

Meeting the Clackmannan Stone(-Person) on the Main St.

AHRC Landscape & Environment Conference 2009: 'Living Landscapes', presentation notes 20.06.2009

[Slide 1: Title]

[Slide 2: Background]

Scottish artist-organiser, cultural producer and doctoral candidate, based in Helsinki, Finland.

My practice involves variable roles of initiator, participant, author and curator, according to different collaborative and cross-disciplinary processes.

I work across the fields of media/ network/ environmental activism, pursuing a participatory arts practice through workshops, performative events, and storytelling.

[Slide 3: Artivistic Fieldwork]

Participatory Platforms, Devised Events and Socially-engaged Storymaking

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Reflecting upon the issues and concerns of an artist-organiser's activity in the field.

Storytelling as a means of sharing experience;
In a particular place over periods of time and involvement.

What might be artistic and activist-orientated fieldwork?

What are the responsibilities involved?

[Slide 4: Googlemap: Locating and Telling about the Clackmannan Stone]

Firth of Forth, Central Scotland, NW Europe

(mostly from materials on the Internet/s)

I grew up here but left in 2000, have lived abroad since.

My first community art projects were commissioned by local Arts Development 10 years ago.

I would like to make a transdisciplinary fieldwork/research/performance project here in the future. Next year.

I am inviting you to get involved too if it catches your imagination a bit like mine

[Slide 5-6: Wikicommons: Alloa, looking over to Wallace Monument and Ochils | Wikipedia EN for Clackmannanshire]

Clackmannanshire Council; wee county, named after Clackmannan Stone

Alloa administrative centre.

[Slide 7-8-9: Googlemaps: Clackmannan village | Wikipedia EN for Clackmannan]

pre-modern administrative centre. Main St.

[Slide 10-11-12: Clackmannan Stone installation, October 2008]

Information display boards installed by Museum & Heritage Officer, Clackmannanshire Council

Where might the stone have come from?

Who attributed the stone significance?

How might people have related to it?

[Slide 13-14-15: Book: A Celtic Miscellany | Wikicommons: 500 AD Map of Britain | Internet: Map of Y Gogledd]

In legend and early historical writing, Clackmannanshire has been associated as Manau Gododdin, the northern region of the dark-age kingdom Gododdin which stretched across central Scotland and Lothians.

[Slide 16-17-18: Wikipedia EN: Manau | Dutch book: Keltische Mythen & Legendes | Modern illustration of Manannan mac Lir]

The stone has often been mentioned to have been worshiped by local iron-age people onwards, for containing the spirit of **Manau/Manaw/Mannan/Manannan mac Lir**.

In mythology from Ireland, Scotland, Wales and Isle of Man (Pictish/Brythonic/Scots-Irish/Manx)

He is a **demi-god** of the sea: both a god and a man.

Often seen as a **psychopomp, shaman** in connection with the Otherworld islands of the dead.

In some cases he was as the Greek mythological character of Charon (*Χάρων* — *the bright*) **the ferryman, who carried souls of the newly deceased across the river that divided the world of the living from the world of the dead.**

He is also seen as the **navigator**, and has the **ability to control weather** and in particular conjure up mists. He **possessed several magical items:**

magic goblet of truth;
he had a ship that did not need sails named "Wave Sweeper";
he owned a cloak of mists that granted him invisibility,
a flaming helmet,
a sword named Fragarach ("Answerer" or "Retaliator") that could never miss its target.

He also owned a horse called "Enbarr of the Flowing Mane" which could travel over water as easily as land.

In some sources he is described as driving his chariot over the sea as if over land, and through fields of purple flowers.

He is also known as a **trickster**. who plays clown.

In one legend he is associated with a "cauldren of regeneration" who once told that he came from a land where old age, sickness, death, decay and falsehood were unknown (Otherworld is also known as the 'Land of Youth' or 'Land of Living'. For this reason he also had connections to fertility rituals.

According to the **Book of Fermoy, a Manuscript of the 14th to the 15th century, "he was a pagan, a lawgiver among the Tuatha Dé Danann, and a necromancer possessed of power to envelope himself and others in a mist, so that they could not be seen by their enemies."**

[Slide 19-20-21-22: Image of Breesha Maddrell's article | Tri-leg symbol | Modern illustration of Manau by Eric Austwick | Performance of Manannan by John Keenan at Inter-celtic Festival date:??]

Breesha Maddrell:
'Shaping the Shape-Shifter: Cultural Revival, Spirituality & the Manx Manannan'

"At the beginning of the 21st century, the Isle of Man Government decided to pursue a 'nation branding' exercise.

It is no coincidence that early discussions among marketing consultants referred to '**the Enbar initiative**'—naming Manannan's steed.

What they did not realise, though, was that **Mona Douglas and Eric Austwick** had already beaten them to it, and at a fraction of the cost. Manannan has found his way into many parts of Manx life and into the Manx psyche in a fairly successful branding exercise by anybody's standards."

[Slide 23-24-25-26-27: Googlemaps: Forth Valley | Overlooking from Lookabootye brae, June 2007]

Suggested that it used to sit somewhere near 'Lookabootye' brae.

It has been suggested in **historical legends that when the Christianising Pict --St. Serf (Servanus)--came to the area in 6th Century he encountered people worshipping it.**

I wonder what he thought. Did he try to divert its supposed significance or?

[Slide 28-29: Wikipedia EN: Robert the Bruce | Wikipedia EN: Clackmannanshire shield]

The stone next appears chronologically in **another legend connected to King Robert the Bruce;**

when in the **14th Century, he was hunting around the area and had apparently stopped at the stone. Recognising afterwards that he had lost his glove, he proclaimed 'Look about ye!' to his servants, where-upon it was found in/on the stone.**

A descendant of the king, Thomas Bruce, became the first Baron of Clackmannan, and established the Bruce name in the region.

Slogan for the county: **Look about ye** (circumspence in Latin)

Rebranded slogan for region in 2007: **"More than you can Imagine"**

This is what I am asking just to imagine..

[Slide 30-31-32: Info board: Worshipping the Stone | Book: Graham Harvey's Animism: respecting the living world | Participatory ritual performance at Storytelling Centre by David Campbell]

According to Graham Harvey:

Indigenous people in other parts of the world, and likely also pre-Christian peoples of our own, believe/d that humans **live and share their environment with 'other-than-human' persons**. This is challenging for common Western European ideas of person-hood:

The term 'person' refers, according to animist belief, not to human-likeness, but to 'willful beings who gain meaning and power from their interactions'. For example, animals such as bears and ravens, stones, rivers and trees, in the animist world-view, are all 'other-than-human' persons, which in different cultures and environments, have communication, and respectful, interactive relations with others.

According to Neo-pagan website 'Manannan.net':

On midsummer, the Manx people offer bundles of reeds, meadow grasses and yellow flowers to Manannán in a ritual "paying of the rent", accompanied with prayers for his aid and protection in and fishing.

Speaking about protection and power..

[Slide 33-34: Clackmannan Tower 1901 illustration | Flickr: Clackmannan Tower]

There is currently little knowledge about how the stone was kept, for how long, and for what symbolism.

However, the stone must have been deemed important enough to be **brought in and kept in the local noble's home or guardianship**, as it was last documented as being kept inside the Clackmannan tower.

Which legend inspired its maintenance and who was aware of the relocated stone's presence?

[Slide 35-36: Old photo of Main St. | Statistical Account of 1791-99 vol. 14 p.608. Accessed online]

The stone then became a public figure in **1833**, when it was put out on public display next to the disused ruins of the Tollbooth (court and prison) on Clackmannan Main Street.

By this time, **the Clackmannan-based Bruce dynastic line had already ended for about 50 years** (last laird of the Clackmannan, the old dame Catherine Bruce) and their Tower itself had also fell into disrepair.

With support from the Bruce family of Kennet, the stone was elevated onto a large pillar of whinstone, according to records, dragged by 16 horses from the Abbey Craigs quarry near Stirling.

Was the stone raised and supported as a conscious Victorian appreciation for ancient power symbols, or as a symbol of Bruce historical continuity?

Whichever way, the stone itself was **neither noted as a public monument nor as an object of antiquarian interest, in either of the Statistical Accounts for the Parish in 1790s and 1830s, before or after its public appearance.**

[Slide 37: Iron plate sign]

It's **position on the Main Street**, next to the **preserved Tollbooth architectures and monuments of burgh authority – the former court, prison and tax-collective offices – of pre-modern life**,

is solidified in modern times in the **iron display info plate** linking them together.

[Slide 38: Picture of Main St., October 2008]

Human changes: During the industrial revolutions of the late 1800s and social developments of the 20th Century, the local population have witnessed many changes in social, cultural and scientific changes.

The stone has '**absorbed**' all of them as a **silent witness**.

However, the local authorities over the years have, despite increased academic awareness and common interest in ancient monuments, have focused **little attention to the stone and it's heritage**.

In 2001, the Scottish sculptor George Wylie, himself an art-master of material transformations, suggested, in a local tourism/regeneration symposium, that moving the stone would be a significant iconic gesture, promoting regeneration and rejuvenation to the region.

Little happened to test this theory.

A small sculptural arrangement of a bottle of sea-water and a small stone of similar ancient quality was given by George in a wooden chest.

The seal on the bottle is to be opened and poured onto the stone only when the stone of Manau is repositioned again on the shores of the Forth.

It is still waiting..

[Slide 39-40: Pictures of fenced in Stone., June 2007]

impression of stone being caged..

[Slide 41: Julian Cope's Modern Antiquarian, ? 2007]

photo from same period as my visit?

[Slide 42-43-44-45-46: Times Online: Fertility Stone remains after women protest: Sept 26, 2005]

Astonished local councilors witnessed rallied local support and opinion in favour of the stone's permanence in the town, with threats of a 'sit-in' protest from local women.

Such an angry reaction had not been witnessed for ages, said the report.

Contemporary interpretations relate the stone as a **symbol of fertility**, no doubt due to its phallic nature, since being raised on its plinth.

Locals joke that the stone continues to **confer virility on local men and fertility on the town's women**.

[Slide 42-43-44-45-46-47-48: Times Online: Fertility Stone remains after women protest: Sept 26, 2005 | Photos of phallic-looking Stone | close-up photo of Surveillance camera | Daily Record: £160K STONE REPAIR, March 28, 2006]

"A giant stone penis is to be repaired at a cost of more than £160,000. Work starts today.."

[Slide 49-50-51-52-53-54-55-56-57: Photos of CCTV Camera in situ & related signage | Photo of stone | Translation-matrix multiplication of coordinates | Photos of BT cable installation]

Caught in the CCTV video data-stream keeping check on drunk and disorderly locals, it also has an archival record and shared data-body with locals that has never been so close.

[Slide 58-59-60: Dialogue with Heritage & Museums Officer about the Clackmannan Stone | Homecoming Scotland 2009 website | Clackmannanshire's Homecoming event: ']

October 2008

Met with Susan Mills: Heritage and Museums Officer
Clackmannanshire Council

(Same one who wrote the information panel & commissioned the illustration of the people worshipping the stone)

She tells me that she sometimes gets 'interesting' people contacting her about the significance of the ancient stones, their alignment, and other so called 'sacred' stone circles. It seems I am not the only one.

Realise that not much more is known about Clackmannan Stone than what I have already presented to you.

There are many gaps: ambiguous pre-Victorian story.

There is little further definite/heritage/scientific information or inquiry about the Stone.

Beyond the newspaper journalism (local & national) there has been **no gathering of local thoughts** about the stone and what it means to the people who live around it.

It is (as I have tried to share already) open to interpretations

Maybe even wild ones.

Susan Mills suggested that maybe I could do something as part of the then 'in-planning-stage' Homecoming Scotland events.

Their Theme was/is: Meet Your Ancestors in Clackmannanshire

(arts/geneology/history centred around old church/kirk graveyards in the county)

[Slide 61: Meet your Ancestors: The Clackmannan Stone(-person)]

'Fieldwork'/Project Proposal to in November, proposed as part of Homecoming Scotland.

[Slide 62: Book: Graham Harvey's 'Animism']

present the monument as a '**stone-person**' (in the animist sense)

who has been in relationship with local people over a long period of history.

This animist and indigenous world-view can be used as an **interpretive tool**,

[Slide 63: Manx Fantasy Role-playing figures of Manau]

As Star & Griesemer, or Brian Marrick might suggest, as a **boundary object**
"An object of collective attention that is interpreted by different communities, with an acknowledgement and discussion of these differences, that allows a shared understanding to be formed; a common point of reference for conversation; a means of coordination and alignment, and of translation."

To learn more about the Clackmannan stone, which people, locals and historians alike, know very little about.

Embellished by local folklore, legend, stories, oral historical interpretation, expert knowledge, media and data.

[Slide 64-65-66: Photo of Clackmannan Main St. | 'OPEN FIELDWORK LAB' PROPOSAL (e.g AUGUST 2010)]

Facilitated by an artist/researcher/organiser-in-residence

Inviting other human persons of different ages & generations –

Local residents and workers, visitors to the region,

Call to:

professional and amateur, artists and storytellers, historians and heritage workers, geographers, archaeologists, social studies researchers, ecologists, performance artists, 3d modellers, gamers, role-players..

– into the process of fieldwork.

2-4 weeks / 1-2 months depending upon funding/resources.

5 'Labs' proposed to be set up for research/investigation/practice in local community hall.

Local interpretations and memories connected to the stone can be gathered as oral history sessions.

Storytelling sessions and workshops can be centred around the legends which are already connected to the stone (For example the Bruce connections)

Dialogue and drama development between character of 'Manau' and other historical characters who may have 'met' the stone.

Online collaborative platforms such as wikis introduced as a participatory way to gather many voices and perspectives from different persons, including texts, audio and media around a particular topic (in this case Stone of Mannan).

3D graphics and craft modeling, online/offline game environments (e.g. WarHammer, Second Life, World of Warcraft) can offer a creative space to explore virtual characters, and the attachments we make to them.

[Slide 67-68-69-70-71-72-73-74-75: Photo of Manannan figurine | Illustration of Manannan's Cloak by Julia Ashby-Smyth | Website of Joy Nash's fantasy-romance book series The Immortals | Image of CCTV camera on Main St. | Translation-matrix multiplication of coordinates | Images of kings quest computer-game cover & screenshot | world of warcraft character | world of warcraft wiki entry on shamanism]

IMAGINED OUTCOMES..

EXPANSIONs/ DEVELOPMENTs/MANIPULATIONs/RELATIONs/

ASSEMBLAGEs/'MASH-UP's/DATA/TEXT/ STORIES/REPRESENTATIONS/ARTEFACTS/

[Slide 76-77: **GRASSROOTS 'INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE' ACTIVISM**]

Suggest this is **grassroots intangible cultural heritage activism**.

Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage
Paris, 17 October 2003

Article 2.1

The 'intangible cultural heritage' means the..

practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills

– as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith –

that **communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize** as part of their cultural heritage.

This intangible cultural heritage, **transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history,**

and **provides them with a sense of identity and continuity**, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity.”

2. The “intangible cultural heritage”, as defined in paragraph 1 above, is manifested inter alia in the following domains:

(a) oral traditions and expressions, including language as a vehicle of the intangible cultural heritage;

(b) performing arts;

(c) social practices, rituals and festive events;

(d) knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe;

(e) traditional craftsmanship.

3. “Safeguarding” means measures aimed at ensuring the viability of the intangible cultural heritage, including the identification, documentation, research, preservation, protection, promotion, enhancement, transmission, particularly through formal and non-formal education, as well as the revitalization of the various aspects of such heritage.”

“living expressions and the traditions that countless groups and communities worldwide have inherited from their ancestors and transmit to their descendants, in most cases orally”

(from UNESCO portal, ICOMOS Ename Charter

<http://enamecharter.org/>

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Rather than top-down application to safe-guard..

Why not from the ground-up, as a grassroots initiative?

(remember the example of Manx cultural activism)

What might this mean and its consequences?

Who could be involved?

How can it be organised?

How can such a process be sustained, (or not)?

What is left behind as digital, material and ephemeral residue of being t/here?

Contact if interested ! agryfp@gmail.com

[Slide 78: Painting by Alexey Fantalov, Manannan's Island, 1999]

St. Petersburg artist who paints allegorical images of mythologies from around the world

<http://fantalov.tripod.com/>