

## **Writing remoteness: Language and place-making at Spurn**

Spurn has sometimes been described as the 'edge of the world', and standing on the Point, it can really feel like you've reached it. Even approaching the entrance to the nature reserve, as with many coastal places, it does seem as though the roads get thinner and the landscape empties out, eventually dropping off into a strange in-between place where sand and sea intertwine.

And this feeling of remoteness has been a powerful inspiration for those who have written about Spurn – Philip Larkin famously reaches the spit in 'Here', where the land ends "suddenly beyond a beach of shapes and shingle"; meanwhile, Will Self's narrator arrives at Spurn after walking the Holderness and sees "a footprinted shore disappearing into the mist", depicting an ominous, empty landscape that mirrors the narrator's memory loss.

The Yorkshire Wildlife Trust, who have owned the land since the 1960s, also write about Spurn as a remote, wild place. In their blogs aiming to attract visitors to the nature reserve, Spurn is described as "Yorkshire's very own Land's End", a reference, of course, to the actual Land's End. This image helps to distance us from Spurn – it places it at the ultimate margin, a last bastion before an uninhabitable sea, and therefore functions to make Spurn more remote than it actually is. The blogs drive home the feeling of escapism that Spurn provides for "walkers and nature lovers", and consigns the surprisingly peopled landscape to a remote past.

To me, and to other outsiders like, arguably, the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust themselves, Spurn does feel like it's in the middle of nowhere. But what about those for whom Spurn sits at the centre of the world? What about the numerous birdwatchers and, indeed, birds, who flock to Spurn during yearly migrations? And what of the local community, many of whom live and breathe Spurn, are passionate about its past, and are concerned for its future? We all have personal and collective attachments to certain places in our lives, but what happens when some people feel that their connections aren't respected, that they are being brushed under the carpet? And what issues and conflicts might arise when a place like Spurn is managed and marketed according to one overarching narrative that might be perceived as excluding others?