

A Picture of Britain – The Heart of England

The landscape of the British Isles has been an inspiration for our _____ artists, writers, and composers. I'm travelling in their footsteps to some of the most _____ places in these islands. This week I'm travelling through the heart of England, exploring the green fields of Warwickshire, Shakespeare _____; travelling through the Cotswolds, with their rolling _____ and peaceful villages; then, the Malvern hills, _____ up spectacularly from the Worcestershire plain; glimpsing the river Severn, winding its _____ to the sea; and, in the north, Derbyshire with its moors and woodlands, a wild expanse of _____ beauty. But that's only half the story.

Most _____ of Britain celebrate the beauty of our natural landscape, of mountains and valleys, of rivers and lakes, and meadows and woodland. But some of our greatest artists and _____ have been inspired by a different kind of Britain: by the drama of industry, of factories and mines. And they've helped us to find _____ and beauty in the most unlikely places. So no picture of Britain would be complete without that other _____ which devoured our countryside even as it dragged us into the modern world.

Manchester. Once the first city of the industrial revolution. A place of _____, child labour, poverty, and disease. But now, its hundreds of smoking chimneys have been erased from the _____, cotton mills have been converted into canal-side apartments. The grime of industry has been swept away. Manchester has become the pleasure-dome of the _____. This is the heart of the city's night life: _____, clubs, restaurants—a lively, sometimes rather dissolute scene. But it's light-years away from what it was twenty or thirty _____ ago, when these streets were dark and dank, the buildings grimy, a place that filled people with a sense of gloom. Except for one man who _____ in this city the inspiration that made him one of Britain's most popular _____. Laurence Stephen Lowry, L. S. Lowry, painted a picture of a world that's gone forever, and one that we're glad to see the _____ of. The dirt, the poverty, people scurrying through a desolate landscape. But because it's _____, Lowry's paintings are all the more precious, a window on a vanished world. _____ was unique in being fascinated by something which most artists for the last 300 years had turned their back on: the _____ sprawl that had taken over great swathes of the countryside. Where other people saw something ugly, he saw something beautiful, and he was able to persuade people to _____ his vision. That was what was

so special about him, that was why he became one of the most popular painters of the twentieth _____.

I'm heading out to Pendlebury, seven _____ north of the centre of Manchester. In 1909, Lowry, aged 22, moved here with his parents. At first, he detested the _____. He was confronted by cotton mills, red-brick terraces, and chimneys belching smoke; a landscape blackened by _____. But he came to love what he had hated, and he painted it obsessively. By day, he'd tramp the streets as a rent-collector, but in the evenings, Lowry lived out his other life—a _____ to the people, who only knew him from his daily rounds. He'd set up a studio in the attic of his parents' home, at 117 _____ Road. He didn't paint views of any particular place. He had favourite buildings, like the many mills in Pendlebury, and he rearranged them. They're recurring _____. Lowry pictures are oddly childlike, with their famous match-stick men and match-stick cats and dogs. Straightforward, _____, and yet strangely haunting. His painting didn't go down too _____ here in Pendlebury. People thought the pictures were pointless, ridiculous. The local councillors even complained there were an _____ to the people of Lancashire. And his own mother, who he was very close to, thought they were downright ugly. So much so that throughout her lifetime she never went upstairs to the attic where he painted. And it wasn't until her _____ in 1939 that Lowry actually brought the pictures downstairs. He used to say that he was painting landscapes that nobody _____. Eventually, people began to see that he had something important and original to say, that he was painting a quite different picture of _____. But Lowry's idea of beauty isn't everyone's. Manchester people have always had an escape route, into the hills of the Peak District. They're called the _____ of Manchester. Driving through the suburbs, I'm heading out of the city, through the urban sprawl of Lancashire into the beauty of Derbyshire.