

THE
TOWN
IS THE
VENUE

Deveron Express



/ 300 Years to Grow ...

Spring 2016

Happy Valentines, Strathbogie
Pesto Pizza, Perambulator,
Cycling for Peace, COP21,
Cabrach Fiddle Coach Tour,
Long Lasting Stories,
Winter Solstice,
Slow Marathon,
White Wood Forum

Storyteller Ben Macfadyen joined us this winter to develop a story for the White Wood that will last the lifespan of the great oak trees which were planted last year. By building on themes central to Caroline Wendling's *Oaks and Amity* project, Ben is continuing the legacy of the wood, promoting it as a site for ongoing exploration of peace and ecology.

In November, Ben arrived in Huntly and began collecting personal experiences of

woodland and the White Wood from the community and those that helped to plant it. While the wood itself is in the early stages of development, it already carries its own history: from the recent, local activity of its planting; to the WWI and II conscientious objectors whom Caroline unearthed through her research; to the oaks' genealogical history, as acorns from Joseph Beuys' *7000 Oaks* project, connecting them to ideas of regeneration and transformation. Ben has pulled these narratives together to create a new story of the wood, as well as exploring its potential as a community space — inviting members of the community to join him to tell and exchange stories and imagine its future.

In creating a story that will last the lifespan of the trees, Ben has been examining the very nature of stories, how they are transmitted and preserved. Will the White Wood Story be passed down through generations and still be told when the oaks reach maturity? Ben has explored the ways in which stories are remembered, through aural traditions,

artefacts, events and rituals within a community.

The woodland has been planted as a site to explore what the future will hold for our environment and the wider world. How will our lifestyles affect future generations and our world? Ben put this questions at the forefront of his research by cycling in relay with others, with an oak sapling from Huntly, to the UN's climate change negotiations in Paris, in December. The debate was brought back to Huntly as Ben hosted a *COP21: Huntly* mini-conference, which transported the global discussions to a local and rural level, making people question: in 300 years, what will these trees see?

This panel discussion was in collaboration with Creative Carbon Scotland.

**Deveron
Arts**



Basic Pesto

a good couple of handfuls of herbs
100 grams of nuts
1/2 cup of extra virgin rapeseed oil
plenty black pepper and salt
2-4 cloves of garlic
zest and juice of 1 lime
100 grams of robust flavoured cheese

Blend all the ingredients together in a food processor for a couple of minutes, to your desired consistency. Taste the blend and adjust any ingredients or seasoning. Place in a sterilised jar and pop into the fridge. It can be used straight away, or kept in the fridge for up to a month; if freezing, split into small amounts for convenience.



From this Land double launch day event on 5 December

Rhynie Woman launched their book *Cooking the Landscape* at the Farmers' Market

Aidan O'Rourke released his new album *Imprint* with a musical tour of the Cabrachs

Pictures by Stuart McAdam

/Ben Macfadyen Interview

7 January 2016

RD: It's great to have you back in Huntly, Ben. Tell us what first interested you in the White Wood as a place to write a story?

BM: After finishing my work as a nature storyteller and drama artist with Eco Drama in Glasgow, I was fascinated by the intersection of the arts, ecology and the power stories have to shape the future. Ecology is all about understanding the complexity of systems, cycles, and keystone events and actors, just like our understanding of time and history. The idea of working on a project that not only brought together peace and ecology with such awareness, but also engaged with the local story of Huntly was very exciting to me. I was also drawn to working with the regeneration of a natural space, after months in Glasgow's concrete playgrounds!

RD: This project deals with a very specific cycle — the life of an oak tree. How do you go about creating a story that will grow with the oaks in the White Wood, and last 300 years?

BM: I guess it's impossible to know if anything will last 300 years when the world is changing so fast, this is why creating a culture of remembrance to surround the story is so important. For a story to last that long it needs to be mythic; the information and wisdom needs to lie beneath layers and symbols, otherwise it just won't stand the test of time. We've forgotten so much of our cultural heritage, and alongside it our connection to place and ancestry. Part of my intention for writing a story for the White Wood is to weave back some of that separation. I will be working with The Gordon Schools to inspire a big performance piece of the story; as the next generation, they are the ones that will carry it forward.

It's important for the roots to be accurate, so I've been meeting lots of people who were involved in the planting of the White Wood, as well as those with knowledge of local history and wildlife. Through this I hope to sow the seeds of longevity, keeping the story alive for many years, beyond my time here.

RD: You identify the White Wood as a project that brings together peace and ecology, how do you personally feel these concepts interlink?

BM: I only really got a sense of their interconnectedness on the day I set off from the White Wood to carry the oak sapling to Paris. That was the morning after the

November Paris attacks. Suddenly my journey wasn't just about climate justice or ecology, it was about peace. I hoisted a big white flag onto the back of the bike and made it to Paris, speaking about peace to everyone I passed along the way. I really got the sense, as I cycled through so much of deforested Scotland, that in order to live in a just and flourishing world we need to not see peace as something only between people. The signs of war are everywhere in the land too.

RD: COP21 was your Paris destination; how does the International Climate Conference fit in with your project in Huntly?

BM: When we plant trees and tell stories of peace we are not only reducing some of the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, we are sowing the seed of a different world. That's where the arts come in, and the work ArtCop21 and ArtCOP Scotland have done in supporting projects like ours has had a huge impact in broadening the movement. COP21 was just two weeks in a much longer journey towards climate justice. My time in Paris showed me that this is a bigger task than any one person, organisation or government can achieve, and that local actions play a huge part in making change. The White Wood Story asks the question 'what world will the trees see in 300 years?'. The answer to that question is up to us, so it's totally connected to how we act now for peace and climate justice in generations to come.

RD: In terms of local action, how would you suggest a community like Huntly could affect change?

BM: I think there are three levels to the actions we need to take. The first is about our individual choices: how we travel, what we eat, where our energy comes from, how we educate our children. The next is political and about reclaiming our power as citizens and

putting pressure on politicians, companies and those in power to make changes: writing letters, choosing where we shop, taking direct action. Then there is the community that we build through the process. That's the one that really excites me. It's about the power of people to come together to create a better world. The actions we take have to be joyful and sustainable for ourselves and communities.



RD: The power of people coming together is something you must have seen on your journey to Paris. What was it like cycling the oak there?

BM: I'm usually a solo cyclist, so travelling with 120 people from London was a really amazing journey. Everyone came with their own tales and the diversity of intentions for cycling all that way in December were so interesting. We came up against many questions about how we could work together well, and how we would take care of each other along the way. These are important questions to ask, not just on a trip like this. When we arrived in Paris we cycled down the Champs-Élysées together with flags and music. Cars were roaring past but we felt invincible, like the world we had been dreaming along the journey really was possible.

*Interview by Rachael Disbury
For further information about Ben's project visit: deveron-arts.com/white-wood-story*



The Path Travelled



/ Land Use and Ownership Day

With absentee ownership and tenant farming in our area, we are watching the Scottish Land Reform bill closely. While we have the right to roam in theory, having access to the land surrounding us is not always there in practice. Issues around access, abandonment and food production were at the heart of two artist commissions by Rhynie Woman and Aidan O'Rourke last year. *From this Land: exploring our multiple senses of place* saw a double launch.

Our contemporary relationship with food is often very distant from its production, the land and our local environment. Low cost and easy access means we often forget to ask where it comes from. Artist collective Rhynie Woman questions this by re-awakening a sense of connection to food from our hills and valleys. They kicked off the launch day on Huntly Square by firing up their pizza oven. Sprinkling dough with garden mint, yarrow and rosehip syrup, from ingredients foraged around the locality, Debby and Daisy reassure us that there is satisfaction from *Cooking the Landscape*, their newly released cooking and foraging guide.

To mark the release of his new album *Imprint*, Aidan O'Rourke took us on a coach, walk and fiddle tour of the Cabrach. Having been affected by various forms of clearance, the Cabrach is often described as an abandoned place. Suitably, the day was spent exploring closed schools, abandoned crofts, old barns and a quiet graveyard, with Aidan's inspired soundtrack guiding us.

The packed evening discussion at the local community centre, however, showed that this land is still populated with people concerned for its future. 'It's a hard life', says Neil Sheed, the youngest of a family of generations of tenant farmers, 'but it's our life'. Land like the Cabrach has opportunity to be productive

towards the creation of a local economy, which is more self-sufficient in food and energy, potentially improving the lives of the people that live there. Land like the Cabrach however, is owned not for the benefit of the people, but a small elite. The discussion highlighted access problems and prohibitions for people living on a land owned by people who do not live there, but whose interest is the farming and shooting of grouse. Scheduled for scrutiny in parliament this year, the new Land Reform Bill for Scotland intends to make provisions for engaging communities in decisions regarding land and access to it. Ian Douglas – Land Access Manager for Moray, who joined us for the community discussion – sympathises with the problems of land ownership, though claims that the power land-owners hold will be difficult to dispel.

/ ART COP21: Huntly

As delegates from across the United Nations gathered in Paris for the Climate Conference (COP21), to discuss how they might halt the impact of climate change, we held an evening of talks and discussion in the local Stewarts Hall.

The goal of COP21 was to achieve a legally binding agreement on climate change to curb greenhouse gas emissions around the globe and prevent the irreversible 2°C rise in temperature.

The potential effects of climate change are overwhelming and it's hard to contemplate what impact we, as individuals and communities, can make. A 2°C rise might not seem like a lot but the effects could be catastrophic with floods on one side of the globe and droughts on the other. How can we think past these incomprehensible facts and figures thrown at us, and not become paralysed by them, but instead look towards the development of locally organised opportunities that have a

global outlook?

Patrick Geddes' mantra "think global, act local" serves us as a good starting point. The panel started global and headed local: long-standing environmental activist Cliff Jones set the scene, describing first hand accounts of the effects of climate change and the melting of permafrost; Dr Liz Dinnie of The James Hutton Institute spoke of the importance of community led projects that deal with local problems; James Reid provided us with an alternative holistic solution to food production through permaculture; and Iain Findlay of the Forres Transition Network made an appeal that, along with the development of new sustainable and resilient forms of community, the larger systems of governments and corporations must be challenged too.

Ben Macfadyen, our storyteller in residence, facilitated an open-space discussion, asking us: what are the greatest challenges faced by towns like ours, and how can we individually and collectively deal with them? Ben linked these local issues to the global discussion personally, by co-cycling one of our oaklings from Huntly to Paris for the conference.

The outcome of the COP21 Paris talks has for many been a disappointment; reaching what they considered a weak agreement. Is our earth and its climate better off with an insubstantial agreement that people comply with, or a strong agreement that they don't comply with? For others the fact that the conference managed to get nearly all the countries of the world to put some form of commitment to paper is a substantial achievement.

We will continue to discuss and explore how we can respond to climate change on a local level. Keep an eye out for our *Leftover Lunches* during lent.

/ Perambulator

Clare Qualmann's *Perambulator* map has been published, resulting from her 2014 residency. The project involved negotiating Huntly with her two children and pram to explore how the infrastructure of the town affects the experience of walking. The often overlooked addition of a pushchair significantly limits movement within both urban and rural environments.

Perambulator suggests alternative pram friendly routes for both practical walks, to the shops, and recreational routes such as the 'Riverside Loop', highlighting the awkwardness parents face in everyday journey that we take for granted.

Get your map at the Linden Centre or Brander Library.

Story-telling . . . does not aim to convey the pure essence of a thing, like information or a report. It sinks the thing into the life of the story-teller, in order to bring it out of him again. Thus traces of the story-teller cling to the story the way the hand-prints of the potter cling to the clay vessel."

- Walter Benjamin

The Path Ahead

/ White Wood Forum:

Art and Sustainability: Joseph Beuys and beyond

Huntly, 26-27 May 2016

For millennia, storytellers, musicians, and other artists and indigenous thinkers have engaged with sentient ecologies and cosmologies that enmesh people into complex relationships between them and all matter. At the core of all this is a concern of the environment and obtaining peace.

Our current eco-political system is designed by and for the very few, resulting in unending conflict and ecological decay. What world can we dream of for future generations? And what contributions can art make?

The White Wood Forum discussions center on social and cultural perspectives of sustainability: local and global understandings and lived practices around the world.

Focusing on the nexus between art, peace and ecology, the White Wood forum questions whether art can be in harmony with the key principles of sustainability, to include social justice, grass roots democracy and non-violence, next to ecology. How can we foster a culture of complexity, an art that impacts the future, to the benefit of generations to come?

With contributions from:

Deirdre Heddou (chairperson) Prof of Contemporary Performance, University of Glasgow.

Satish Kumar, life-long peace activist and editor of Resurgence magazine.

Shelley Sacks, Professor of Social Sculpture, Oxford Brooks University; Founder of the University of the Trees.

Caroline Wendling, White Wood artist.

Robin MacAlpine, Director of Common Weal.

Rhea Thoenges, Joseph Beuys friend; collaborator of the 7000 Oaks project.

Ben travels from Huntly, to WWI trenches, and then further back still, to the first micro-organisms on the planet.

The pair have been running workshops with The Gordon Schools to inspire classes to develop their own interpretation of the story, which they will continue to develop as part of their syllabus. The art, drama and music departments will be working collaboratively over the next few months to create a performance of the tale for the White Wood Forum in May. Ben will be returning to Huntly to tell the story at the forum and to plant the Peace Objects he has been collecting from local people. If you wish to donate a personal object, please contact us.

/ Slow Marathon

This year's Slow Marathon takes its inspiration from the project *With and Against the Flow*. Visual artist Anne Murray and musician Jake Williams walked the length of the River Deveron (in opposite directions) from its source to the sea; mapping its banks, and surrounding area through collecting stories, songs and illustrations.

Now in its fifth year, the Slow Marathon originated as a poetic act as Ethiopian artist Mihret Kebede tried to walk from her home in Addis Ababa to Aberdeenshire. Due to physical boundaries, closed borders and visa restriction the 5,850 miles could not be achieved by one walk alone. Instead, this ambitious feat could be achieved if 225 walked 26 miles each, metaphorically completing the distance. And thus the Slow Marathon was born.

For 2016 the 26mile/42km route will go with and against the flow of the Deveron, on Saturday 16 April. It will be followed on Sunday by talks and discussions reflecting on our use of rivers, and how they have shaped our landscape and culture.

EXPLORATION AIDS

Tim Knowles is developing a network of howffs, shelters and other aids in the Cabrach/Cairngorms area

21-22 July: Camp Exploration
Join Tim for an outdoor adventure!

Try out: bush craft, foraging and shelter making

23 July: Howff Warming
A day about shelter/housing in the Scottish land, with discussion on land use/access

/ Soon 20 Years

After nearly 20 years in operation, Deveron Arts finds itself at a time where we want to review and reflect upon our impact and achievements so far, both in our hometown of Huntly, as well as further afield.

To help us achieve this, Tessa Jackson OBE will be joining us as Shadow Curator throughout 2016, helping us to find appropriate ways of celebrating our work in our 20th year of operation. Tessa is an independent curator, writer and cultural advisor in International Cultural Development. Until recently she was Director of Iniva (Institute of International Visual Arts), London, an organisation that explores the politics of race and global identities through the visual arts.

With over 25 years' experience working as a curator, gallery director and cultural policy advisor in Britain and internationally, Tessa will bring a critical perspective to our mission and help us articulate a new framework for our continuing diverse practice here in Huntly and further afield.

WHITE WOOD FORUM

Get Tickets **NOW** at: deveron-arts.com

Early bird (first 50): **£35**

Regular tickets: **£45**

Student concessions available

/ The White Wood Story

In January storyteller Ben Macfadyen and Moroccan musician Omar Afif performed the newly crafted *White Wood Story*. After leading a procession to the wood, Ben told the tale that explores the history of the area and its connections to peace and conflict. Ben's story gives voice to the varying perspectives of animals, trees, earth and light. Through story,

SLOW MARATHON 2016

BOOK NOW TO RESERVE YOUR PLACE!

First 50: **£25**, Regular tickets: **£35**
www.deveron-arts.com/events/slow-marathon-2016

TRAIN WITH US!

Sat 5 March & Sat 2 April: Meet 1pm
Huntly Square

Walks will be up to 10 miles, wear sensible shoes and bring a packed lunch

LIVING THE LAND

*Artists and the Arts:
Living and Working in the rural*

Thursday 17 March 2016

A day with Amanda Catto from Creative Scotland, talking about being an artist in rural Scotland.

*Limited places
More details at: deveron-arts.com*

Notices

People Talk

Goodbye

Jeni Cumming Project Intern
Peter Moosgaard Shadow Curator Intern
Kate Sargent Project Manager

Welcome

Tessa Jackson Shadow Curator
Sophie Lindsey Project Intern
You Li Intern
Dominic O'Donnell Project Intern
Omar Afif Gnawa Musician

Our Guests

Marlene Creates, artist, Canada
Travis Souza, artist, Portland, USA
Moira Jeffrey, writer, Scotland
Helen Needham, BBC, Scotland

Shop

NEW ITEMS!

Aidan O'Rourke CD
(or geocache the tunes for free!)
Imprint £5.95
(visit: www.deveron-arts.com/imprint-abandon/ for more information)

Rhynie Woman
Cooking the Landscape £10
Cooking the Landscape + limited edition measure cup £20

Coming Soon: Janet Starkey
Huntly Cookbook



CAFE

Deveron Arts

Huntly Farmers Market
First Saturday of every month
9am - 1pm

Inspiring and topical refreshments in our seasonal pop-up cafe!

PODCASTS

A new series of podcasts exploring local accounts of food, growing, cooking and eating; travel, land and landownership, local songs, folklore and beliefs. Interviews with local historians, farmers, musicians and residents from the Deveron and Strathbogie valleys

Recorded by Gill Russell and Isobel Gilchrist.
Listen at:

www.deveron-arts.com/rhynie-woman

FRIDAY LUNCH

Every Friday our doors are open for lunch at 1pm. £2

During Lent: Leftover Lunches; rake your fridge left-overs and we cook it.

Watch out for our Friday lunch speaker sessions.

Do you want to give a talk?

Art, a trip or trek, local history or issues, specialist knowledge or any other topic; come and share it with us.



EMBROIDERY WORKSHOPS

Would you like to learn a new stitch?

The Quaker Stitch is a technique that allows your embroidery to be visible on both sides.

We will be holding informal sessions for needlework and teaching the stitch. With refreshments.

If you are interested please get in touch.



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Follow us:
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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 the geo-boundaries of Huntly.