown proficiency in the sciences, and who had taken a special course on the theoretical and practical side of forestry. *The Times's* University Correspondent, reporting from Cambridge, was careful to identify that although the public increasingly recognised the importance of forestry, there were not necessarily any jobs for graduates from that university. This was because the Indian Forest Service was aligned with the forestry school at Oxford, and had 'not yet called upon the Universities to supply men for the important forestry posts in our widely-spread dominions.'⁵⁴³ Cambridge sought to broaden the appeal of its forestry diploma, focussing not just on overseas appointments, but also to 'the sons of landowners, who will one day be the possessors of woodland areas, and those who contemplate land agency as a profession.'⁵⁴⁴

⁵⁴² 'British Forestry', *The Times*, 11 February 1908, p.4.

⁵⁴³ 'Cambridge at the Beginning of Lent Term', *The Times*, 18 January 1909, p.5.

⁵⁴⁴ 'Cambridge at the Beginning of Lent Term', *The Times*, 18 January 1909, p.5.

Along with this new cohort of students, the university hoped to benefit from changes in regulations relating to the Indian Forestry Service that had previously precluded graduates from Cambridge. This was achieved by allowing students to meet the requirement of a natural science honours which was provided on condition of students having spent a period of practical training in a Continental forest rather than demanding that graduates spend a period at Oxford to be eligible. This elitism created tension between the two universities:

We should be the last to deny that sound educational advantage may accrue from a period spent at a second University, and if that University is Oxford, no Cambridge man should grumble; but a post-graduate sojourn at another University should be essentially a period of advance study or research in the strictest sense, and not of mere qualification for an examination in no sense more advanced than that which he has passed at his own University.⁵⁴⁵

The issue of afforestation was one that existed in the wider cultural domain, and a Royal Commission on State Afforestation sat from 1906 to 1911, prompting public debate. Newspapers carried letters voicing concerns about the lack of woodland; trees being ‘of one of the most profitable products of the soil.’ Not only valuable as a crop, the impact on local hydrology was raised: ‘within measurable distance a change of climate fraught with dangers to agriculture’ causing ‘in some districts signs have been observed of diminished rainfall due to this cause.’⁵⁴⁶ Britain’s changing agricultural landscape was illustrated by the loss of shade trees in meadows, which were ‘essential to the well-being of cattle’; elm trees, which brought stately grandeur to the countryside, were being cut to make boxes for the lead industry in Cornwall; and hedgerow timber was being cut and not replanted – replaced only by suckers. ‘All is sacrificed to present gain, with the result that in a few years the supply of native timber will be practically exhausted.’⁵⁴⁷

⁵⁴⁵ ‘Cambridge at the Beginning of Lent Term’, *The Times*, 18 January 1909, p.5.

⁵⁴⁶ ‘Afforestation’ *The Times*, 19 January 1909, p.8.

⁵⁴⁷ ‘Afforestation’ *The Times*, 19 January 1909, p.8.

What is most pertinent, however, is the optimistic and stirring portrayal of afforestation, which the writer Harriet S. Wantage had seen on the Lockinge Estate in Berkshire. By the 1860s the Estate had very little tree cover, but this would soon be reversed by tree planting:

Those bleak hillsides are now clothed with mixed plantation in different stages of growth, which already break the violence of the winds and give grateful shade and shelter to herds of cattle. Beech, birch, and soft wood trees, larch, and Austrian and Causican pines predominate on the chalk downs, while on the lower ground the roads are bordered and waste pieces of land planted with young elms, beech, and chestnut and other trees.⁵⁴⁸

This mixed-species plantation was a result of fifty years of investment, averaging 80,000 plants a year, and Wantage claimed that the woodland was already profitable. The costs of labour were remunerated by the sale of wood obtained from the thinnings that took place every year, as well as the cutting of older timber. But, as well as providing raw materials, the woodland also allowed for around twenty men to be employed on a seasonal basis under the head forester. Many of these men were ‘farm labourers, whose services on the land [were] required in summer only, and who would otherwise swell the ranks of the unemployed.’ Wantage also noted that forestry work was ‘found to be very popular among discharged soldiers and Reservists, especially those who have known active service abroad, and who prefer it to ordinary farm labour.’

Although this letter can only ever serve as an example of the wider public interest in forestry, with no way of demonstrating that it had a direct effect upon Baker, it demonstrates that the indecision that Baker may have felt about a career in forestry was part of a bigger conversation taking place at the time. 1909 was the year in which Baker left for Canada, and it is quite possible that homesteading and training for a role in the Church afforded a much more stable future at that point than that emerging in the field of forestry.

Towards the end of the war, the necessity to avert a timber crisis and to productively occupy returning servicemen took on a whole new momentum. Baker’s claims become part of the zeitgeist when considered in relation to the training and education of foresters after the war as

⁵⁴⁸ ‘Afforestation’ *The Times*, 19 January 1909, p.8.

part of a national scheme of afforestation, intended to prevent another timber shortage and surge in unemployment. The conflict, which had so intensified Britain's use of timber, was one in which Baker was an active participant, and whose escalation he may have observed with a keen eye whilst in Britain, Ireland and France. One of the most striking demands was that of pit props – timber used in mining – of which the Welsh collieries were the largest consumer. Prior to the war, the majority of the timber was softwood from the managed forests of the Baltic and Western France, easily transported by boat to the Welsh ports. The German fleet of U-boats made that transport difficult, and instead Britain had to look at its own supply to meet the demand, with one third of Britain's trees felled during the war, including almost all of its softwood. Prior to the war, the opinion was that Britain needed a domestic afforestation policy; one that would allow it to meet its own requirements for timber and pulp. However, this was not economically advantageous, as softwood in particular was much cheaper if imported from France or the Baltic.

The cost efficiency in importing timber was not enough to daunt the champions of afforestation, as the scheme represented an all-encompassing panacea for Britain's social and economic ills. The wartime shortage of pitprops propelled advocates of large-scale tree planting into the corridors of power, making the issue a key part of Britain's reconstruction: 'By 1918 a timber supply problem, especially for colliery pitprops, had become clear, a solution had been devised by key players (for a different problem), and a decision point arose. The afforestation programme had been a solution waiting for a problem.'⁵⁴⁹ It was upon this wave of enthusiasm for a panacea for so many ills - including unemployment and rural depopulation - that Baker embarked upon his studies in Cambridge.

THE SCHOOL OF FORESTRY AND ARCHIVES OF THE CAMBRIDGE FORESTRY SOCIETY

Baker was clear about the nascent state of the University of Saskatchewan and Emmanuel College; institutions that were being actively constructed whilst he was studying there. What is

⁵⁴⁹ Alec Dauncey, 'A Century of Forest Policy: makers at the 'bar of history'', *Quarterly Journal of Forestry*, Jan 2019, Vol. 113, No.1, p.39.

less clear is just how new (and short-lived) the Cambridge School of Forestry was. The Diploma that Baker took was introduced in 1912 and rescinded twenty-three years later in 1935. When Baker described meeting the Director of Agriculture, he was referring to the Agricultural School at the University of Cambridge, which had only been established in 1894, and whose academic staff were amongst the first instructors in forestry as part of their courses. The Guard Books of the Schools - incorporated into one volume - trace the evolution and development of both lines of study, and demonstrate a much clearer context for the environment in which Baker was to study.

Before the war, forestry was taught as a supplementary course to agriculture. Agriculture was closely aligned with estate management and public health, all of which represent more vocational courses than those classically associated with the University of Cambridge. Just before the outbreak of the First World War, the India Office declared that the need for trained foresters was so great that British Universities should increase the number of men ready for service in the Empire. This built upon the existing training of colonial foresters that already took place at the University in Oxford, having moved there from Coopers Hill near Windsor, and the University of Edinburgh. It appears that Cambridge heeded this call, and it added greater impetus to the creation of a School of Forestry at the University of Cambridge, distinct from the School of Agriculture.

This pre-war enthusiasm saw a three-story building constructed, with a laboratory, room for lectures, and space for practical experiments. However, the outbreak of war resulted in a sudden drop in student numbers, which must have made the School of Forestry an echoey place for those who studied there during the war. Only half the usual number of men were in residence in the Autumn of 1914, and those empty dorms were then taken by soldiers 'billeted in colleges, some encamped in the fields around the town'. This influx transformed the university town:

Rupert Brooke expressed and personified the romantic idealism of so many who were to die in the trenches, while W. H. R. Rivers, Director of the newly established Psychological Laboratory, won golden opinions for his treatment of the shell-shocked and the disillusioned. Senior officers dined at high tables; Nevile's Court at Trinity was transformed into a field hospital later transferred to King's and Clare cricket ground, where

the University Library now stands. Special courses were devised, some of them practical, others makeshift substitutes for the normal courses.⁵⁵⁰

The status of agriculture and forestry was tied up with the recognition that more practical subjects may be of greater use to the Government, and so saw increased investment after the war. This shift in economics and politics quite exceeds Baker's claim that he was the catalyst for the School of Agriculture getting Government support after voicing his opinions. In fact, agriculture as a subject had existed solely because of external funding, mostly from county councils.⁵⁵¹ The Special Board of Medicine was the first to make a grant claim from the Board of Education. This prompted a debate between 'the necessity of seeking financial support from the state and the threat to academic freedom which this might entail.'⁵⁵²

From 1919, the Cambridge Forestry Society produced a journal, *The Archives of the Cambridge Forestry Society*, one of whose main contributors was Herbert Stone. The journal offers an interesting counterpoint to Baker's account; one in which the development of the school is both set out with a distinctly wry philosophy. Practical issues defined the journal's nascent existence, the initial intention was more 'to make an appeal for support than to pretend to furnish a serious contribution to science.'⁵⁵³ The intention of *The Archives* was to gather together 'stray notes that are often too valuable to be lost and yet do not provide sufficient matter for a paper.' In addition, the hope was that it would 'stimulate the spirit of research amongst our students and that a periodical reminder [would] maintain the feeling of "bon camaraderie" between past and present members.'

The Association was made up of two types of members: Active, and Honorary. The Active members were mostly students and the Honorary were, for the most part, benefactors of the School; people who had donated their time or resources to its establishment. Funds appear to have been modest, with the income of the School of Forestry being £575, with a deficit of £125.

⁵⁵⁰ Elizabeth Leedham-Green, *A Concise History of the University of Cambridge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p.188.

⁵⁵¹ Leedham-Green, p.189.

⁵⁵² Leedham-Green, p.189.

⁵⁵³ *The Archives of the Cambridge Forestry Association* (ACFA) (Cambridge: University Forestry Association). No. 1-4. 1919, April-Oct. 1920. p.2.

Stone suggested that although the deficit was to double in the coming years, they were not to be discouraged, as ‘making bricks without straw is our particular speciality.’ Financial support was not asked; instead, Stone had drawn up a list of ‘desiderata’ and hoped that his readers would meet his appeal.

The equipment on the list included microscopes and laboratory appliances, photographic equipment, museum accessories, as well as specimens of timber that included homegrown wood for the log collection. Exotic species in log or plank form were also desired, with the School admitting that it was ‘very poor in commercial kinds’; herbarium specimens, including fruit and cones; specimens of insects and fungi that could harm timber; photographs of felled trees, of trees in general; and also photographs and samples of figured wood and veneers. As well as those items, books on forestry and timber were requested, along with a rather delightful call for ‘original notes on all branches of our subject.’⁵⁵⁴

The journal includes a list of sites and samples of interest to the School: the silvicultural listing is in regards of a False Acacia plantation planted by William Cobbett and belonging to Sir Hugh Beevor, made up of 54 trees planted in 1829. The dimensions of the estimated timber were provided, as was their locations, suggesting that interested parties could contact Sir Beevor and inspect the plantation if it was of interest to them. The listed Wood samples included a drum of larch with ‘a remarkable enclosure’ in which a stem, either from the same or a nearby tree, was enveloped by the main specimen. Another was a ‘Rose of Hell’; an unusual formation with the appearance of a mushroom caused by the epiphyte *Loranthus* that was found after fires. The name coming from the belief ‘that it is the only flower that is capable of supporting the heat of the infernal regions’ and that to possess one caused bad luck.⁵⁵⁵

Details such as that may seem trivial, but there is a sense of excitement and exploration which gives the publication a rather unusual tone for an academic enterprise, sometimes touching upon the magical, which Baker would later exploit in his work:

⁵⁵⁴ *ACFA*, p.11.

⁵⁵⁵ *ACFA*, 1919, p.6.

Our members W. J. Powell-Jones and W. M. Walters report that when sleeping on the ground in the woods in Canada, they have frequently been aware of a sound resembling that of a full band, which appears to be the result of the vibration of the wood of the trees against the roots of which their heads might have been lying. This phenomenon is well known to the Western Canadian Railway-survey men, who call it the “Music of the Pines.”⁵⁵⁶

The second issue, published in April 1920, continued the chatty style of the first, with Stone declaring that ‘the gentle reproof by the distinguished Past President of the Museums Association, Mr Chas. Madeley, concerning our “disregard of typographical conventionalities,” has caused us to make certain concessions for the benefit of future generations of librarians. The present number is therefore No. 2, and the previous one may be regarded as No. 1, though we hate the tyranny of numbers.’⁵⁵⁷ The concerns of the editors in respect of the employment of their graduates is also in evidence, with the situation ex-servicemen found themselves in particularly difficult:

The slow absorption of our members by the various Forestry Services causes us much uneasiness. “Learn Forestry and shift for yourself” seems to be the official formula and is a good one when addressed to the ordinary student who may be choosing a profession. It is a brutal cynicism, however, when used in connection with Officers whose sufferings in the service of their country are the immediate reason for their presence at the School.

Anything seems good enough to throw to an ex-serviceman. “Give him a cold potato and let him go!”

This concern aligns with Baker’s identification of the difficult position that war veterans faced in Cambridge; although in his case his efforts were in helping them during his time there. Was Baker one of the men that Stone saw as struggling to find gainful employment? Baker was initially turned down for overseas service at the end of his studies, with only a last-minute reprieve getting him a position in East Africa. Commercial interests are evident, with the ambitions of the School to take part in the Exhibition for Overseas Trade and Development in

⁵⁵⁶ *ACFA*, 1919, p.8.

⁵⁵⁷ *ACFA*, 1919 No.2, p.14,

London in 1921, as is the presence of women at the school, as shown by the list of those who had ‘gone down’, as of 1920. Gladys Dora Swift, who had geology at University College, London, was described as ‘at liberty and desiring a post’, as was Honor Joan Greaves, who had studied agriculture at Reading, as well as a dairy course and ten months’ agricultural work during the war. The two men who also graduated were Captain Arthur Blair Dumas and Lieutenant Harold Walter Edmund Crouchly. Both had served in the War, with Dumas having been appointed Probationer with the Forestry Commission, and Crouchley as Assistant Conservator of Forests in British East Africa.⁵⁵⁸

Three others were listed as having gained their diplomas, but were to remain ‘up’ until June 1920. Lieutenant James Hunter Blair who had been with the Seaforth Highlanders on the Western Front; Lieutenant Leonard Bloomer who had been in the Royal Warwickshire Regiment and had been wounded at Gallipoli; and Hubert Worsley Woolley, a former school master who had served with the Honourable Artillery Company and the Royal Field Artillery. All three were listed as being ‘at liberty and desiring a post’; evidence of Stone’s concern that his students were not readily finding employment, despite their war service and qualifications. Employment enquiries from people outside the school were also included, with a post from an ex-soldier reading: ‘sometime medical-student, ex-serviceman (private), twice wounded, desired outdoor occupation in Forestry. Willing to start as labourer.’⁵⁵⁹ Here, the shadow of the recently ended war is felt again, and the need is clear for a solitary, un-claustrophobic working environment for a man who had experienced great hardships. That may be a lot to read into two lines, yet it is consistent with Stone’s concerns.

The community that rallied around the Forestry School continued to supply all kinds of material to their collection. A second tranche of thirty-three gifts, which included a telegraph pole that had been bored by woodpeckers; twenty-one pieces of wood used in the manufacture of walking-sticks; a sample of Mycelium resembling chamois leather; Hornbeam seeds from the Director of the Forestry School of Nancy; and ‘R.St. B. Baker’ is listed as having contributed

⁵⁵⁸ *ACFA*, 1919 No. 2, p.16.

⁵⁵⁹ *ACFA*, 1919 p.22.

four photographs.⁵⁶⁰ There is much in the spirit of the Cambridge Forestry Society that is evident in the later *Men of the Trees* publications. Both embrace the idea of a collegiate and constructive group, in which the members generously share information for the enlightenment and betterment of their fellows. There is no great intellectual snobbery, and the journal could be read by any layperson with an interest in trees and forestry. The third journal took an even more chatty tone in its introduction. First revelling in the mirth caused by the School's 'declaration' in the previous issue that it was going to start experiments to grow square trees, and then in the announcement that one of its benefactors, Mr Thomas Shipp, was to be made an Honorary member with a very jocular welcome 'to the brotherhood.'⁵⁶¹

The third issue highlighted the tensions between the School and the Forestry Commission, with the modest income of the School being calculated as being equal to half of the salary of a 'Forestry Commissioner,' whose wages were paid by 'Nunky' (slang derived from Uncle Sam, meaning that the Government was footing the bill).⁵⁶² The size of the school was a fraction of an American contemporary, with the University of Madison claiming 450 timber-research staff, whilst the School of Forestry had a staff of about three. The rather jocular descriptions of the permanent and loaned staff included 'a Reader (sound in wind and limb)' who was listed as one person, and a Lecturer on Wood (somewhat the worse for wear) who was accounted for as $\frac{3}{4}$ of a person; an in-joke likely not lost to the journal's readership. By 1920, the School was offering a Degree, as opposed to the Diploma that Baker qualified for, and the employment potential of graduates was exalted:

Attention, all Landowners! You naturally desire that your sons shall have a University education and to take a degree. Why not let them take it in Forestry? And you, ye Timber-merchant Princes! Learn that in the final year of the course, your sons may specialise in Wood Technology. And when they have taken their degrees they will say to you: "Look here, Dear old Bean, can't you do something for the School of Forestry?"⁵⁶³

⁵⁶⁰ *ACFA*, 1919 p.23.

⁵⁶¹ *ACFA*, 1919 p.26.

⁵⁶² *ACFA*, 1919 p.27.

⁵⁶³ *ACFA*, 1919 p.27.

Student numbers and future patronage were addressed in one fell swoop, but the intimacy of such a small school seems to have produced a much less mercurial institution than the one that Stone joked about, and the esteem in which Stone held his student cohort is clear in the way he described them; men who had all ‘distinguished themselves in the trenches and it is their due that some mark of their passage be made. Probably no other body of men more worthy of our Livre d’Or will ever again frequent the School. So long! Boys! We shall not forget!’⁵⁶⁴

Getting a sense of the curriculum of the School of Forestry is not straightforward, yet in the third issue the reports it carried offer some information about the application of the education that the School provided, as well as the international interests of the readers. The first report, ‘The Forest of the Tronçais’ by H. Jackson, described an oak and beech forest whose timber had traditionally been used for making barrels, naval timber, and construction. The geology of the landscape is noted, along with an assessment of the different working plans, dating from 1670 and 1869.⁵⁶⁵ Here, the rotations of felling and planting were analysed, with the author describing the suggestion that certain areas have their rotation extended in order to increase the value of the timber. This report was probably in keeping with many of the reports that Baker created during his career as a silviculturalist for various landowners: an external assessor coming in and working out the rate of growth and potential market value of various trees and timbers.

The ravaged landscape of the Western Front was described in a second report by the same author, with Jackson detailing the ‘Reconstitution of forests in the Department of the Ainse, near Laon, which have been demolished during the war.’⁵⁶⁶ Here, the forest was categorised into the area on or near the battlefields, and the area behind the German front line, and Jackson describes the different approaches to management in the two areas, as undertaken by the French Forestry Department. The practicalities of clearing up after such a devastating conflict were thoroughly thrifty and economical, with the damaged forest standing as a silent witness to the conflict:

In these forests, the principal cause of destruction has been shell fire, and the demolition of the growing stock has been more or less complete. Over the greater part of the area every

⁵⁶⁴ *ACFA*, 1919 p.28.

⁵⁶⁵ *ACFA*, 1919, p.32.

⁵⁶⁶ *ACFA*, 1919, p.37.

big tree has been broken by projectiles, and killed (by effects of the concussion, or by gas?), and even the underwood has all been cut and broken by bullets, etc.⁵⁶⁷

The first task was to remove shells, projectiles, barbed wire, and other ‘military debris’. The next was to infill all the trenches, shelters, and excavations – having removed all of the useful timber. All damaged trees were cut down to stumps and all of the underwood was cut back to promote new growth. The last job was to collect and sell any timber and brushwood procured by the endeavour. These were the woodlands caught in the crossfire, different to the areas of forest behind German lines. There is a sense of scorn in the analysis of the German treatment of the forest, and although the shortening of the stumps was listed as a job, the exertions in this area of the forest appear much less onerous than in the former battlefield. The energetic approach to restoring the forest was lauded in the close of the report:

Still more must we admire the practical resourcefulness of the French, who tackled their most difficult task without loss of time. They did not discuss for months where they should begin, nor what system should be followed. At once they set about clearing away the ruins of the former forest, cleaned the ground and made nurseries. Within a few weeks the seed was in the ground, and now already the work of restoration is well advanced, the soil is already entering into full production, and before long the new crops will hide all signs of the terrible destruction brought by the Great War.⁵⁶⁸

BAKER’S STUDIES AT CAMBRIDGE

Baker proclaimed how fortunate he was to be under the tutorage of men like William Dawson at the Cambridge School of Forestry, described as ‘an able silviculturalist, with a wide experience both in Great Britain and on the continent of Europe’, and Professor Steward, who was Baker’s ‘botany professor, a popular lecturer and most able instructor.’⁵⁶⁹ However, it was Herbert Stone who made the greatest impression on Baker. Stone, the author of *Timbers of Commerce* (1905), had

⁵⁶⁷ *ACFA*, 1919, p.37.

⁵⁶⁸ *ACFA*, 1919 p.43-44.

⁵⁶⁹ Baker, (1944), p.38.

‘brought with him a superb collection of more than 4,000 specimens of wood, carefully catalogued and described, and this he had generously presented to the University.’ From Stone, Baker learnt what he felt to be the most concise definition of a tree and which he was to use throughout his career: ‘a long-lived woody plant of upright habit having a capacity of infinite growth.’⁵⁷⁰ Baker felt that Stone ‘approached a subject from the point of view of a fellow student and always conveyed the impression that [they] were engaged on research together.’ This attitude was something that Baker carried forward in his attitude towards teaching, and the instruction of foresters, describing his ‘profound knowledge and practical experience in handling wood [as] a constant inspiration’ and which Baker carried forward in his own attitude towards teaching.⁵⁷¹

Stone’s career prior to teaching at the University of Cambridge took place mostly at the Forestry School in Nancy, France. The French Forestry School was an important place in the international education of foresters. The school was established in 1824, and produced forest engineers, as opposed to foresters. It corresponded with the training of army engineers in France under George Washington, which resulted in the creation of the United States Army Corps of Engineers. Gifford Pinchot (1865-1946) studied at Nancy as well as spending a tour of service with the Indian Forestry Service before returning to the United States where he developed a career in forestry and politics. This furthering the idea that America’s forests should be managed on a planned and sustainable model, and led to the establishment the Society of American Foresters.

Baker’s writings also reinforce the culture of international cooperation that existed amongst the European foresters before and after the war. Baker referenced the French Forestry School, Nancy, although it is not clear exactly when Baker travelled there. Such a visit may have occurred during his war service, and he described having been ‘impressed by the high standard of training given there.’⁵⁷² This was something that would supplement his diploma, alongside the

⁵⁷⁰ Baker, (1944), p.38.

⁵⁷¹ Baker, (1944), p.38.

⁵⁷² Baker, (1970), p.34.

study of working plans in Germany. In Baker's view, 'there was little point in taking up a profession unless one had the capacity and determination to reach the top of the tree.'

Pinchot was to become a key contact for Baker. When Baker travelled to the States in 1930, Pinchot suggested that Baker made a tour to stay with different members of the Forestry Service across the country. It was during this tour that he developed the forestry plan that he claimed to have put before F.D. Roosevelt when he was Governor of New York. The boast has proved impossible to substantiate, but Baker held that it 'eventually gave employment through the Civilian Conservation Corps to six million men in the dark days of the 'thirties.'⁵⁷³ What is clear is that Pinchot represents the internationally mobile forester, able to plan forestry on a continental scale; an example into which Baker would mould himself.

The curriculum for the Diploma in Forestry was challenging, and Baker noted the breadth of subjects, of which 'knitting and the care of teething infants' were the only subjects they weren't tested on. He had thought that 'forestry was something that you do in a forest', rather than achieving honours in a Science Tripos, and then after that 'become proficient in the Principles of Forestry, Principles of Silviculture, Forest Botany, Forest Management, Forest Utilization, Forest Protection, Forest Entomology.'⁵⁷⁴ One difference between the two accounts is that in *I Planted Trees* the last item on the curriculum was that students must demonstrate 'the required conditions as to proficiency in practical forestry', whereas in *My Life, My Trees*, written decades later, he added Ecology to the list. Baker uses the same phrase in both accounts; that the academics took him by the hand and led him through the technical labyrinth to the moss and acorns beyond.⁵⁷⁵

Baker took on other roles and responsibilities during and after his studies at Cambridge, with appointments to the Horse Guards Headquarters Lecturing Staff for the Army School of Education and membership of The Raleigh. In his role as lecturer, he went to camps where soldiers awaited their demobilisation, with uncertain employment prospects upon their return home. Baker was an advocate for a career in forestry, often to huge numbers of men; a

⁵⁷³ Baker, (2010), p.47.

⁵⁷⁴ Baker, (1970), p.30.

⁵⁷⁵ Baker, (1944), p.39.

challenge that seems to have left him singularly unfazed in the delivery, although reflective on the hollow nature of the Government's promises of jobs in afforesting land:

On one occasion, when I arrived at a great military depot where I had been billed to lecture on "Re-afforestation in Great Britain and how to obtain Posts," over a thousand of the troops turned up to hear me, although attendance was voluntary. I told them of the difficulties of the life, and of the arduous training necessary. I stressed that forestry was not a get-rich-quick specific, but provided absorbing work in healthy surroundings with at least the prospect of a fair living. I was disappointed that, in spite of the Government's promises, so few real openings were provided for forest settlers.⁵⁷⁶

As well as a career in Forestry, Baker also lectured on beekeeping, and dusted off the slides from the talks that he gave in the East End. He presented The Raleigh with a paper on the mushrooming of Saskatoon in Canada, describing the growth of his former Prairie home from one of eleven thousand people in 1910, to forty-seven thousand when he left in 1913.⁵⁷⁷ This message - championing tree planting and the good life of a forester - was to become one of the central pillars of his social and environmental advocacy. Nevertheless, much of this was incidental in comparison to the major event of 1919: the invention of the modern caravan.

CARAVAN VISION

My Life, My Trees features a whole chapter on the episode. Indeed, there was enough material for him to relate the story in a privately printed book, *Caravan Story and Country Notebook* (1969).

Baker set the scene in different ways; in *I Planted Trees*, he 'had a vision of a home on wheels in a silvan setting.'⁵⁷⁸ In *My Life, My Trees* he awoke 'one foggy November morning' having dreamt that he 'saw an aeroplane evolving into a house on wheels.' This house could make use of the great 'dumps' of aircraft material resulting from the war and provide homes for both holiday-makers and the 'many who were coming out of the forces frustrated in their search for

⁵⁷⁶ Baker, (1944), p.40.

⁵⁷⁷ Baker, (1970), p.37.

⁵⁷⁸ Baker, (1944), p.39.

houses.⁵⁷⁹ Baker had it that serendipitously, on that very day, the newspaper provided the opportunity to make his dream a reality:

When I sat down to breakfast, there on the front page of *The Times* was an advertisement from the Government Disposals Board inviting tenders for surplus war aircraft materials at Waddon near Croydon ... By the time I arrived in London I had a rough idea of the types of material, plywood, wings, fuselages and undercarriages I could use in building my house on wheels.⁵⁸⁰

Waddon was indeed national news, with *The Times* reporting in January 1919 that the aircraft factory there had been subject to a shop stewards' scheme to take it over. The Ministry of Munitions rejected the application, as it was obliged to 'retain certain factories for the salvage of obsolete aeroplanes.'⁵⁸¹ Employment was clearly not an issue just on Baker's mind, with the factory's suitability for the reclamation work resulting from the fact that the type of aircraft that had been manufactured there was no longer in production, resulting in a workforce in need of jobs. Sustaining these roles - especially those held by 'unskilled labour and discharged and disabled soldiers' - was paramount. A few months later, in May 1919, *The Times* published a report by their Special Correspondent, alerting readers to 'scrapped' aircraft and the work undertaken at Waddon. The article immediately focussing on the huge material waste that the war had produced:

A three or four hours' inspection of the sheds of the aircraft salvage depôt at Waddon gives some key to the extent of the wastage of preparations for war. It needs an aircraft salvage depôt to convey an adequate idea of what were our arrangements for bombing the enemy. Forty truckloads of the results of such arrangements, diverted by the armistice from their original purpose, have been brought daily to Waddon by train, and more come by road. Aeroplanes are landed direct from France on the aerodrome there. The stock that awaits disposal includes 1,000 planes and well over 6,000 engines.⁵⁸²

⁵⁷⁹ Baker, (1970), p.31.

⁵⁸⁰ Baker, (1970), p.31.

⁵⁸¹ 'News in Brief, *The Times*, 18 January 1919, p.10.

⁵⁸² "'Scrapped' Aircraft: Diversion to Peace Uses', *The Times*, 26 May 1919, p.17.

In Baker's account, the report is serendipitous, but in reality, the article made a very real request that the public and industry think creatively about the material that was being stored at Waddon. The enterprise was enormous, employing over a thousand men and women, of whom a third were discharged soldiers and sailors whose work consisted 'of sifting, ordering, storing, and putting things into a manageable and saleable form.' The development of suitable timber for aeroplanes had been a wartime imperative, with both sides rapidly developing their air force in response to the newly static conflict in the trenches. There had been a drive during the war to maintain 'the present and possible future supply of timber for aeroplane construction' of which Poplar, Scots pine, and Wych elm were the most desired species. It had been seen as 'the patriotic duty as well as to the interest of landowners and timber merchants to select and send for trial without delay samples of any specially fine wood of these species, which they may supply even in very small quantities.'⁵⁸³

Aircraft which had flown through the sky only months before sat boxed up, and it was possible to walk 'through long avenues of machines – of wings, of propellers, and of engines.'⁵⁸⁴ Much of the article focussed on the constructed aircraft, as well as the engines and other mechanical and mineral parts, but there was also a wealth of auxiliary material, including fabric, that could be used to make paper or bank notes. One of the Waddon staff had transformed an aeroplane float into a punt, but the challenge was laid down for more ambitious ideas:

Thinking out a new employment for something in wood or metal manufactured expressly for a single purpose has the fascination of difficulty and mental adventure. Most of the suggestions made are in an athletic or sporting direction; while other are more fantastic than practicable. Though salvage presents plenty of opportunity, the inventive faculty is daunted now and then. There are parts of an aeroplane – multiplied by hundreds at this depôt – which, as it seems, cannot possibly be of value to anybody or anything but the original inanimate owner.⁵⁸⁵

⁵⁸³ H.G. Elwes, 'British Timbers for Aeroplane Construction' *Royal Forestry Society Journal*, p.63.

⁵⁸⁴ *The Times*, May 1919.

⁵⁸⁵ *The Times*, May 1919.

The report ended with the suggestion that ‘any man of an economical turn of mind must leave it with a quickened sense of the mass of human endeavour which either war lays on the scrap-heap or peace demobilizes more or less skilfully.’⁵⁸⁶ However, the Government Disposals board was not in the business of selling on small quantities of parts, and so when Baker asked for two airplane undercarriages, he was confronted with the reality that the smallest lot was thirty-six. Baker procured 12 x 4 foot sheets of plywood, ash for the frame, holland cloth for the roof, awnings, extra camping equipment, ‘and a stack of new propellers, struts of sitka spruce from the North West Pacific, and a dozen or so ailerons.’⁵⁸⁷ These parts arrived ten days later at Cambridge Railway Station as ten truckloads, which necessitated Baker quickly finding somewhere to store them, and then somewhere to start to make his design a reality. He described his invention with pride:

It had a pullman roof with three pivoting ventilators on each side. It had a low, wide window at the back to allow a through-view for the driver of the towing car. This together with the side windows. Let down into the walls of the caravan like those in a railway carriage. The front door was a double stable-door with upper windows opening out; the lower part of the door was solid, with a spring-slot for letters – similar to those used in the front door of houses.⁵⁸⁸

The enterprise took off, and Baker established the Navarac Caravan Company to market and sell the caravans. However, other companies quickly took up the idea and the heavy Navarac design was replaced with smaller and lighter models that only needed two wheels. Baker was philosophical about the evolution of his business, ‘after all, [he] was a forester by profession, not an architect or caravan designer. It was great fun though, and it gave much needed employment to aircraftsmen who were finding it difficult to get work.’⁵⁸⁹

⁵⁸⁶ *The Times*, May 1919.

⁵⁸⁷ Baker, (1970), p.33.

⁵⁸⁸ Baker, (1970), p.33.

⁵⁸⁹ Baker, (1970), p.34.

THE GRADUATION OF THE MEN OF THE TREES

The enterprise provided sufficient funds for Baker to pay his way through University, and his can-do attitude seems to have stood him in good stead. He was to claim that, ‘in spite of [his] side interests’ he was able to ‘pass out at the head of [his] class and was put in charge of the training of thirty-five ex-officers on the practical side during the vacations.’⁵⁹⁰ Yet again, Baker set himself apart from his cohort of fellow students, but examining Baker’s place at the School of Forestry from the institution’s perspective suggests that he was not quite the trailblazer that he made himself out to be. Proactivity in France was not matched by constructive employment at home, with the fourth issue of the journal offering a stern reproach to the political forces that had promoted the idea of forestry as the panacea for all of Britain’s ills:

With the exception of Indian and Colonial Conservators, we have heard of no appointments either by the Forestry Commission or by private owners of estates. It is certain that far too many disabled officers were encouraged to take up Forestry, and that there is now a large number of qualified men at liberty which cannot hope to be absorbed for several years. The responsibility for the flooding of the market with trained Foresters is divided amongst several Ministries, and it is difficult to fix the blame on one more than on another; still, the necessity of turning to some other occupation, after having wasted two years, naturally causes those whose wounds prevent them considering posts in the tropics, to feel that they have been betrayed.⁵⁹¹

Tensions within the forestry industry appear to have been prevalent, with Stone describing the School’s presence at the Empire Timber Exhibition, where it ‘nominally’ represented Trinidad. The School of Forestry is presented very much as a scholarly and empire-focussed enterprise, with a knowledge of historic timber production in the British Isles. Networking seems to have been an imperative, with the connections made with Colonial Conservators (the position that Baker was later to take up), as well as with members of the timber trade, with the ‘lessening of distrust’ in the scientific study of wood held up as one good result of the conference. Forestry

⁵⁹⁰ Baker, (1944), p.40.

⁵⁹¹ The Archives of the Cambridge Forestry Association, 1919 p.50.

was also seen as a branch of the Natural Sciences, with a call made to the wider Cambridge community to participate in the study of Forestry:

For the benefit of our new friends we repeat our invitation to all interested in any branch of Natural Sciences to attend our weekly meetings. Forestry embraces all the outdoor branches of Natural History. Students of the Schools of Agriculture, Botany and Zoology will be welcome. Membership of our Association may be acquired by performing some voluntary service for the School of Forestry – there is no subscription.⁵⁹²

The fourth issue of the *Archives* was made up of only twelve pages. After Stone's report, the students 'Gone Down' are listed, with Richard Edward St. Barbe Baker at the top of an alphabetical list. As with all of the men and women, there was a short biography: 'Caius College. Diploma in Forestry, June 1920. Dean Close School. Cheltenham, and University of Saskatchewan. *Services during the war* -five years. King Edward's Horse. R.F.A. Ist Div., France. R.H. and F.A. Records' Office, Woolwich. Remount Service, Swaythling and France. Richborough. Givinchy, May 9th, 1915. La Bassée, May 17th, 1915. Sinn Fein Rebellion, Ireland, 1916. Hon. Lieut. *Went down*, June 1920. Asst. Conservator, E. Africa.⁵⁹³ Baker was one of twenty men in that group, most of whom had served in the war (with the exceptions of two men whose biography contains the note 'other details lacking').

That Baker studied within an exclusively older, male, ex-service cohort is maybe no surprise, especially considering that many officers had been sold the diploma as a means to secure new employment opportunities. Previous qualifications varied; there was a teacher; a student of modern languages; a man who had worked as a logger and miner; and someone who had farmed fruit in California and surveyed and logged lumber in British Columbia. The Diploma in Forestry seems not to have required stringent academic qualifications, and most of the men were in their mid-to-late twenties by the time they enrolled.

The rehabilitation of returning servicemen was central to activities at the university and within the city more broadly. The lack of permanent housing was visible, and the treatment of those

⁵⁹² The Archives of the Cambridge Forestry Association, 1919 p.54,

⁵⁹³ The Archives of the Cambridge Forestry Association, 1919, p54-55.

injured was taking place in the centre of Cambridge in a large field hospital. Inventing the modern caravan and starting a beekeeping society was consistent with the wider efforts to accommodate, educate and rehabilitate the men returning from war; the cohort Baker felt an affinity for.⁵⁹⁴ His activities can be seen to distinguish him from his peers, but that is only a position retrospectively granted and not one that is communicated by the records of the time. That is not to devalue his contribution, but merely to place Baker's activities more firmly in context. Seeing a pattern when looking back is no surprise, and it is easy to imagine conversations in the School of Forestry in which the staff and students, upon reading in the press about the potential wastage of aeroplane parts, discussed the inefficiencies of the manufacturing and use of wood. That one of the students saw an opportunity to turn the surplus timber into a home for himself and his fellow students was highly logical, given the circumstances.

Baker's page from the Matriculation book of 1910-1919 demonstrates the short nature of his studies in Cambridge. It records, 'The undersigned Richard Edward St. Barbe Baker was admitted a pensioner of Gonville and Caius College, on the 29th day of January 1919' he was described as the 'Son of John Richard St. Barbe Baker, Nurseryman & Timber Valuer', educated 'at Dean Close, Cheltenham, under Dr. W. R. Flecker, & at the University of Saskatchewan, Canada.' There are two qualifications listed (notably not a degree in Theology): 'Qualifying Exam for the Diploma in Forestry, June 1919, Diploma in Forestry Pts. I & II June 1920.'⁵⁹⁵

Colonial forestry was the main route into the profession. Baker, along with Norman Vincent Brasnett and Patrick Bonfield, joined the East African division. Henry Fox became a Lecturer in Forestry (having already gained a teaching certificate before the War). Sydney Curtis, Charles Trigg, and Charles Williams all joined the Indian Forestry Service. Edmund Goodwin became a Probationer with the South African Forestry Services and Alexander Watt became a Lecturer in Forest Botany at Aberdeen University. One man, Robin Barratt, had 'Gone into business!', which in a small way demonstrates the heavy weighting towards forestry work, rather than a role

⁵⁹⁴ Jeffrey S. Reznick, *Healing the Nation: Soldiers and the Culture of Caregiving in Britain during the Great War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005).

⁵⁹⁵ Cambridge, The University of Cambridge (UC), fonds TUT/01/07

in the forestry industry as a form of commerce. That left eleven graduates without a permanent position, of which nine had asterisks next to their names to indicate that they were ‘at liberty and desire[d] a post’, which, curiously, included Baker.⁵⁹⁶

This inconsistency is in line with the situation in which Baker found himself. He had initially been found unfit for overseas service, but was determined to try and learn all that he could from the ‘forestry schools and trained foresters of other countries’, and so started to plan a tour in his caravan after completing his studies at Cambridge.⁵⁹⁷ Baker left Cambridge in one of his caravans, heading for London, where he parked up outside his club. From there he travelled south to the coast with the intention of getting a boat to France and beginning his adventure. However, during that journey, the officials in charge of his appointment changed their mind and he was appointed Assistant Conservator of Forests to the newly formed British East Africa Colony. Furthermore, it was in this role that the chapter of his life in which he could truly claim to be a Man of the Trees began in earnest.

⁵⁹⁶ The Archives of the Cambridge Forestry Association, 1919, p.55-57.

⁵⁹⁷ Baker, (1970), p.35.

11. Discussion and Conclusion

This study ends with Baker's departure for Africa a century ago. Baker had thought that his hopes for a career had been dashed and intended to travel Europe and gain insight into forestry practice on his own. He had survived the war, dealt with physical and mental damage, participated in the reconstruction of post-war society, and succeeded in gaining a diploma in forestry in what would have been intense and demanding conditions given the condensed nature of the course. The following years would see him initiate the Dance of the Trees in 1922, create the Watu Wa Miti with the help of Chief Joshua Njonjo, and form the first chapter of the Men of the Trees in Britain in 1924. It was in the 1920s that Baker consolidated his professional identity, eventually leaving his role in the colonial office for the life of an independent advocate for trees and shaping his persona as a forester and silviculturalist of international note. His professional elevation gave him the material and resources to start to write, and the first books that he published about his time in Africa were rooted in his practical experience in the East and West of the Continent, with *The Men of the Trees: in the Mahogany forests of Kenya and Nigeria* (1931) with its introduction by the American broadcaster Lowell Thomas. Thomas conveyed the evangelism of the 40-year-old Baker:

In his person and in his turn of mind Captain Baker reminds me of dozens of similar British officers whom I have met in many parts of the world, a soldier devoted to some scholarly and scientific idealism. He is in all respects the blue eyed-ruddy faced, red mustached, British soldier type. The Britisher most often displays a characteristic reserve in all matters, including his pet enthusiasm. Captain Baker though, cannot hold himself to the often somewhat wooden British restraint, where the subject of trees is concerned. In his love for forestry he wears his heart on his sleeve. His manner becomes animated. His eyes widen. He speaks with a rushing enthusiasm - the wonder of the trees – the necessity of forest conservation and reforestation – how fair fields will turn into desert if they keep destroying the trees – how arid wastes will bloom with the freeness of life and the colors of the flowers, if they will reforest. You feel the passion and the earnestness of the man who

has given his life to a great devotion. You sense the singular turn of poetry and exultation in the man who is in love with trees.⁵⁹⁸

There is much to unpack in this portrait of Baker, not least the admiration felt by the man who had made T.E. Lawrence a house name as Lawrence of Arabia; this uncharacteristically evangelical Englishman, meeting all the usual criteria of a British colonial officer, whose evangelism for trees revealed an expressive and passionate nature. However, to delve deeper into the publication in question, *Men of the Trees*, is to confront a two-dimensional narrative of the pseudo-environmental history that was a common thread in colonial thinking about the arid lands around the Sahara: that it was caused almost exclusively by nomadic Muslim tribes and their goats, unsustainable forest clearing and farming. These myths in themselves are important areas of study, as Diana K. Davis has demonstrated in *Resurrecting the Granary of Rome: Environmental History and French Colonial Expansion in North Africa* (2007) in which she deconstructs the narrative that was created and perpetuated by French colonial officials, scientists, military and settlers. Under the guise of conservation, the myth of anthropogenic desertification became a tool for the expropriation of land, forests, and natural resources during the period. Within just the first pages of *The Men of the Trees* Baker's personality and strength of conviction shine through, his experience the vehicle for sharing this interpretation of desiccation theory with the wider public.

Baker's contribution to these myths and stories will have to be the subject of future research, but in the context of a study of his early autobiographical writing, one distinction is clear about the way in which he wrote about his colonial exploits: although much is relayed as a first-person narrative, there is no backstory beyond his appointment to East Africa as Assistant Conservator of Forests. It took another decade before Baker's origin story really took centre stage with the publication of *I Planted Trees* in 1944, twenty years after the formation of the Men of the Trees in Britain, eight years after the journal *Trees* had come into being, six years after the first summer school, and at the end of another global conflict. One wonders, as it was within the same period

⁵⁹⁸ Lowell Thomas, in *The Men of the Trees: in the Mahogany forests of Kenya and Nigeria* (New York: Dial Press, 1931) p.xiv.

as Faber and Faber published a suite of texts from the luminaries of the organic farming movement, whether this was Baker's way of capitalising on the domestic interest. During the war Rolf Gardiner published *England Herself: Ventures in Rural Restoration (1943)*, Lady Eve Balfour *The Living Soil (1943)*, and the Earl of Portsmouth (the self-styled Viscount Lymington) *Alternative to Death: the Relationship between Soil, Family and Community (1943)*.

And it was the Earl of Portsmouth who wrote the foreword to *I Planted Trees*, presenting Baker as an example of 'singleness and continuity of purpose' in the bedevilled and bewildered world, with a 'catholicity of enthusiasm and perennial zest for life.' In this, Baker is held up as a forester, a discipline that itself he considered to be the 'elder brother' of his own pursuit of farming.⁵⁹⁹ Baker begins *I Planted Trees* with the questions that he felt he was most often asked: Why do you love trees? How did you first become interested in tree planting and forestry? His answer, that the love of trees was in his blood, part of his inheritance.⁶⁰⁰

This statement and answer formalised and fixed his persona and origin story as the Man of the Trees, something he had been honing for over twenty years and which was informed by his diverse experiences leading up to his training as a forester. However, as this study has demonstrated, there was much that was unrelated to trees and forestry in Baker's biography, and much that has been ignored which in fact influenced the form and feel of the evangelist for trees that he became. Drawing more deeply than he had in *Men of the Trees*, Baker called upon his rich life's experience to write an appealing and fictionalised narrative which immortalised his adventures and experiences, yet often at the loss of nuance or historical accuracy. To return to John Vallins' observation of the remarkable achievements that this ex-soldier with a degree in Divinity, it is worth noting that Baker was never awarded a degree, and that his diploma was the only concrete academic qualification that he gained in his life before being awarded an honorary doctorate. Indeed, his persona as the Man of the Trees had been crafted to paper over some of the more complicated backstory and give him an elevated status as the founder of an international society. Yet this persona has resulted in a problematic legacy: autobiographies that

⁵⁹⁹ Earl of Portsmouth in Baker, (1944) p.7.

⁶⁰⁰ Baker, (1944) p.9.

are used as primary source material, that are easily caricatured, that are adventurous yet of their time, and which miss much of the nuance that a broader engagement with his life and work could provide.

This study has sought to redress this simplified persona and has attempted detail rather than caricature. The hope is that it demonstrates the value of looking more deeply and critically at Baker's autobiographical texts, celebrating the wealth of previously unstudied source material and to demonstrating Baker's unusual intersections with significant chapters and figures of history. By shifting the focus beyond Baker, it has attempted to set out more clearly the interconnected web of reform, reconstruction and revelation which occurred within the network that he participated within. And, by doing so, figures who themselves are now rarely even footnotes in history are more clearly situated within Baker's early life. This is true for his family, for his teachers, and for his friends. Yet, despite the attempted rigour, there are voids in Baker's narrative, and much that would have added real insight is unavailable, especially diaries and correspondence in a more meaningful volume. But such source materials are not forthcoming, and Charlotte Baker's bonfire as well as the bomb blast that put paid to many of Baker's personal papers just leaves a tantalising possibility of the more personal and intimate words that could have informed this study.

Furthermore, the breadth of Baker's experience makes this a difficult study to pigeonhole, tied as it is to the history of Evangelism, colonialism, the advent of theosophy, the First World War, post-war reconstruction, and the domestic and colonial practice of forestry. Yet despite the disparate nature of Baker's biography and the histories that it sits alongside and within, a clearer contribution emerges; that to increase and enrich environmental history, one task is to engage confidently with complex life stories and to understand their contribution to the evolution of the discipline itself. The historians of forests who preceded the arrival of environmental history as a discipline themselves were the products of their time, and yet there are rarely opportunities to look at the messenger as well as the message that is enlightened in the early texts on the world's forests which were invariably seen from a particular mindset created by nationality, class, and education. Baker's life story allows us to see a more deftly sketched picture of who these public servants really were, even more so as the necessity to deconstruct and recast his narrative allows for the inclusion of otherwise forgotten men and women: his lecturers at the Cambridge School of Forestry and his fellow students being notable new additions.

Creating biographies within a biography has defined much of this research. Some elements have a more immediate influence upon the understating of Baker's biography, such as that of Exton Lloyd, whereas the deviation to explore more fully the relationship between figures like Charles Booth and William Booth, as well as Percy Alden and Christopher Addison, have added greater complexity and rigour to the account of Baker's time in London. These shifts in focus were made essential as there is much that is assumed to be common knowledge about the context within which Baker sketched in his autobiographies, yet whose meaning has been lost in time, or was superficially accounted for in the first place.

RECONSTRUCTING THE MAN OF THE TREES

When held up against the luminaries of environmental and ecological thought, distinctions are easily and quickly made between Baker and his contemporaries. Many of them had a much more firm educational and professional basis for their authority as scientists, and although no life is without its incidents, their trajectory was often more self-explanatory: excelling at school and university, carving a niche in their career and producing world-renowned books to share their message. Baker could draw much less authority from his education than many of his contemporaries, yet the fact that he had experienced so much from an early age in terms of the breadth of international experiences, spiritual enquiry, and practical experience and understanding of tree care and forestry gave him a unique story, and when Baker started to publish his exploits in the late 1920s, that is when the narrative began to firm up. This is when the message and messenger become intertwined, but that is not unusual for figures in the ecological pantheon.

Aldo Leopold's empathetic but understated land ethic message used his own active research and practice as its basis, and consequently is tied up his biography as messenger. Rachel Carson's contribution to environmental thought is often obscured by interest in her personal life and sexuality, something that could either be interpreted as a distraction or recognition of the real human complexity which informs the passion and integrity of the message. Albert Howard wrote about his work with some mention of his upbringing and personal life which was followed by a posthumous biography by his second wife. The message was communicated in his books on the Indore method, yet it was still important for those close to him to elevate his lived

experience as the messenger. This presents important questions, especially when figures like Leopold, Carson, Howard, and Baker are included or excluded in the broad history of environmentalism and ecological thought, namely, are we more interested in the message or the messenger? Is it important to recognise the distinction between the two, and the use of the process of biography or autobiography in reengaging the wider public with the contributions made by the key evangelists of the ecological and environmental age and their elevation through either critical biography or hagiography into that hall of fame.

The science of ecology has offered enlightenment, and the figure of an ecologist – someone furthering, enriching and communicating their understanding of ecology - is one that merits exploration. Much as Lynn White Jr. extolled Francis of Assisi as the patron saint of ecologists, the persona of the ecologist can be found in the form of Edward Goldsmith (1928-2009), founder of *The Ecologist* and the Green Party, as well as co-author of *A Blueprint for Survival* (1972). Goldsmith, himself a student of Philosophy, Politics and Economics at Oxford University, sought an integrated understanding of the world, and devoted much of his life to developing a holistic expression of the interconnectedness of humankind and the environment.

He was described by Catriona, Baker's second wife, as an associate and friend of her husband, as well as being a deep ecologist and systems theorist and one of the early proponents of the Gaia hypothesis.⁶⁰¹ This philosophy was encapsulated in his 1996 book, *The Way: An Ecological World-View*, in which he set out his case for ecology as a unified organisation of knowledge based on three points: that it is teleological in that it demands moral obligation, that it is emotional, and that it is a faith. Goldsmith saw the expression of faith in science as a substitution for religious faith, yet believed that ecology as spiritual revelation could replace it:

It is a faith in the wisdom of those forces that created the natural world and the cosmos of which it is a part; it is a faith in the latter's ability to provide us with extraordinary benefits

⁶⁰¹ Catriona Baker, *The Man of the Trees and Other Environmental Guardians* (Timaru, NZ: Evagreen Books, 2014) p. 248.

– those required to satisfy our most fundamental needs. It is a faith in our capacity to develop cultural pattern that can enable us to maintain its integrity and stability.⁶⁰²

Edward Goldsmith blurs the theoretical and the personal in the context of this study. *The Way* sets out an ecological worldview, and although he makes no mention of Baker in any of the text, he is the most heavily represented in the quotations that introduce each chapter. Only James Lovelock, Peter Medawar, Eugene Odum, and W.H. Woodger are quoted from repeatedly; but the insight that Goldsmith found in Baker's writing demonstrate the range and adaptability of his proclamations. Goldsmith's choices in *The Way* demonstrates Baker's writing at its most powerful. A chapter on Gaia is prefaced with the line 'You can gauge a country's wealth, its real wealth, on its tree cover.'⁶⁰³ Another, on the necessity for a world-view of ecology, took a longer passage: 'This generation may either be the last to exist in any semblance of a civilized world or it will be the first to have the vision, the bearing and the greatness to say 'I will have nothing to do with this destruction of life, I will play no part in this devastation of the land, I am determined to live and work for peaceful construction for I am morally responsible for the world of today and the generations of tomorrow.'⁶⁰⁴ In choosing these bon mots, Goldsmith does what anyone would do to corroborate their argument, picking out the most expressive and concise words and leaving much of the rest. In this, Goldsmith falls into one of two distinct camps: those of Baker's followers who sought to select and elevate his key concepts and messages, and those who see his life story as holding the message.

Indeed, Goldsmith was to describe Baker as being akin to an Old Testament prophet, 'a wise man, a teacher and an inspirer' when delivering his eulogy at his London memorial service in 1982 which was later published in *The Ecologist*.⁶⁰⁵ Baker is held up in the address as being prescient in his warnings of the consequences of rampant deforestation, and if one is to look at the covers of *The Ecologist* in the early 1980s you can see the issues that Baker had championed for decades being taken up anew. What shines through when Goldsmith quotes from Baker is

⁶⁰² Edward Goldsmith, *The Way: An Ecological World-View* (Dartington: Themis Books, 1996), p.99.

⁶⁰³ Baker, quoted in Goldsmith, p.206.

⁶⁰⁴ Baker, quoted in Goldsmith, p.438.

⁶⁰⁵ Edward Goldsmith, 'A Celebration of the life and work of Richard St. Barbe Baker O.B.E., LL.D. (Sask), F.A.I.L., For. Dip. Cantab, 1889-1982' 14 July 1982 in *The Ecologist* Vol. 12 No. 4, July–August 1982.

the expression of hope and redemption that Baker was able to imbue into his words. Though he admitted, and was recognised as not being a professional writer, the immediacy of his evangelical childhood shines through in the passage ‘Man has lost his way in the jungle of chemistry and engineering and will have to retrace his steps, however painful this may be. He will have to discover where he went wrong and make his peace with nature. In so doing, perhaps he may be able to recapture the rhythm of life and the love of the simple things of life, which will be an ever-unfolding joy to him.’

This vision of peace and reconciliation is not completely at odds with the visions of hellfire and damnation which papered Baker’s childhood bedroom. Indeed, Baker’s writing does contain the dire warnings of death and destruction which could befall humankind if they were not to follow the path he set out, but he was also able to envision a more hopeful future, one in which harmony with nature is found. Baker was uniquely placed, along with having a distinct spiritual and moral philosophy, to coalesce the zeitgeist of the time: the reconstructive potential of forestry as an economic and social force for good and the revelation that comes with an understanding of ecology. His background allowed him to apply the liturgy of his childhood, and to create a form of literary ecologicalism which brought together social values and ideas of environmental responsibility in an ecological creed in which redemption is possible in this life and something to gift to future generations. It was utopian, yet practical. Baker saw in trees the potential to solve manifold and disparate problems, and at a time of great crises was able to articulate that vision in such a way as brought others along with him. A doctrine of peace, with stark warnings of the calamity that will come from not following the path. Not so vastly different to the two contrasting landscapes in *The Broad and Narrow Way*, where the path to righteousness is across the meadow and through the forest-clad mountains.

PRACTICAL FAITH AND PRACTICAL HORTICULTURE

Much as Gregory Barton demonstrated the interlinked histories of organic agriculture and colonial forestry, the link between practical silviculture and horticulture is one that adds insight to Baker’s philosophy, not least in the spirit of reconstruction. His autobiographies sought to demonstrate the practical training and insight that he had gained as a child by his father’s side: that he knew how to tend plants and had helped with the practical side of his father’s nursery business; he understood how to care for horses and build relationships with them; and that he

saw the potential of skills like beekeeping as both an economic and therapeutic activity. At school it appears that he did not excel as a scholar but took to woodworking which necessitates an appreciation of timber. Under the Reverend Watts Ditchfield he saw the impact that one person could have upon his community and gained a significant figure to emulate. Whilst in Canada he saw a university being built from the ground up, something which left him ever hopeful of the role of education as part of land restoration. During the war, he was able to find meaning and purpose by training men and horses, and even when he had sustained physical and emotional wounds that meant he was unable to serve, he engaged himself in the efforts of social and environmental reconstruction in Britain, first through his work for Percy Alden, and then through his study of forestry.

The distinction between creation and reconstruction is important. Creation does not depend on something having been broken, whereas reconstruction can only follow the breaking of something. As this study demonstrates, within Baker's autobiography lie clues to a much more complex and conflicted life story, one in which conflict, crises of faith, the erasure of figures and events, and the simplification of narrative occur in amongst epoch-defining conflicts, globalisation, and environmental change and exploitation. Much as this study has come about through the deconstruction of Baker's narrative, there is much to be learnt from the spirit of reconstruction with its transformational possibility in which he participated. This first-hand experience of catastrophe and death was then countered by the constructive efforts of people to understand and protect the natural environment.

Baker was alive with this spirit until the end, and it is in his intertwining of forestry and gardening – silviculture and horticulture - that we can gain the greatest insight. Baker, throughout this study, appears as an outsider. A child brought up in a family of strong religious faith which may have set him apart from his peers, an experience of school in which he never excelled and instead lost himself in practical tasks like woodwork, spending his latter teens on another continent in relative isolation, and years in which he ricocheted between expressions of spiritual and social values and a rejection of the faith he had grown up within. However, although the influence of practical faith is clear upon Baker's message as a forester, something which also deserves attention is the influence of gardening and practical horticulture on his attitudes towards the natural world.

Gregory Barton recognised that it was through their connection to the gardening community that the Howards were most impactful, offering a clear method of application to his methods that could be taken up in private households across the world.⁶⁰⁶ And this idea of individuals and small communities being able to make a tangible difference through the process of gardening is something that Baker's work and writing is suffused with. Indeed, one of his missing manuscripts was titled *My World, My Garden* and although there are obviously Edenic parallels in his utopian vision of a world made green by the tending of trees, water and soil, there is a universality and accessibility of his message which is at odds with the often daunting implications of global deforestation or afforestation, actions occurring on a scale beyond most people's ken. Drawn from his 1950 manifesto, the New Earth Charter, Baker proclaimed:

We believe in the innate intelligence of the villagers, the country men and the workers, that they should be allowed to manage their own affairs. We believe they will put into their work not merely their hands and their feet, but their brains and their hearts. Each can experience the transcendental joy of creation, and can earn immortality and bestow immortality.⁶⁰⁷

This elevation of farming, forestry and gardening to an act which can bring transcendental joy and immortality is central to Baker's message and the appeal that his followers found in it. By no means is it exclusive to Baker, indeed the attitude is replete in garden literature, with Christopher Lloyd's *The Well-Tempered Garden* (1970) and Sue Stuart-Smith's *The Well Gardened Mind* (2020) being two examples where the parallel between mental and physical health (including that of the non-human) is extolled in popular books for a general audience. In this can we see a broad church, which its adherents attend because it reinforces their values and beliefs, and offers up a reframing of the everyday in such a way as they can see hope in the future? And to return to Baker and the theme of biography, what is interesting is who else could be cast, or cast themselves, within this persona of messenger, curate, prophet or visionary?

⁶⁰⁶ Barton, 2018, p.198.

⁶⁰⁷ Baker, quoted in Goldsmith, 1982.

BAKER'S PLACE IN THE NARRATIVE

The spirit of restoration, reconstruction and the use of militaristic language to further conservation causes is as commonplace now as it was one hundred years ago when Baker sought to engage the young people he worked amongst in Africa in the enterprise of planting and protecting trees as part of their agricultural practice. Yet in this century, it is not conflict but a global pandemic which has had people rally around the concept of a Green New Deal, espouse the virtues of creating an army of volunteers to protect and enhance the nature that some have come to see anew as a result of lockdown, or to proclaim the idea that it is through tree planting that some semblance of balance can be found with the natural world in a time of climate crisis. One platform for this was the BBC Radio Four programme, *Rethink*, which invited contributors to explore ideas that might offer a more hopeful future after the global shock caused by the novel coronavirus in radio broadcasts and extended podcasts. HRH Prince Charles was one of the public figures who broadcast a short essay, his on the need for the global community to engage with the practice of regenerative agriculture, in which organic and small-scale farming and tree planting would protect and enrich soil, livelihoods, and communities.

It implies a significant shift from industrial farming towards mosaics of sustainable regenerative production systems based on smallholder organic farming. because more people are needed to do regenerative farming increases employment helping meet the demand for jobs. To empower nature, we need to invest in her, particularly in reforestation. Recent discoveries have *revealed* the central role of forests for the global water cycle and food security. The virtues of restoring tree cover for soil and water conservation are nowhere better illustrated than in a heavily deforested country like Ethiopia.⁶⁰⁸

The wry emphasis on the word 'revealed' hints at Prince Charles' long association with environmental concerns. Indeed, although it is not mentioned in this context, he remains to this day the Patron of the Men of the Trees, a position he has held since meeting Baker in 1978. Prince Charles has described Baker as a 'true pioneer', someone who espoused the practice of

⁶⁰⁸ HRH Prince Charles, 'Rethinking Nature' *Rethink*, BBC release: 26 Jun 2020. <<https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/p08j2frj>> [accessed 3 July 2020].

agroecology and permaculture in his work in Nigeria long before the terms came into being and whose reconciliation of indigenous knowledge and the new sciences of silviculture and ecology gave him an important insight into the unity of life.⁶⁰⁹ The project that Prince Charles holds up as an example of forest landscape restoration is AFR100, a continent-wide programme of dry land restoration. For the most part, the website that sets out the aims and objectives is straightforward enough, as befits an international development initiative. Yet, embedded in every page is a link to a YouTube video advertising the story of ‘The Man who Stopped the Desert.’

The man in question is not Baker, in fact the voiceover is clear to say that it is fact the story of Yacouba Sawadogo, a farmer from Burkina Faso, whose story will ‘explode the myth that one of Africa’s greatest problems can only be solved with help from outside.’⁶¹⁰ The parallel between the Man of the Trees and the Man Who Stopped the Desert is obvious, but taken amongst the wealth of other literary ‘The Man Who’s - The Man who Would be King, the Man who Planted Trees, The Man who Sold the Moon etc. a theme develops.

Much as Baker’s autobiographies manifest a progressive and linear version of his life’s story, the reality of his life’s events is much less easy to rationalise, not least to do justice to the complexity and interconnectedness of his wider personal, practical and theoretical network. This network is international in its reach, and defies compartmentalising, as it exists across time and is manifest in both people and places, science and spirituality, ideas and action. But usefully, stories and biographies often play a role in simplifying and making accessible this complex and often contradictory reality, and the fact that Baker simplified and transposed his own experiences into a children’s book set in Africa goes some way to show how useful to see even his books for children as autobiographies: works of fiction in which the hero and heroines are no longer white; where redress is given those who lost land to colonialists, where trees are planted and land and water is restored, *Kamiti* (1958). In it, Baker found a creative form for a vision of Africa in which ordinary people were empowered to restore harmony to the land through the example of Kamiti

⁶⁰⁹ HRH Prince Charles, Foreword, in Hanley, 2018, p.ix-x.

⁶¹⁰ Afr100 <<https://afr100.org/>> [accessed 4 July 2020].

and his Green Front. A story which holds an uncanny real-life parallel as the daughter of the hero gives is called Wangari, a name shared with Wangari Maathai, founder of Kenya's Green Belt Movement and brief associate of Baker's.

This thesis has not sought to act as apologist for Baker, but to demonstrate instead the necessity of drawing upon new sources to create a sound basis for different interpretations of Baker's life and legacy. It seeks to redress the common errors that other historians find when encountering Baker within colonial forestry, international development and ecological advocacy and to establish a more wide-ranging understanding of the interconnected nature of the Edwardian society that Baker was a part of and the influence he had upon subsequent epochs. Yet the limitations of this study are clear: it does not cover his personal life, it does not confront his paternalistic attitude towards people of colour, it does not touch upon his conversion to the Bahá'í faith and the impact that had upon him. Yet for all the unmet scope, there remains much to research. The centenary of the formation of the Watu Wa Miti is less than two years away, the founding of the Men of the Trees in Britain just under four. There is likely to be a renewed interest in the life and contribution of Richard St. Barbe Baker to our attitudes and understanding of trees and the global environment, and a small hope is that this work will enrich the conversation and that a renewed and critical engagement with his life and work will emerge.

Bibliography

ARCHIVES CONSULTED

The University of Saskatchewan Special Collection and Archives, Canada

Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan, Canada

The National Archives, Kew

The British Library

BOOKS AND ARTICLES

Addison, Christopher. 1934. *Four and a Half Years: A personal Diary from June 1914 to January 1919, Vol I*, (London: Hutchinson & Co. Ltd)

Addison, Christopher. 1934. *Four and a Half Years: A personal Diary from June 1914 to January 1919 Vol II*, (London: Hutchinson & Co. Ltd)

Allen, Camilla. 2018. 'Groves as metaphor for the fragmented redwood forests of California' in *A History of Groves* ed. by Jan Woudstra and Colin Roth, (London: Routledge)

Baden-Powell, R.S.S.. 1908. *Scouting for Boys: a handbook for instruction in good citizenship*, (London: Horace Cox)

Baker, Catriona (ed.) 2014. *The Man of the Trees and Other Dedicated Environmental Guardians*, (Timaru, NZ: Evagreen Books)

Baker, Richard St. Barbe. 1944. *I Planted Trees*, (London: Lutterworth Press)

Baker, Richard St. Barbe. 1954. *Sabara Challenge* (London: Lutterworth Press)

Baker, Richard St. Barbe. 1956. *Dance of the Trees*, (London: Oldbourne Press)

Baker, Richard St. Barbe. 1958. *Kamiti*, (London: George Ronald)

Baker, Richard St. Barbe. 1962. *Horse Sense: Horses in War and Peace*, (London: Stanley Paul)

Baker, Richard St. Barbe. 1970. *My Life, My Trees*, (London: Lutterworth Press)

- Baker, Richard St. Barbe. 2010. *Tall Timber: a great forester revisits the many people who influenced the course of his long life*, (Guilford: The Men of the Trees Inc., Western Australia Branch)
- Barton, Gregory. 2002. *Empire Forestry and the Origins of Environmentalism*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press)
- Barton, Gregory. 2018. *The Global History of Organic Farming* (Oxford: Oxford University Press)
- Barton, Gregory. 2017. 'The Myth of the Peasant in the Global Organic Farming Movement' *Interario*, Vol. 41, No. 2, pp. 75-91
- Barton, Gregory. 2001. 'Sir Albert Howard and the Forestry Roots of the Organic Farming Movement' *Agricultural History*, Spring, Vol. 75, No. 2 (Spring, 2001), pp. 168-187.
- William Beinart and Lotte Hughes, *Environment and Empire*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007),
- Bennett, Brett. 2015. *Plantations and Protected Areas: A Global History of Forest Management* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press)
- Bishop, Mary Anne. 2002. 'Great Possessions: Leopold's Good Oak' in *Aldo Leopold and the Ecological Conscience* ed. by Richard L. Knight and Suzanne Riedel (Oxford: Oxford University Press)
- Booth, Charles. 1902. *Life and Labour of the People of London, Third series: Religious Influences, Volume 6: Outer South London*, (London: Macmillan and Co.)
- Booth, Charles. 1903. *Life and Labour of the People of London, Third series: Religious Influences, Volume 7*, (London: Macmillan and Co.)
- Fried, Albert and Richard M. Elman (eds). 1969. *Charles Booth's London: A Portrait of the Poor at the Turn of the Century, Drawn from his "Life and Labour of the People in London"*, (London: Hutchinson)
- Booth, William. 1890. *In Darkest England and the Way Out*, (London: International Headquarters of the Salvation Army)
- Conford, Philip. 2001. *The Origins of the Organic Movement*, (Edinburgh: Floris)
- Conford, Philip. 2011. *The Development of the Organic Network*, (Edinburgh: Floris)

- Conford, Philip. 2012. 'Review - Tall Timber: A Great Forester Revisits the Many People who Influenced the Course of his Long Life', *Rural History*, Vol.23 (1), pp.115-116, p.116.
- Cronon, William. 1992. 'A Place for Stories: Nature, History, and Narrative', *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 78, No.4, March
- Curtis, Kent. 2010. 'The virtue of Thoreau: biography, geography, and history in Walden Woods' *Environmental History* Vol. 15 pp. 31-53
- Dauncey, Alec. 2019. 'A Century of Forest Policy-makers at the 'bar of history'' *Quarterly Journal of Forestry*, Vol 113 No. 1
- Dunlap, Thomas R.. 2004. *Faith in Nature: Environmentalism as Religious Quest* (Seattle: University of Washington Press)
- Eckersley, Robyn. 1992. *Environmentalism and Political Theory: Toward an Ecocentric Approach* (London: UCL Press)
- Fernow, Bernhard E. 1911. *A Brief History of Forestry in Europe, the United States and Other Countries*, (Toronto: University Press, Toronto)
- Fraser Darling, Frank. 1970. *Wilderness and Plenty: The Reith Lectures 1969* (London: British Broadcasting Corporation)
- Freedon, Michael (ed). 1989. *Minutes of the Rainbow Circle*, (London: Offices of the Royal Historical Society, University College)
- Garrard, Greg. 2004. *Ecocriticism*, (Oxford: Routledge)
- Goldsmith, Edward. 1996. *The Way: An Ecological World View*, (Dartington: Themis Books)
- Gowing, Ellis Norman. 1926. *John Edwin Watts-Ditchfield, first Bishop of Chelmsford*, (London: Hodder & Stoughton)
- Gridley, Karen. 1989. *Man of the Trees: Selected Writings of Richard St. Barbe Baker*, (Willits, California: Ecology Action)
- Richard Grove, 'Climatic Fears: Colonialism and the History of Environmentalism', *Harvard International Review*, Winter 2002, Vol 23, 4, p.50.

- Hanley, Paul. 2018. *The Man of the Trees: Richard St. Barbe Baker, the first global environmentalist*, (Regina: University of Regina Press)
- Hays, Samuel P.. 1999. *Conservation and the gospel of efficiency: the progressive conservation movement, 1890-1920*, (Pittsburgh, Pa.: University of Pittsburgh Press)
- Harris, Khim. 2004. *Evangelicals and Education: Evangelical Anglicans and Middle-Class Education in Nineteenth-Century England*, (Carlisle: Paternoster Press)
- Hayward, Tim. 1995. *Ecological Thought: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Polity Press)
- Hellerman, Pauline von. 2013. *Things Fall Apart? The Political Ecology of Forest Governance in Nigeria*, (New York & Oxford: Berghahn)
- Hornberg, Alf. 2008. 'Introduction: Environmental History as Political Ecology' in *Rethinking Environmental History: World-System History and Global Environmental Change* edited by Alf Hornborg, J. R. McNiell, Joan Martinez-Alier (Oxford: Oxford University Press)
- Hornberg, Alf, J. R. McNiell, Joan Martinez-Alier (eds). 2008. 'Introduction: Environmental History as Political Ecology' in *Rethinking Environmental History: World-System History and Global Environmental Change* (Oxford: Oxford University Press)
- Hughes, J. Donald. 2006. *What is Environmental History?* (Cambridge: Polity Press)
- Hughes, Thomas. 1989. *Tom Brown's School Days*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press)
- Klein, Naomi. 2014. *This Changes Everything* (London: Allen Lane)
- Knight, Richard L. and Suzanne Riedel (eds). 2002. *Aldo Leopold and the Ecological Conscience* (Oxford: Oxford University Press)
- Kumar, Satish and Whitefield, Freddie (eds). 2006. *Visionaries: The 20th Century's 100 Most Important Inspirational Leaders*, (Dartington: Green Books)
- Leedham-Green, Elizabeth. 1996. *A Concise History of the University of Cambridge*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press)
- Leopold, Aldo. 1940. 'History of the Riley Game Cooperative, 1931-1939' *The Journal of Wildlife Management*, Vol. 4, No. 3, pp.291-302

- Leopold, Aldo. 1943. 'Wildlife in American Culture', *The Journal of Wildlife Management*, Vol.7. No.4
- Leopold, Aldo. 1949. *A Sand County Almanac* (New York: Oxford University Press)
- MacAloon, J.J. (ed). 2008. *Muscular Christianity in Colonial and Post-Colonial Worlds*, (Abingdon: Routledge)
- McIlhiney, David B. 1988. *A Gentleman in Every Slum: Church of England Missions in East London 1837-1914*, (Allison Park, Pa: Pickwick Publications)
- McLaren, Angus. 2012. *Reproduction by Design*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press)
- Meyer, Thomas. 1992. *D.N. Dunlop: a man of our time*, (London: Temple Lodge)
- Munden, Alan. 1997. *A Cheltenham Gamaliel: Dean Close of Cheltenham*, (Cheltenham: Dean Close School)
- Nash, Roderick Frazier. 1989. *The Rights of Nature: A history of environmental ethics* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press)
- Noll, Mark. 2004. *The Rise of Evangelism: The Age of Edwards, Whitefield and the Westleys* (Leicester: Varsity Press)
- Oldfield, Barrie and Christopher Fyfe (eds). 1989. *Richard St. Barbe Baker 1889-1982: A Keepsake Book for All Ages and Generations*, (Lesmurdie: The Men of the Trees (Western Australia Branch, Inc.)
- Pepper, David. 1984. *Roots of Modern Environmentalism* (New York: Routledge)
- Rackham, Oliver. *Trees and Woodlands in the British Landscape*, (London: Phoenix Press, 1976, second edition, 1990), p. 23.
- Reznick, Jeffrey S. 2005. *Healing the Nation: Soldiers and the Culture of Caregiving in Britain during the Great War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press)
- Sillence, Charles. *Tales of Old West End*, (West End: The West End Community Association)
- Mark J. Smith, *Ecologism: Towards Ecological Citizenship* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1998),

- Townsend, Charles. 2006. *Easter 1916: The Irish Rebellion*, (Plymouth: Ivan R. Dee)
- Watts-Ditchfield, J.E.. 1914. *The church in action: lectures delivered in the Divinity School of the University of Cambridge in 1913* (London: Robert Scott)
- Lynn White, Jr., 'The Historical Roots of Our Environmental Crisis', *Science*, 10 March 1967, Vol. 155, No. 3767, p.1203
- White, Richard. 1985. 'American Environmental History: The Development of a New Historical Field', *Pacific Historical Review*, Vol. 54, No. 3, pp. 297-335
- Whitney, C.E.. 2009. *At Close Quarters: Dean Close School 1884-2009*, (Woonton: Logaston Press)
- Williams, Michael. 2008. 'The Role of Deforestation in Earth and World-System Integration' in *Rethinking Environmental History: world system history and global environmental change* Hornberg, Alf, J. R. McNiell, Joan Martinez-Alier (eds) (Oxford: Oxford University Press)
- Wright-Millar, Ruth. 2004. *Saskatchewan Heroes and Rogues*, (Coteau Books: Regina, Saskatchewan)