

ABRIACHAN, SAT 26 MAY 2018

HIGHLAND STRAVAIG



Scottish
Centre
for
Geopoetics

IN ASSOCIATION WITH MONIACK MHOR & THE ABRIACHAN FOREST TRUST

This year's Highland Stravaig will take place in Abriachan in collaboration with Moniack Mhor, Scotland's Creative Writing Centre, and the Abriachan Forest Trust (AFT). Abriachan is a rural community set high in the hills above the western shores of Loch Ness, half way between Inverness and Drumnadrochit. We will explore Abriachan both as a rich cultural and literary landscape and as a part of a diverse bio-region, reflecting on different creative, poetic and aesthetic ways of being in this place.

A live theme at last year's 'Expressing the Earth' conference on Seil Island in Argyll was the contribution of geopoetics to modern land consciousness. There is a social and poetic link here: 2018 sees the 20th anniversary of the Abriachan Forest Trust's community land buy-out in 1998, following the Isle of Eigg in 1997. This year's Stravaig is, in part, a celebration of this milestone in Abriachan's history. Local writer Katharine Stewart (1914 - 2013), a former member of the Scottish Centre for Geopoetics, played an important role in this story. Stewart's writing - including *A Croft in the Hills* (1979) and *Abriachan: The Story of an Upland Community* (2000) - is celebrated this year by Moniack Mhor with a bursary for aspiring nature writers and writers of historical fiction. Following the inaugural Tony McManus Lecture on 'Nan Shepherd as an Early Geopoet' by James McCarthy in Edinburgh in 2017, we will also reflect on the work of local author Jessie Kesson, who, upon a chance meeting with Shepherd, was inspired to pursue her writing. Kesson's works include *The White Bird Passes* (1958), *Glitter of Mica* (1963) and *Another Time, Another Place* (1983).



SCHEDULE

This will be a day in two parts. Following a welcome from **Mairi McFadyen** and **Heather Clyne**, we will discover more about the story of Abriachan from leader of the Forest School, **Suzann Barr**. Gaelic expert **Roddy MacLean** will share his deep knowledge of Gaelic place-names, native flora and fauna and local geodiversity on a forest walk in the shadow of hill *Carn na Leitire*, inspiring a creative response to the landscape (outdoor wear recommended!).

In the afternoon, following a lunch of soup and bread, we will hear from ecologist and international river campaigner Lucio Marcello - who is currently investigating archive materials to chart the impact of dams and other land use changes on the biodiversity of the Ness river system - and from writer and cartographer **Raghnaid Sandilands** who will share her creative approach to landscape and cultural memory.

Following some free creative time in the afternoon, we will traverse 1.4 miles up the road to the Village Hall. Writer and musician **Heather Clyne** will introduce us to the work of Jessie Kesson with a selection of readings on a short walking tour through the village. This will be followed by a hearty shared meal in the hall and an evening ceilidh hosted by Heather and Mairi, with opportunities for open floor contributions. Music for dancing will be provided by the local community ceilidh band.

PART 1: ABRIACHAN FOREST CLASSROOM

10am	<i>Arrivals, Teas & Coffees</i>
10.30am	Welcome: Mairi McFadyen & Heather Clyne
10.45am	Suzann Barr: 'Celebrating 20 years of Abriachan Community'
11.15am	Roddy MacLean: 'Gaelic in the Landscape' Forest Walk/Talk
12.15pm	<i>Lunch (soup & sandwiches)</i>
1pm	Dr Lucio Marcello (UHI): 'Biodiversity and Cultural Memory'
2pm	Raghnaid Sandilands: Creative Cartography
3pm	Creative time/workshop time/wandering/free time
4pm	Travel to Village Hall (5 mins by car)

PART 2: ABRIACHAN VILLAGE HALL

4.30pm	Dr Heather Clyne: Jessie Kesson Walk/Talk (leaving from hall, 45 mins)
6pm	<i>Shared Evening Meal. BYOB</i>
7.30pm	Evening Ceilidh - Open Floor & dance (Heather & Mairi host) - Open to All
10pm ~	Finish

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Suzann Barr

Suzann is a member of the Abriachan Forest Trust. She is a teacher, botanist and is Learning Coordinator for the Abriachan Forest School. The Forest school is the only one of its kind in the Highlands, turning Abriachan's community owned forest into an educational resource for children, young people and adults.

<http://www.abriachan.org.uk/>

Roddy MacLean (*Ruairidh MacIlleathain*)

Roddy is an Inverness-based Gaelic journalist, broadcaster and author of publications on Highland place names. Much of his professional life is concerned with assisting Gaelic learners to reach fluency through, for example, his Letter for Learners on *BBC Radio nan Gàidheal*. He has also worked on developing a greater understanding within Scotland's Gaelic-speaking population of the relationship between Gaelic language and culture and the local environment. Roddy is also a botany graduate, hillwalker, Nordic skier and sailor.

Raghnaid Sandilands

Raghnaid Sandilands is a writer, publisher (*Dreathan Donn Press*) and quiet radical based in Farr on the south side of Loch Ness. She was involved in initiating the 'Farr Conversations' talk series in 2013 aiming to 'oil the wheel of engagement with issues affecting Scotland by hosting lively nights in one Highland hall.' She also runs the local *Fèis* and is involved with Fearnag Growers - *Lios na Feàrnaig*, a community-run allotment project which offers talks and creative workshops for the local community.

Dr Lucio Marcello

Lucio is an academic and ecologist with a background in molecular genetics and bioinformatics. Having worked internationally, he is now based in Cromarty on the Moray Firth. He recently joined the Rivers and Lochs Institute (University of the Highlands and Islands) and coordinates the AMBER working group, with a focus on biodiversity and habitat assessment of the River Ness Case Study. Lucio is also an international campaigner with 'To The Amazon,' a platform devoted to all individuals, organisations and indigenous peoples that are fighting to protect the Amazon Rainforest.

Dr Heather Clyne

Heather is a writer and musician based in Abriachan. She is a graduate in Scottish Gaelic from Sabhal Mòr Ostaig on the Isle of Skye and has a passion for Gaelic placenames and poetry. Her book *The Rough Bounds of Lochaber - A' Ghàidhlig air Aghaidh na Tìre Garbh-Chrìochan Loch Abar*, co-written with Jake King, was published by Scottish Natural Heritage. Heather works part-time at Moniach Mhor and is currently writing a book on the life of North East fiddler James Scott Skinner. She regularly organises gigs in the local village hall and is often found tending her ever-increasing flock of hens, each named after a Scottish fiddle player.

Dr Mairi McFadyen

Mairi is a creative ethnologist, writer, researcher and cultural activist. She is a graduate of the Department of Celtic & Scottish Studies, University of Edinburgh where she worked for 9 years until she escaped to the Highlands in 2017. Mairi is involved with various creative and educational projects and is currently writing a book on her PhD research into the aesthetics and poetics of traditional song. She was delighted to become assistant director of the Scottish Centre for Geopoetics in 2017.

DIRECTIONS

Inverness to Abriachan:

Take the A82 south for Fort William. (4 miles) Do not turn off the A82 at the first signpost marked for Blackfold and Abriachan (8 miles) Take the right turn marked Abriachan at the large turning circle.

From Fort William, Fort Augustus and Invermoriston:

Proceed up the A82 through Drumnadrochit, the Abriachan road is approximately another five miles. Just round the bend from the Nursery Gardens there is a turning circle on the right. Turn into the turning circle to approach the Abriachan road safely.

In Abriachan

Travelling up the Abriachan road for about a mile the village hall will be the grey corrugated iron building on your right. Shortly after the hall there is a junction, take the left fork, marked Abriachan Forest Walks Passing a small Loch on your left, the Abriachan Forest is the next left turn. The Forest Trust car park is 300 metres on the left.

Download a map here:

http://www.abriachan.org.uk/downloads/2010_abriachan_trust_3pdf.pdf

ACCOMMODATION

Map of regional accommodation on Visit Scotland website (scroll to bottom):

<https://www.visitscotland.com/info/see-do/abriachan-trail-p317431>

In Abriachan itself:

Self-catering:

<https://www.holidaylettings.co.uk/rentals/abriachan/>

Airbnb:

<https://www.airbnb.co.uk/s/Abriachan>

Camping:

<http://camping-pod-heaven-gb.book.direct/en-us/cabins>

<http://abriachan-cafe-campsite-wester-laide.business.site/>

Bed and Breakfasts:

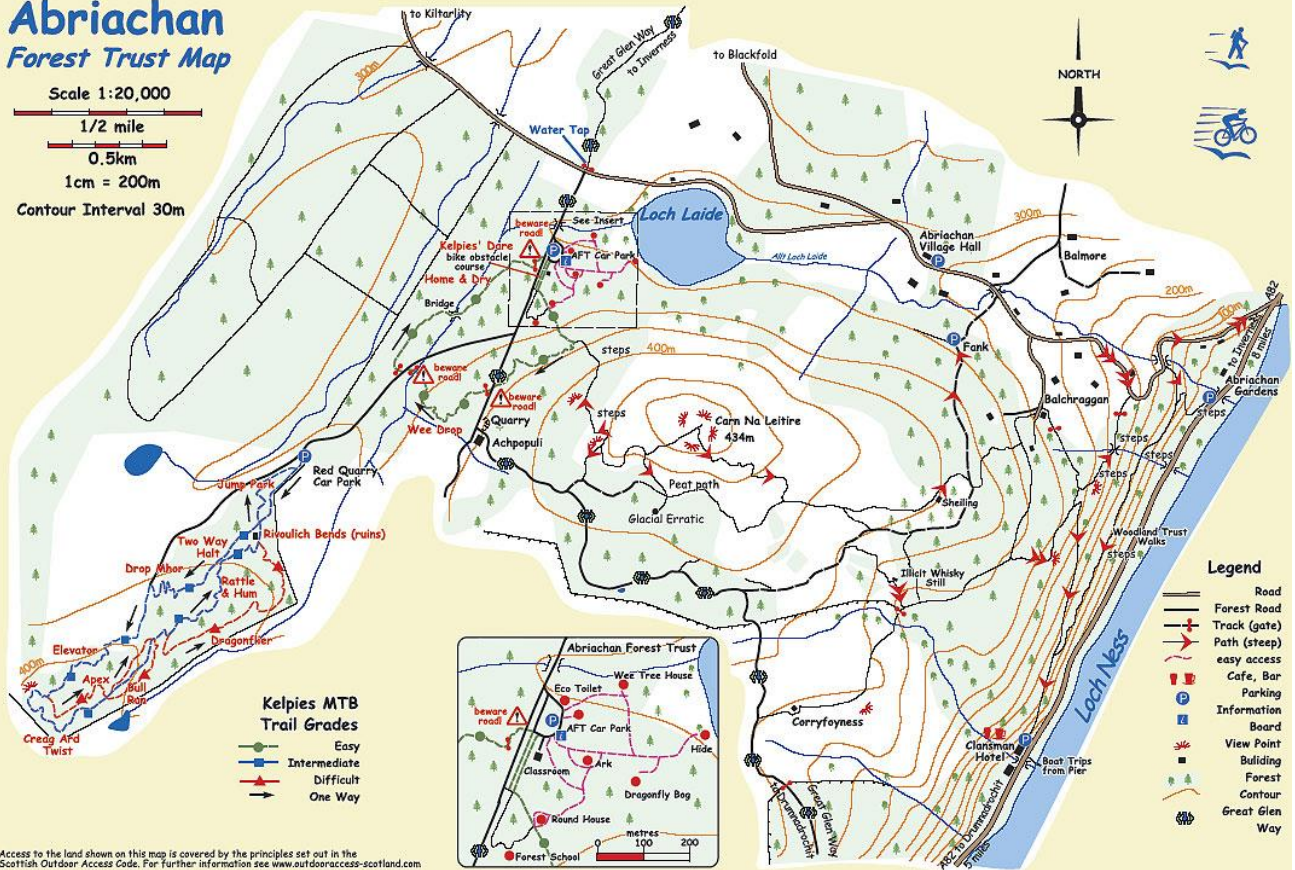
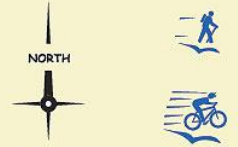
<http://www.bedandbreakfasts.co.uk/highland/abriachan/>

CONTACT

Please email Mairi McFadyen at geopoeticshighland@gmail.com for more information.

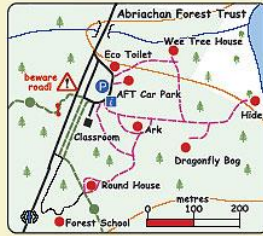
Abriachan Forest Trust Map

Scale 1:20,000
 1/2 mile
 0.5km
 1cm = 200m
 Contour Interval 30m



Kelpies MTB Trail Grades

- Easy
- Intermediate
- Difficult
- One Way



- Legend**
- Road
 - Forest Road
 - Track (gate)
 - Path (steep)
 - easy access
 - ☺ Cafe, Bar
 - Ⓟ Parking
 - ⓘ Information
 - Ⓛ Board
 - Ⓜ View Point
 - ▣ Building
 - 🌲 Forest
 - Contour
 - ⚡ Great Glen Way

Access to the land shown on this map is covered by the principles set out in the Scottish Outdoor Access Code. For further information see www.outdooraccess-scotland.com
 Map based on out of copyright OS material and original survey by Trailmaps using GPS.
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OS Map 26, grid reference NH 540 355