

READING THE LANDSCAPE

Understanding the landscape, the processes that formed it and how it presents itself

Simon Bell

Estonian University of Life Sciences

READING THE LANDSCAPE

- This lecture will introduce the idea of interpreting a landscape through observing and drawing the features that make it what it is as well as by mapping.
- You will have a go at sketching a local landscape for practice.

THE EUROPEAN LANDSCAPE CONVENTION

- The landscape is “... an area, as **perceived** by people, whose character is the result of the **action and interaction** of natural and/or human factors”.

READING THE LANDSCAPE

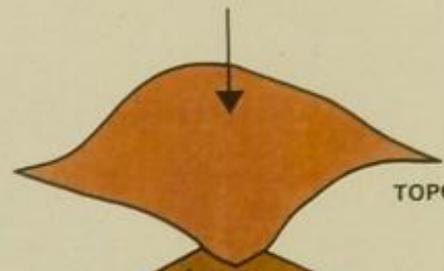
- Understanding the landscape, the processes that formed it and the pressures for change is an important step before landscape planning or design, especially at a large scale.
- It includes more than a geographical understanding – the visual and experiential aspects must be included.



CLIMATIC PROCESSES OVER TIME HAVE MODIFIED



GEOLOGICAL FORMATIONS



TOPOGRAPHY



DRAINAGE



DISTRIBUTION OF SOILS



PLANTS AND ANIMALS



MAN'S ACTIVITIES

WHICH ACCOUNTS FOR CURRENT

WHICH HAS DETERMINED

WHICH HAS INFLUENCED

AND ASSOCIATED

WHICH HAVE BEEN MODIFIED BY

READING THE LANDSCAPE

- Layers to consider:
- Climatic context
- Geology, geomorphology, hydrology, soils;
- Ecology and vegetation types
- Land use, settlement types, communications, building types, cultural elements;
- **Visual/experiential aspects;**

READING THE LANDSCAPE

- Visual and experiential aspects can be considered from the point of view of the perceiver – in the landscape, as it is seen from various viewpoints.
- Other sensory aspects can be noted while out there making analytical sketches.

Aim of sketching as part of understanding the landscape

- The aim of landscape sketching is to capture the key elements that make the landscape what it is
- Artistic composition and aesthetic quality are secondary to the analytical function.
- Economy and speed are important when sketching.

Aim of sketching

- While it is possible to make sketches from photographs, when done this way you do not really look at and see the landscape!
- By drawing it on site, the act of sketching means you have to look at it and interpret how it is assembled
- The pencil becomes an extension of the brain

MATERIALS

- A4 Sketch pad
- Range of pencils- HB to 6B
- Oil bar and graphite pencil
- Pencil sharpener or sharp knife
- Eraser? NO!!
- Clear polythene bag (in case of wet weather)

Examples of sketches

- The following examples were made by a student at ECA a course called “Reading the Landscape”.
- They show a personal style
- They are very economical
- They use many annotations and comments to build up the understanding of the landscape.

Behaven Bay 3/5/11

Woodland seen as silhouette
in distance.

house
outcrop
at the
hill.

bird
covered
island.

Behaven
Bay

rocky
beach
with
rock
pools
right
up to
the cliffs.

Very
steep
cliff
side
eroded
by
sea.

grassy top of the cliff.



coastline distance.

Salisbury crags formed around 320 million years ago. hills mostly old volcanoes/volcanic.

upstanding rocks left behind after glaciation

Arncliffe Scar.

Ice age erosion deepened valleys and rounded off hills tops.

Blackford hill formed 410 million years ago.

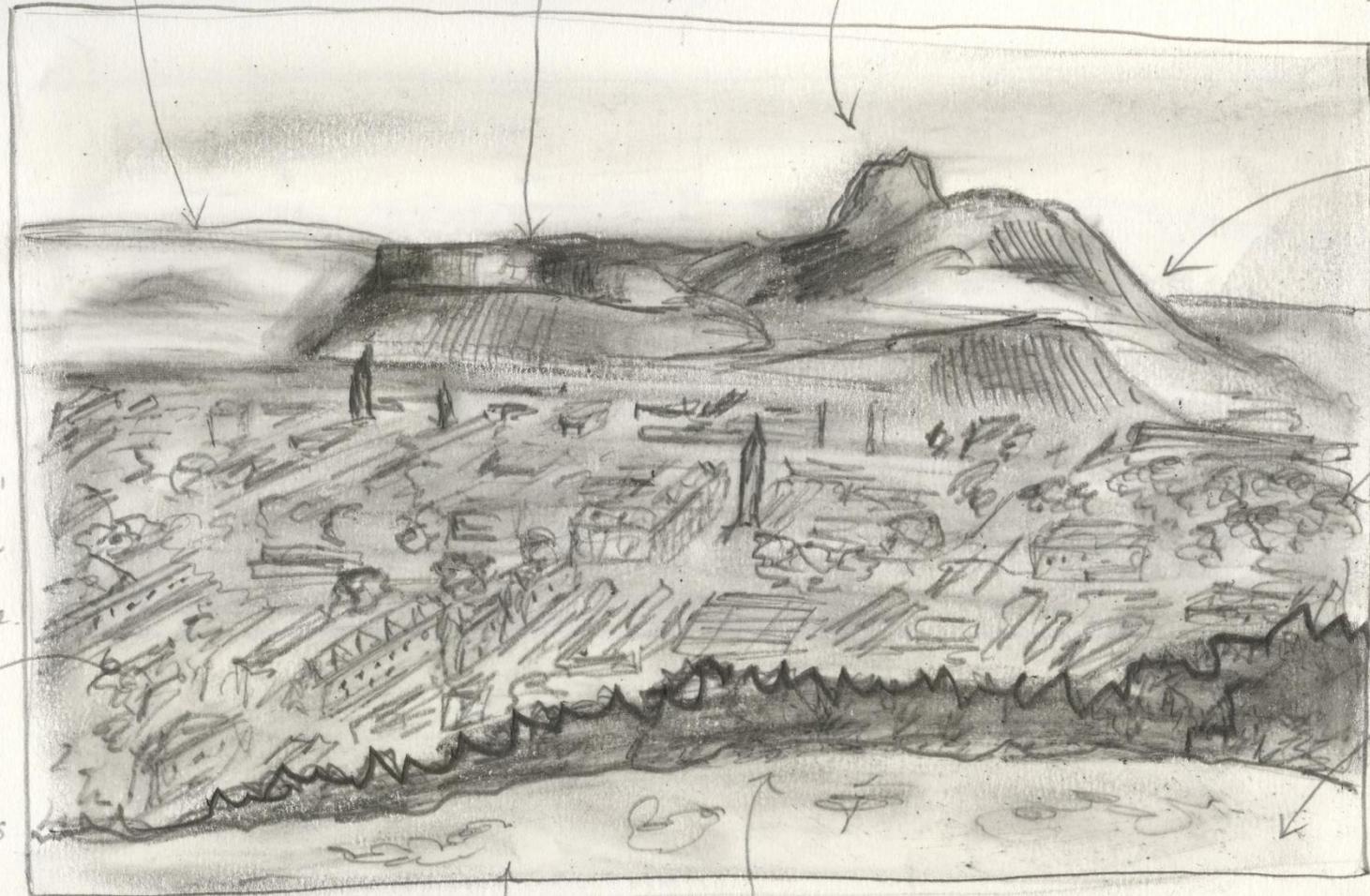
belt of mud separating Blackford hill from the city.

This area used to be covered with kms more rock which was eroded away.

Blackford hill 4/15/11

During ice age, whole area covered by ice, next, Neolithic started to farm etc, human impact on the landscape.

See cityscape - buildings emerging from the landscape.

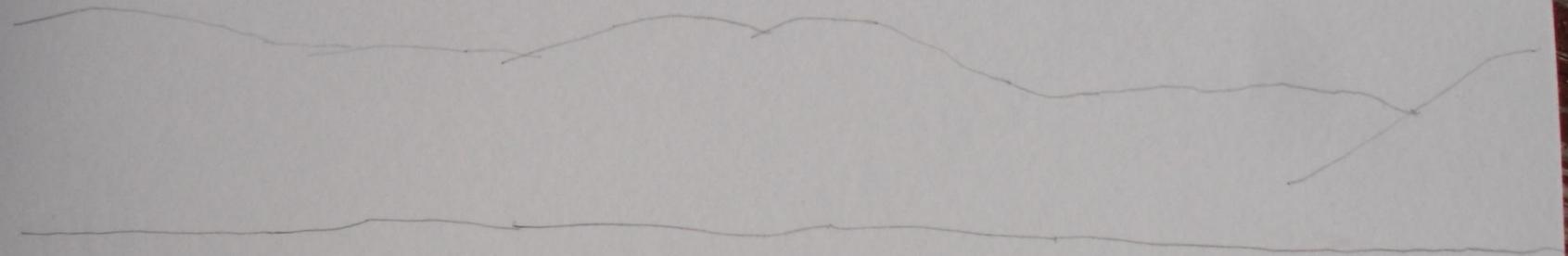


Technique 1

- The following sequence shows a step-by-step approach for making a pencil sketch of a scene.
- Materials – sketch paper, pencils (range of hardness/softness)



A view over a lake with forest in the background



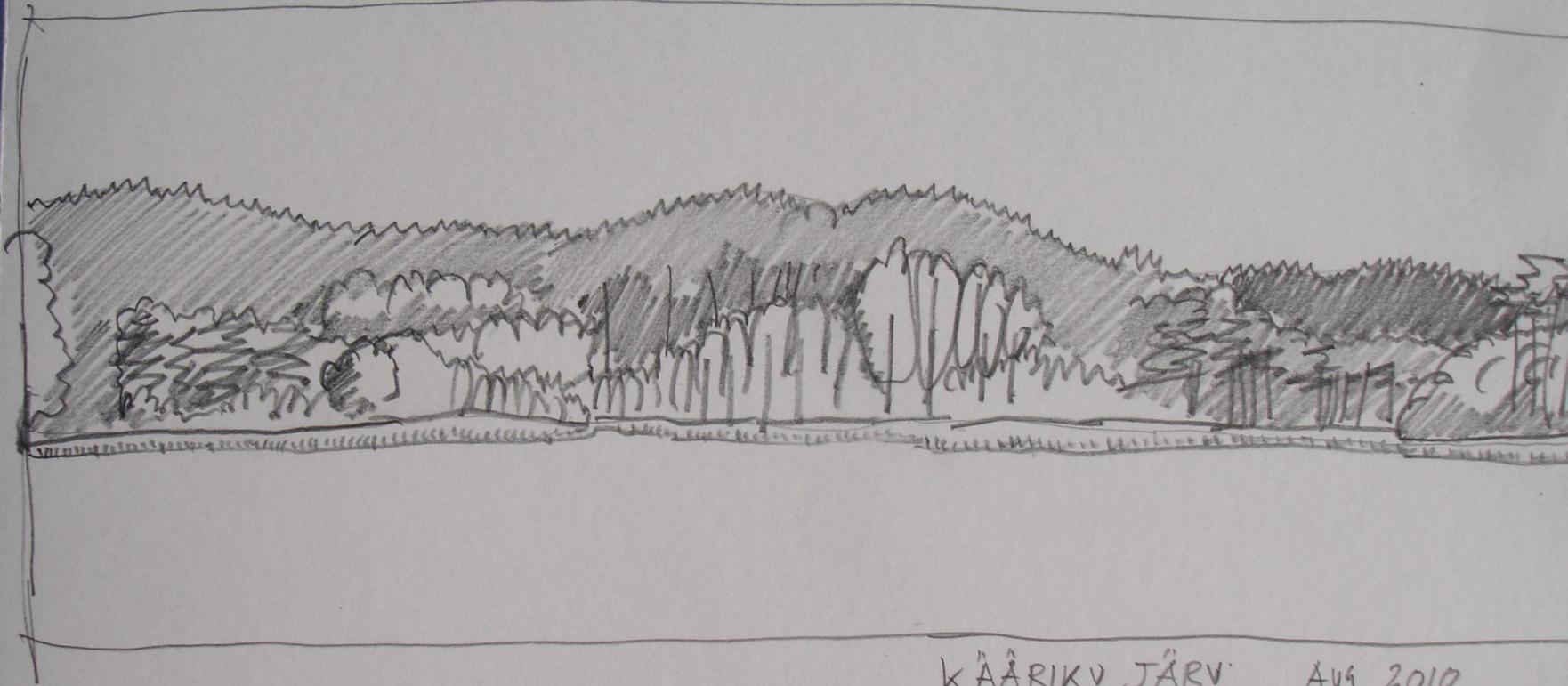
Step 1: establish the edge of the lake
and the skyline as the main lines



Step 2: establish the lesser forms and
add texture to the lines in a softer pencil

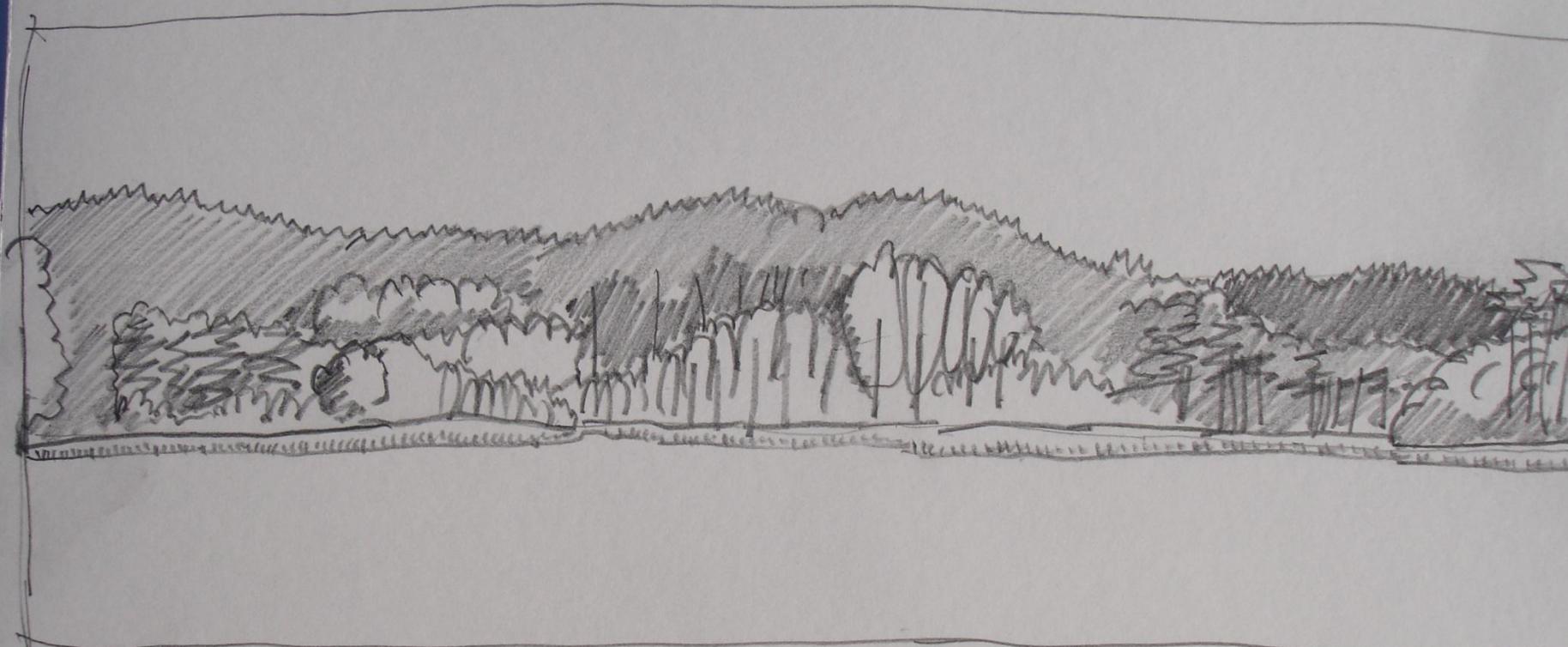


Step 2: add some more detail of tree shapes and add simple shading to emphasise darker areas or shadow areas



KÄÄRIKUV JÄRV. AUG 2010

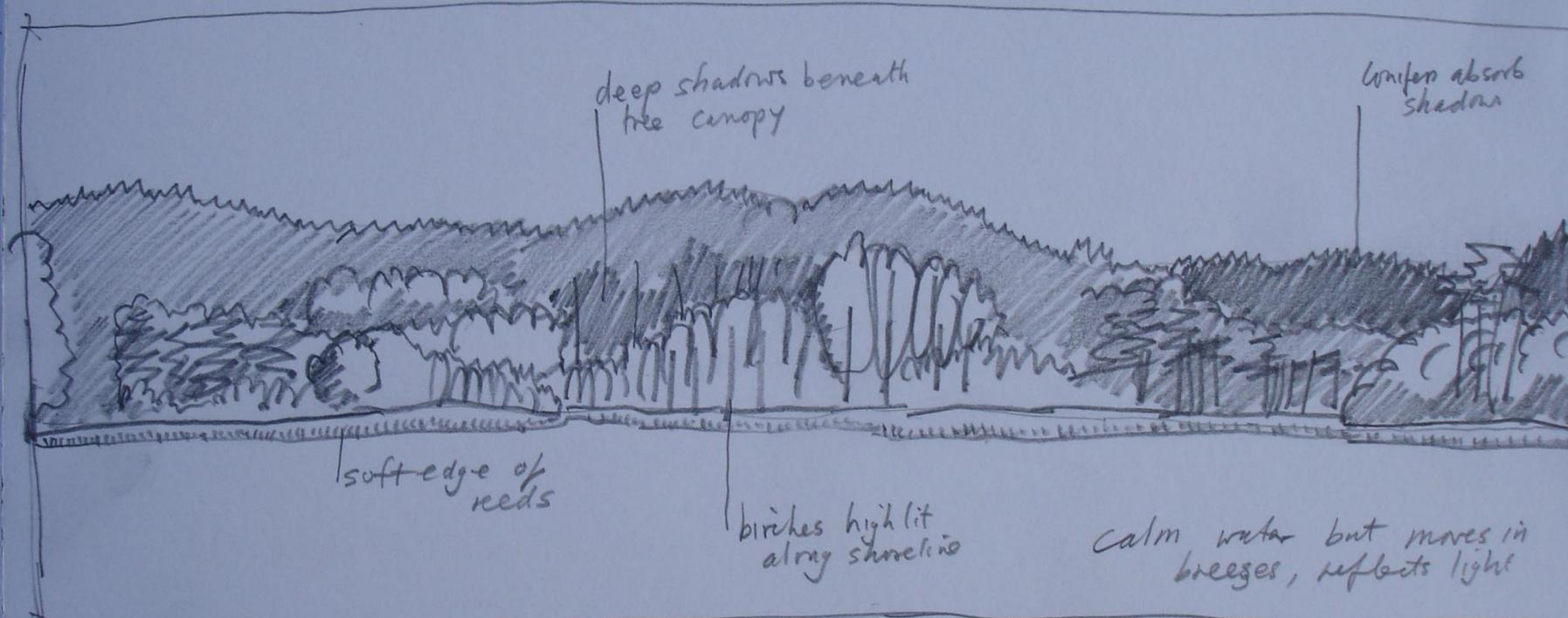
It often helps to put a frame around the sketch to help to focus on the main section



A reed fringed lake surrounded by pine, spruce & birch forest. Strong play of light & shade with forest edges catching the light. Small scale, enclosed landscape with coarse textures. Flat, calm plane of the lake gives contrast to forest. Rounded, small hills and overlapping layers provide distinct character and strong sense of *genius loci*.

KÄÄRIKUVÄRVÄ AUG 2010

Step 4: add some description about the main compositional aspects for the landscape



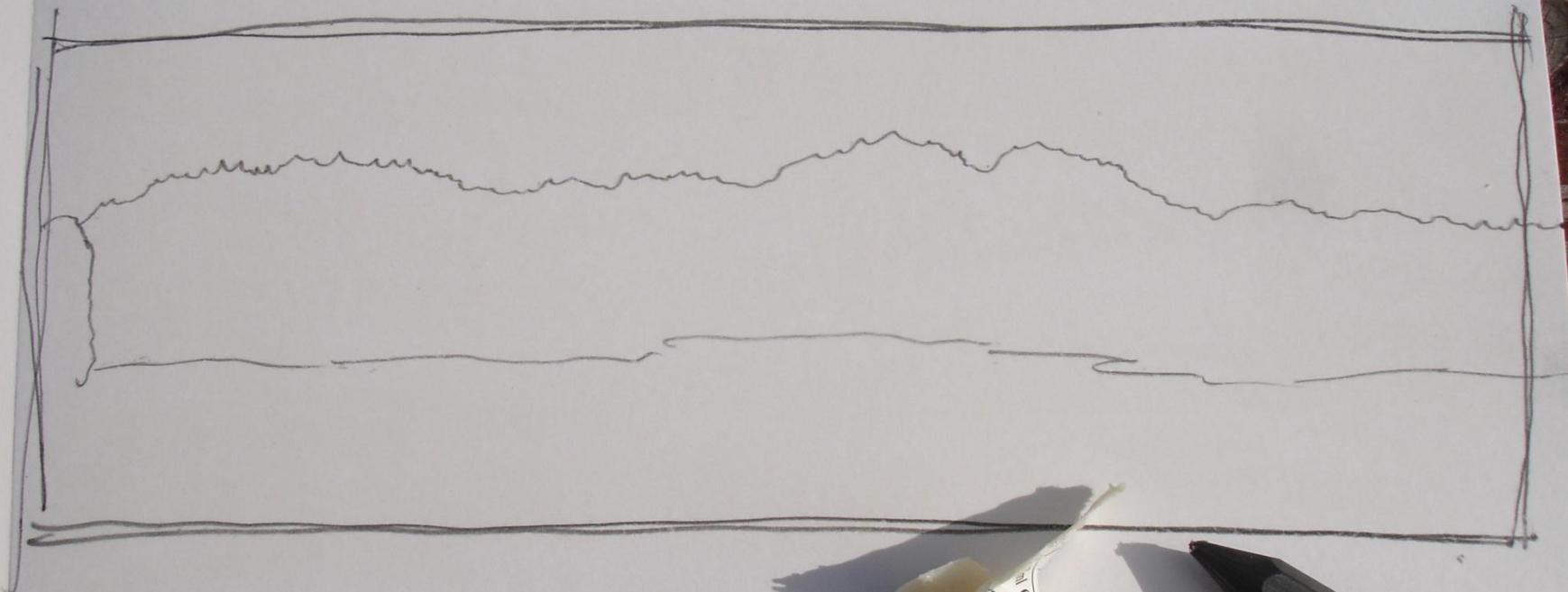
A reed fringed lake surrounded by pine, spruce & birch forest. Strong play of light & shade with forest edges catching the light. Small scale, enclosed landscape with coarse textures. Flat, calm plane of the lake gives contrast to forest. Rounded, small hills and overlapping layers provide distinct character and strong sense of *genius loci*.

KÄÄRIKUV JÄRV. AUG 2010

Step 5: add some annotations to the sketch to bring out the key points about the scene.

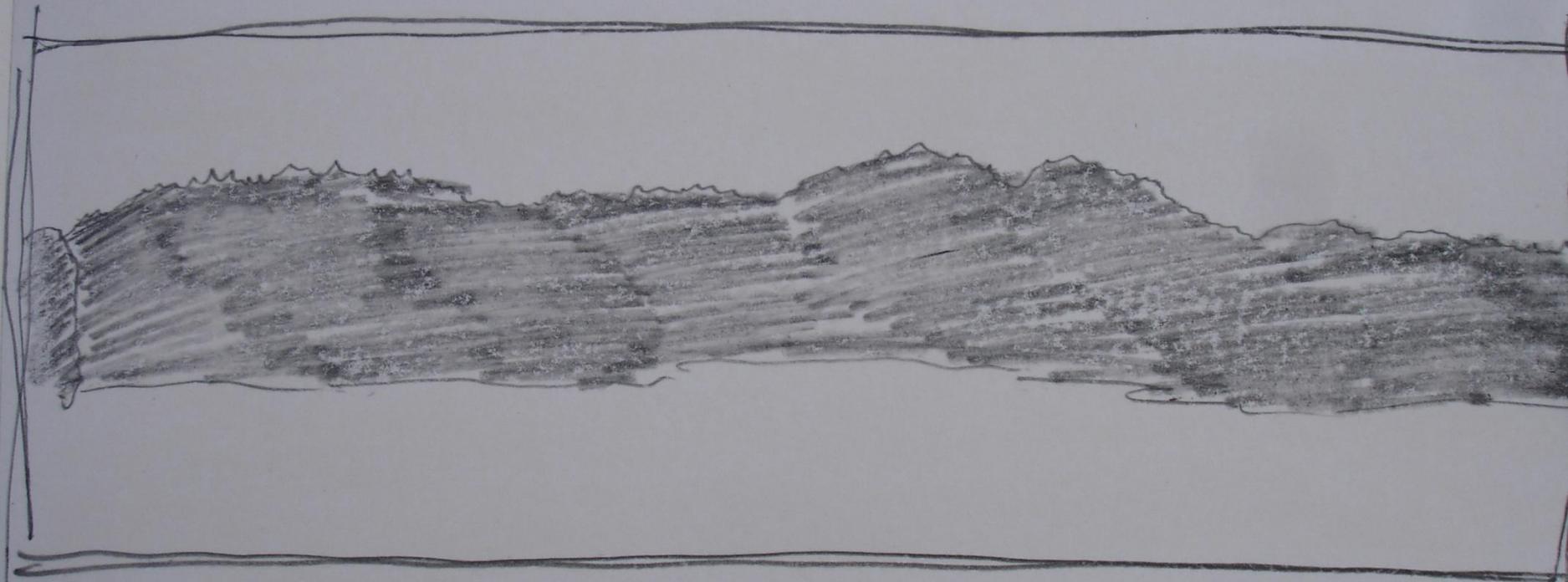
Technique 2

- Use oil bar and graphite pencil in addition to pencil
- This can be quick and as effective as pencil sketches
- The oil bar means that dark areas can be scraped off to reveal white areas beneath.

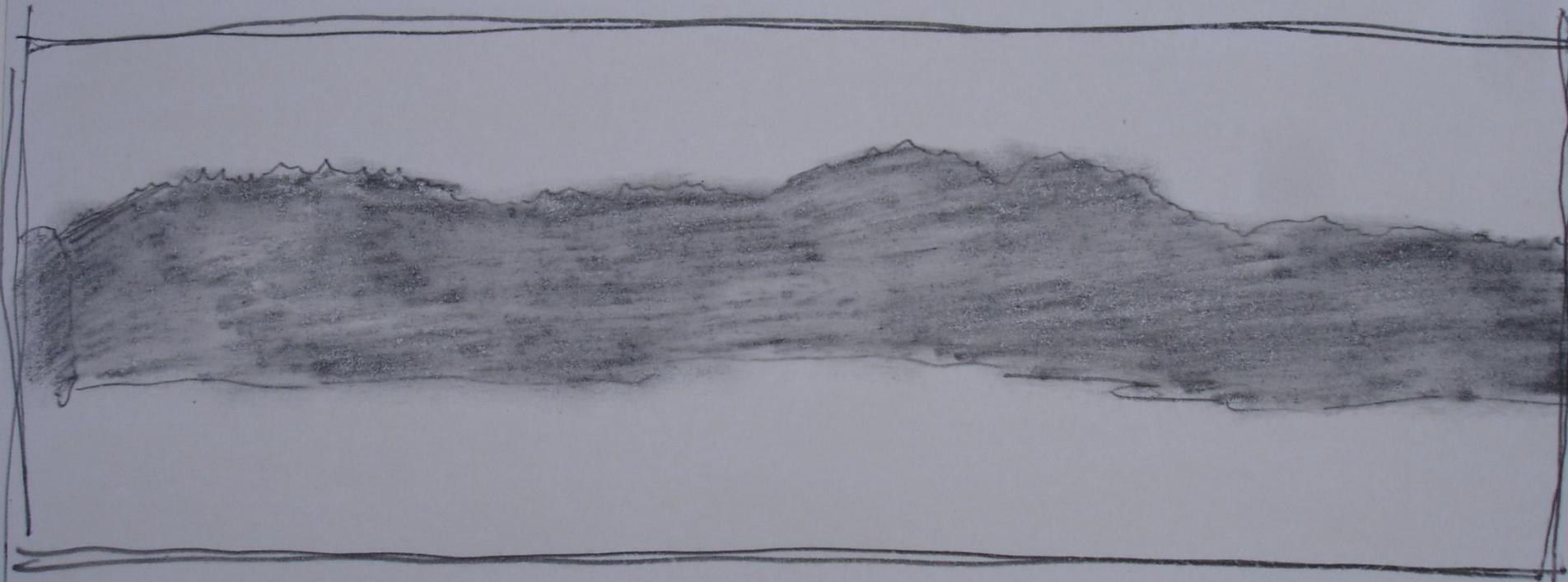


Step 1: cover the area with oil from the oil bar, then sketch the basic structural lines as for pencil, with the graphite pencil

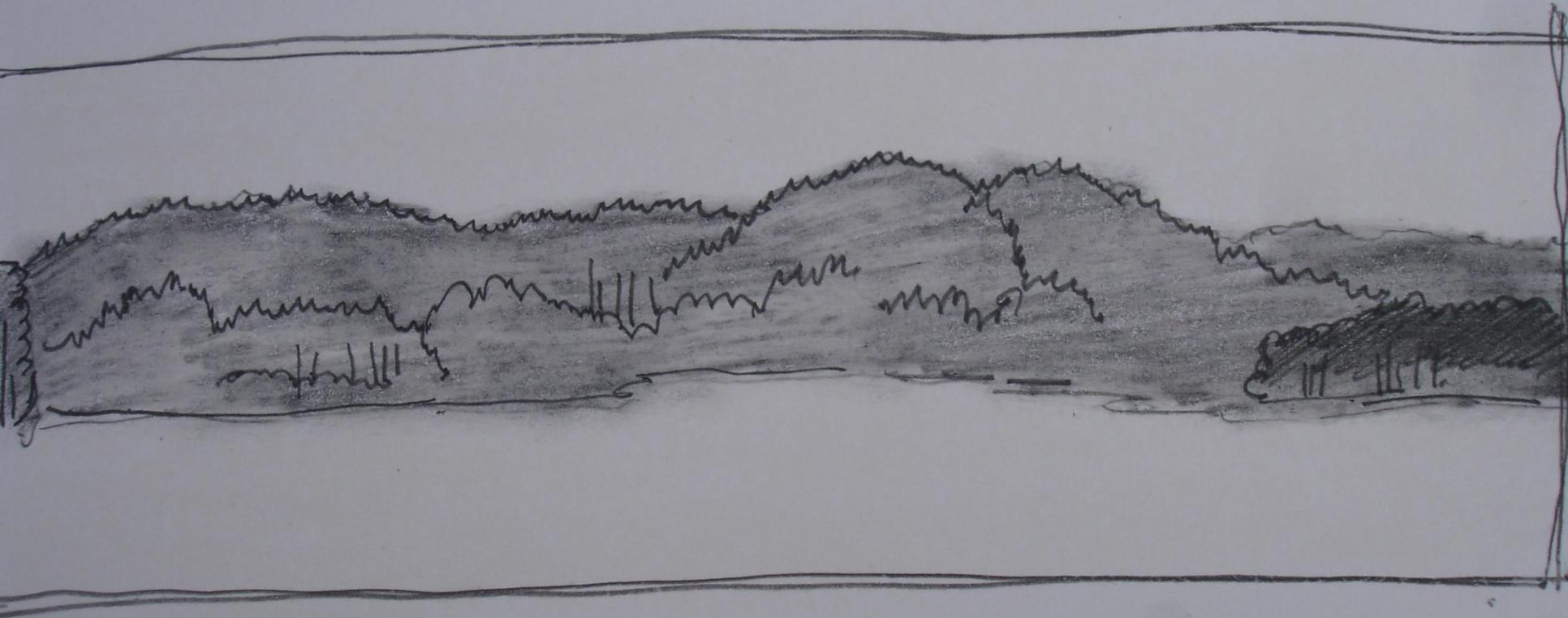




Step 2: roughly shade the area with graphite pencil



Step 3: smudge the graphite pencil over the oiled area to create a softer effect



Step 4: draw more features using graphite pencil or normal pencil and add extra shading where necessary



Step 5: add more shade and detail as needed. Scrape away the graphite from the oil bar to reveal light areas, perhaps for birch trunks, for example



An enclosed, small scale lake landscape. Breezes play on the water, ever changing the light. Dark conifers and contrasting birch on rounded hills, coarse textures and a range of greens dominate. Strong sense of unity and genius loci.

KÄÄRIKU JÄRV AUG 20

Step 6: add text comments as for the previous example.

Features of sketching

- Sketching involves selection and interpretation which a photo does not
- We often exaggerate the height of hills when we make sketches and this reflects some aspects of our perception.
- We remember a landscape much more when we sketch it than if we photograph it.