

Blueprint for a tale

by Sandra Davies

Imagine a rectangle of blotting paper, not pink but green, well-worn and faded randomly to ochre, biscuit and in parts to grey, the left-hand edge torn roughly and curving so the piece is wider at the bottom than the top.

Take a piece of loose wove-string, frayed and widespread at its end, and soft and flexible, tight-twisted near its source and three times or more in length the width of the paper.

Take an empty bottle (wider necked than wine for preference), part-fill with inks, a slightly dilute mix of Burnt Sienna, and some Quink of Prussian blue.

Then dip the string into the ink, inch by inch to absorb, to soak the loose-wove end the most, until all but the finger pinch is immersed.

Remove with care, then slowly lay the string, wide well-soaked end at left-hand edge, to start, and allow to curve, to bend, to almost loop and wind its way at rest across the mottled, patterned green, to leave a mark — an estuary, a river-line, across a landscape, for a map.

Within one loop, a loop whose open-end is well-defensible, will lie a Yorkshire town, like Yarm, but imaginary: a place I plan to populate with part-invented people, some already met, to pontificate upon their creativity and their interactions.

