

THE
TOWN
IS THE
VENUE

Deveron Express



/Cooking the Landscape

Autumn 2015

Pilgrim's Arrival, Gaelic Pronunciation, Foraging Herbs, Remembering Peace, Perambulator Paths, Pizza-Oven, Social Researcher, Sacred Sites, University of the Trees, Unwanted Plants

Daisy Williamson and Deborah Beeson, alias Rhynie Woman, look at social connections to land and food through a land-to-table approach. Through food-based events and experimentation with foraging and locally grown/sourced foodstuffs Rhynie Woman creates not only delightful meals and recipes, but an awareness of the local landscape and -use, questioning how we value our land today.

Daisy and Debbi have conducted research into food history and the role of hospitality in

social interaction alongside Deveron Arts' curated programme this year. Through 'pop-ups' they shared skills by engaging with people from the Strathbogie Valley with various strands of interest: firstly local heritage, archaeology and history, which included an afro-caledonian banquet made from plant matter of the abandoned church garden of Ugandan missionary Alexander McKay, an all white themed picnic for Caroline Wendling's White Wood and a three-course History Boys' Supper for a gathering of local historians, poets, farmers and local heritage enthusiasts from Glenlivet, Glenbuchat, the Cabrach, Rhynie and Tarland who live in the Hielan' Ways area. Secondly, with the community: a passing on of experimental methods through workshops such as *Make Do in the Kitchen*. Thirdly, with the local environment such as a foraged autumn feast for the *Hielan' Ways Symposium* walkers.

Often unconventional in their concoctions, Rhynie Woman's upcoming book, *Cooking the*

Landscape, kicks off by suggesting a Foraged Spanakopita, and insists on adding nettles to the mix along with your traditional kale and spinach. This is not the average recipe book, nor a guide to foraging. It is the mix of a year long experimentation with flavours, textures, liquids, weeds and ideas. Readers are warned that not everything always works together, but encouraged to go out, try, and taste, for the most interesting culinary creations, good local hospitality and sustainable land use on a micro level. Rhynie Woman brought their enthusiasm to long established residents, by welcoming tourists, guests, economic migrants and strangers, all of whom form part of the social landscape through good company, new tastes and wonderful smells of home baking.

**Deveron
Arts**

CULINARY CONUNDRUM!

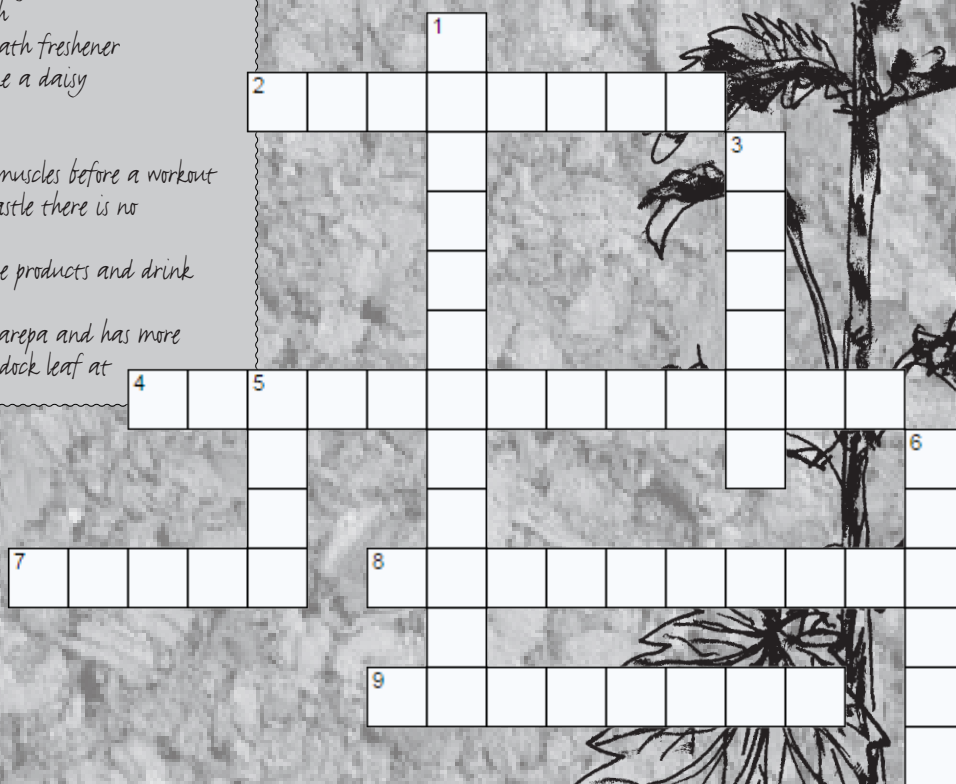
Read the clues and work out the forage-able herbs!

ACROSS

- 2 Blue-Flowered and savoury for your brain
4 Used in folk remedies to aid pregnant women
7 Time to get rid of that cough
8 A natural anti-bacterial breath freshener
9 An 'earth apple' that looks like a daisy

DOWN

- 1 Aids weight-loss and protects muscles before a workout
3 Between the school and the castle there is no congestion or stress
5 Throw away your anti-wrinkle products and drink this instead
6 Staple of Buddhist saint Milarepa and has more benefits than you can shake a dock leaf at



Fran Rowe reflects on Huntly

Cast your mind back to the few sunny days in the latter part of August, and you might have seen a middle aged woman apparently asleep on a bench in Huntly Town Square. Nothing unusual in that, you might say. If you had looked more closely you might have glimpsed a small black notebook on the seat beside her. Well, that was me. And though my eyes might have closed momentarily, I wasn't asleep (honestly). Rather this was one of my 'observation' moments, taking in the town, watching the comings and goings, noticing people, being there.

I was in Huntly as a guest of Deveron Arts, who had agreed to be a case study as part of my PhD research at the Centre for Rural Economy in Newcastle University. I'm exploring how arts organisations, like Deveron, have contributed to places like Huntly over the years, particularly through the lens of innovation and change. Looking back, when I approached Claudia Zeiske and she said 'yes', it seemed like a brave decision. I soon discovered taking part fitted exactly DA's spirit of adventure and curiosity; I was yet more grist to its creative mill.

I came to Huntly, not as a practising artist,

but as someone who is fascinated with culture in its many manifestations, and what it enables: art as experience, as John Dewey puts it. I wanted to explore what happens when you throw creativity into the pot of local development in a small rural town, especially when that recipe has endured for nearly 20 years.

I talked to lots of people in the local community (including artists); observed DA at work; delved into the archives. I was told I had to try the famous buttery at Saturday morning coffee in the Stewarts Hall, and discovered that it bears close resemblance to croissant warmed up in a sandwich maker, but is a whole lot tastier.

I found out that even people who weren't sure about Deveron Arts (some of their projects can be a bit weird, I was told) expressed a sense of something gained, as if the artists had enabled a mirror to be held up to Huntly through which pride was reinforced, maybe even rediscovered. When I asked that tricky question – 'what would Huntly be like if DA weren't there?', many expressed the view that something would be lost, that Huntly would be somehow less colourful. And of course there were more tangible things like the Huntly Cultural Fund – that were universally popular.

I am now back in the North East (of

England) working with two other long suffering rural arts organisations – Visual Arts in Rural Communities and Allenheads Contemporary Arts. Look them up and you may see similarities to Deveron Arts in their ethos and approach.

I was sorry I couldn't stay longer in Huntly. I missed the famous folk session in the Tin Hut, Room to Run, Halloween (!), the list goes on. I'd like to thank everyone who gave up their time to meet me, for having me around, asking lots of questions digital recorder in hand, and taking up a lot of time.

I left further convinced that policy makers need fresh ways of assessing the value of culture. The thing is with art, you never know what effect it might have, and the chain of cause and effect is complex and unpredictable, and almost impossible to disentangle. Engaged art can change things, yet we don't know exactly how. As an artist whom I know said: 'if we knew in advance what we were going to do it wouldn't be art'. If instead of economics – that tries to calculate the value of the benefits gained in relation to the cost to the public purse and frequently comes up with numbers rather than experience, arts (and other) organisations could ask people to express that value in their own terms – we might get a more meaningful answer.



He made it!
**After 111 days of
pilgrimage, over 2500km,
Anthony Schrag arrived in
Venice on 1 October**

Pictured: Pilgrim in Venice, Parade to
the Biennale, Collected Relics, Picnic
at Giardini

Pictures by Alessandro Descovi



Crossword Answers: 1. Lemon Verbena 2. Rosemary 3. Linden 4. Raspberry Leaf 5. Sage 6. Nettle 7. Thyme 8. Peppermint 9. Camomile

The Path Travelled



/ Lure of the Lost

Crossing the Ponte della Libertà into Venice on October 1, Anthony Schrag was met by a parade of over 30 people from near and far, to walk the final stretch of his Contemporary Pilgrimage to the Venice Biennale. This project, spanning 111 days of pilgrimage over 2500km, saw an abundance of support from hosts, co-walkers and crowd-funders. Upon reaching the gates of Venice's Giardini, which holds much of the Biennale, Anthony paid tribute to all the people that helped him to reach his destination by reading out their names.

The pilgrim removed his worn shoes at a celebratory picnic post-arrival, which included herbs collected on the way, and laid out an array of relics collected from people along the route. From a lost feather from St. Kilda to a 4th Century Veneto carved pietra, the objects gathered depict the line traced by Anthony over three and a half months of movement, and the people weaved throughout. Later, Anthony and Claudia Zeiske from DA were joined by Venice based art critic and curator Prof Angela Vettese, to discuss his journey in front of an eager audience from near and far at the splendid venue of the Serra del Giardini.

Anthony's 2500+km pilgrimage from Huntly to Venice has been complimented by a variety of events. A panel discussion at Edinburgh Art Festival questioned what it means to walk to a major art festival; the discussion, led by David Harding, was complimented by a short pilgrimage from St Anthony's Chapel Ruin to Rosslyn Chapel, led by artist Andrea Geile,

who incorporated sculptural interventions into the route. Anthony also spoke at various events, such as with Creative Scene in West Yorkshire, and in London's Toynbee Hall, at a discussion on *The Right of Free Movement* addressing issues of the freedom to travel.

Throughout the pilgrimage, Anthony carried with him a small oak tree, from the same Beuys' Kassel acorns that make up Huntly's White Wood. Carried through the Cairngorms, down the Pennine Way, along the Via Francigena through France, over the Swiss Alps and into Italy, the oak was planted in a garden of the Arsenale in Venice, where it will grow for the next 900 years.

/ How We Remember Peace

On September 2 2015, Deveron Arts held a visit to the White Wood, commemorating 70 years since VJ Day. The *Oaks & Amity* project culminated this year in the community planting of over 1000 trees and other plants that will bloom in white; the colour of peace. Included were 49 oaks grown from acorns, from artist Joseph Beuys' oak trees in Kassel. The representation of German oaks, British soil, and French limestone placed on-site, is symbolic of peace between nations.



A visit was therefore fitting to commemorate the anniversary of the end of war, and discuss concepts of peace post-war. Participants were invited for a high tea and to reminisce over memories from the end of war and the immediate period after. Stories were told of the celebrations on Huntly Square at the announcement of the end of war. There was also retelling of WWI stories, involving the wearing of kilts by the Gordon Highlanders.

The wood was planted by and for the community and is due to see much activity in the coming years. Pupils from the Gordon Schools, upon visiting the site in September, have helped initiate a minor path, making the space more accessible to the community.

/ Place Work Folk

Murdo Macdonald, Professor of History of Scottish Art, visited Deveron Arts in late September to deliver a talk on town planner, ecologist and cultural activist Patrick Geddes. Concepts created by Geddes have, for a long time, informed Deveron Arts methodology. Associated with expressions such as 'by leaves we live' and 'think global, act local', Patrick Geddes is particularly relevant to our approach in Huntly.

Murdo spoke of Geddes as a *polymath*, incorporating both art and science, fact and creativity. This is in tune with Deveron Arts' holistic approach to everyday life and the creative programme within the community of Huntly. The talk coincided with Deveron Arts' Annual General Meeting and was concluded with an impressive feast by Rhynie Woman.

/ Open Garden

The lack of sunshine did not dampen our spirits this past Summer! We have made full use of the Brander Garden. An Honesty Box has been initiated by Deveron Arts Interns, allowing members of the public to come in and purchase seasonal produce grown in the garden, or donated by the local community. Did you see our strawberries?!

We have offered such produce at the monthly Farmers' Market. At the Huntly Hairst, in September, freshly grown mint was offered, as well as the introduction of the *Unwanted Plants Floristry*. Flowers, classed as 'weeds' by many, were arranged in blooming bouquets, raising relevant questions of the value in something often considered unwelcome.

By living we learn, by creating we think.
-Patrick Geddes

The Path Ahead

/ Rhynie Woman Skype Interview with Claudia Zeiske 15 Sept 2015

CZ: Hello Daisy and Debbi, with the publication of your book, *Cooking the Landscape*, we are rounding off your like-named project. To start with, please tell our readers what Rhynie Woman is about.

RW: We see ourselves as landscape artists. Not painting or sculpting it but using our other senses to experience it - primarily taste. The engagement with the public is through food, which naturally functions as a hub. We use what is available locally to hand, whether that is by foraging locally abundant plants/ingredients, or what people identify with being local ingredients. Our aim is to create a specific flavour of a specific place.

CZ: There are so many qualities to your work: history, nature, landscape, gender, hospitality, craft. How do you think your aesthetics are expressed through the artistic process?

RW: We feel our work could be perceived as traditional, vintage, and perhaps old fashioned but that aesthetic hides far more experimental and sometimes challenging ideas and flavours. Innocent looking iced cakes and chutneys can disguise unlikely weeds and foraged materials.

CZ: Yes, that is what makes you different from other foragers, other cooks and trendy caterers. It combines a sense of 'hospitality' with delicious, extravagant, but true to itself hospitality. What role does gender play? Could men do this?

RW: It sounds very sexist but we feel our practice is an extension of female domesticity, which is what both of us have been brought up with. We feel there is a different dynamic and ego when women are involved. It's not that men couldn't do it - they do - but our basis is domestic and not commercial.

CZ: We agree that women's practices, and accumulated knowledge have been ignored and undermined for too long as 'housewife' work. Your art brings value back to this by highlighting all the many things women can do, especially here in the country side. What about city people? Those who are not as lucky

as us, being able to forage on our doorstep. How do you think they can use your book?

RW: We will be experimenting with that format in the near future, taking it to Aberdeen. Although a city may look bare of wild produce, it's actually an oasis of eclectic multicultural species of plants in gardens, parks and other public places. It's a matter of looking more closely at the landscape around you and researching it.

CZ: Urban foraging; I like it. Is there, in your view, such a thing as a weed?

RW: Not really. Our view is that weeds are just plants in the wrong place at the wrong time, it could be a beautiful rose but if the gardener doesn't want it, then it's a weed. Weeds are just colonators, and successful at living in the most inhospitable places. They have their own beauty, however, and their persistence has to be admired... they can be relied upon. Whereas, the more fragile 'garden centre' plants are a bit hit and miss and a little frustrating sometimes.

CZ: Admired persistence. I wonder if this can also be applied to people, looking at the harrowing news around migrants and refugees across Europe at the moment. The Aberdeenshire town planner Patrick Geddes applied the rules of nature to community and society too. Maybe it is this extended cohabitation between plants, people and ideas that makes your art work and its popularity.

RW: We are all nature - all those rules apply - our ideals lead us to sustainability and how we, as individuals, can do that. In the same context, you then create a unique sense of place that is not the ubiquitous monoculture we seem to have gotten used to in recent years. Food is everywhere, it is how we see it, as to what it is. Our popularity is possibly about our ability to collaborate, socialise, speak on different levels, be adaptable, be chaotic and not worry about it too much. It's just food after all and it is transient.

CZ: Thank you for this conversation today, Daisy and Debbi. It was great having you contribute culinary ingenuity to our various projects. We are curious how Rhynie Woman is going to develop in the years to come.

Dates for your Diary

Lunchtime Talks

1pm, Brander Building, £1.50

Wed 14 October: Marlene Creates

The Boreal Poetry Garden and other works

Fri 27 November: Anne Murray

Welcome Home Rhynie Man

Fri 11 December: Claudia Zeiske

Trekking in the Semien Mountains, Ethiopia

Monday Autumn Walks

2 mile thematic walks, in and around

Huntly, from 2 November

10.30am, Huntly Square

Wed 11 November

Steve Brown: Native Woodlands

in NE Scotland

Brander Building, 7pm

Mon 30 November - Fri 11 December

ArtCOP: Visiting Storyteller

Coinciding with the UN Paris climate change negotiations, DA will be joining Creative Carbon Scotland in creative exploration, debate and discussion connecting art, climate change and environmental sustainability, with a visiting storyteller project

Sat 5 December

Eating the Landscape

Rhynie Woman Book Launch

9am - 1pm, Huntly Farmer's Market

Imprint/Abandon: Aidan O'Rourke

Fiddle music, bus and walking tour around

lived and abandoned landscapes

Meet Huntly Square, 12pm

£5 including bus (bring a picnic)

Fri 18 December

Huntly Small Business

Christmas Lunch

1pm, Park Lane Cafe

KEEP the DATE 2016

Sun 17 January: Snow Shoe Walk

Sat 16 April: Slow Marathon

Fri 27/Sat 28 May: White Wood

Forum: Pacifism, Ecology and Art

Notices

People Talk

Goodbye

Juliette Walker Project Intern

Katrina Anderson Intern

Tom Aitkinson Digital Intern

Welcome

Jeni Cumming Project Intern

Peter Moosgaard Shadow Curator Intern

Rachael Disbury Local Programmer

Pilgrim Talk

17 September 2015, Recetto, Italy
A Letter, from Anthony Schrag, To Those Who Stayed At Home

More than 2000km away, I can still feel us tied together with a thread. Sometimes, during the difficult moments, that thread has stretched and become tense, almost invisible. Other times, I have felt love coursing down it like a river in full flood. It has kept me going. I know it's strange to say, because how could the thoughts of people at home really enervise a walker a thousand miles or more from their front doors, but it has.

When I get back, I will not have made a loop (remember: I am not walking back!). I will have made a line. I will have drawn a trace from The Square to Venice, and made (approximately) 1200 steps per every kilometre, and I will have walked (approximately) 2500 km. That is three million steps. Three million steps in some tired and torn boots. So, when I get back to Huntly, I want to walk my tired and torn boots around The Square. Just a short, quick loop, in a way that shows the soles of my shoes that they are back home: that they have returned.



CAFE

Deveron Arts

Huntly Farmers Market
First Saturday of Every Month
9am - 1pm

Indulge in seasonal refreshments, or relax in the comfortable seating area, provided at Deveron Arts' pop-up cafe!

FRIDAY LUNCHES

On the last Friday of the month our doors open for lunch at 1pm.

Everybody is welcome to meet us for a hearty meal from the garden!

£1.50

Our Guests

Cllr John Latham, Huntly

Shelley Sacks, Prof Social Sculpture, Oxford

Prof Murdo MacDonald, Uni of Dundee

Mary Burgerhout, Gaelic Speaker

Ahlam Shibli, Artist, Palestine

Fran Rowe, PhD Candidate, Newcastle

Brian Ford, Historic Scotland

Jacques Coetzer, RSA

The Caravan Gallery, Artists

Alex Salmond, MP

Simon Preston, Artist

Jacqueline Donachie, Artist

Dennis Roberston, MSP

Shop

Rhynie Woman
Eating the Landscape £12

Stuart McAdam
Lines Lost £10

The Caravan Gallery & Jacques Coetzer
Aberdeenshire Ways £12



Contact Us:

Deveron Arts
The Studio
Brander Building
The Square, Huntly
AB54 8BR, Scotland

T: 01466 794494
E: info@deveron-arts.com
www.deveron-arts.com
www.walking-institute.com

Follow us:
on facebook and twitter

Deveron Arts works with the context and identity of the town of Huntly in Aberdeenshire. Here, the town is the venue, research base, studio, gallery and stage for artists of all fields and from all over the world. Engaging local people and the community in topics of both local + global concern, Deveron Arts works through a 50/50 motto, bringing together artistic and social relationships in a world wide network that extends throughout and beyond Huntly's geo-boundaries.