

DRAFT

For The Journey & Return
Orkney- Shetland- Bergen- Oslo- Trondheim- Orkney
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'For The Journey and Return' is an art project developed with the Orkney Islands Council. It will form part of a programme of cultural events that the Orkney Arts Council are holding in 2017, to mark 900 years since the death of St Magnus, the peace loving, Norwegian Earl of Orkney.

My name is Beatrice Searle. I am an artist and stonemason. My practice explores closer human connection with landscape. I have been researching footprints carved into rock, because the idea of being anchored and strengthened by direct contact with a stone has great resonance for me. The carving of footprints into stone has a rich historical precedent in Pictish, Medieval and Roman history.

The project I put to the Orkney Islands Council is directly inspired by one such example of footprints in rock, an ancient Orcadian stone known as The Ladykirk Stone. The stone is not on public view, but is housed in a back room in Old St Mary's Church in Burwick, South Ronaldsy. This was its location when it was first recorded, around 400 years ago. Into this piece of whinstone, rounded by the action of the sea, are carved two foot shaped hollows. The footprints are carefully shaped and smoothed, so that a bare foot fits comfortably. For reasons of local legend the stone is sometimes referred to as St Magnus' Boat. One of many stories surrounding the stone tells that St Magnus, when he was unable to find a boat to carry him across the Pentland Firth, took this stone and, "setting his feet thereupon, passed the Firth safely and left the stone in the Church, which has continued here ever since."



However, the stone almost certainly came from and was used near its present location. It precedes St Magnus and the myths that surround him, having in fact been made and used by the Picts during the late Iron Age. For the Picts, stones such as these were connected with Iron Age Kingship; the chosen King would stand in the footprints in order to signify his connection with the land he ruled and to attest to his intention to follow in the footsteps of his ancestors. Subjects too, when the time came to choose a new King or chieftain, would stand in the stone to proclaim their votes before their peers, signifying by the steadfastness of the stone that the deed would be lasting. These stones promoted democracy and harmony; stepping into the stone was a deliberate act, an unambiguous action that could not be misinterpreted. Pictish stones containing footprints occur elsewhere in Scotland, such as in The Hebrides and Dunadd in Argyll.

Carving and standing in such stone was significant for the Romans, also. To bring safe travel the Romans are known to have carved pairs of footprints into stones, bearing the inscription 'Pro Itu Et Reitu,' 'For the Journey and Return.' The traveller would place his feet in the footprints to mark the beginning and the end of the undertaking, in order to be in direct contact with the land he loved, to which he was returning, or leaving. This use relates to another tale surrounding the legend of Magnus, which tells that rather than cross on the stone, Magnus stood in it before setting out by boat across the Pentland Firth.

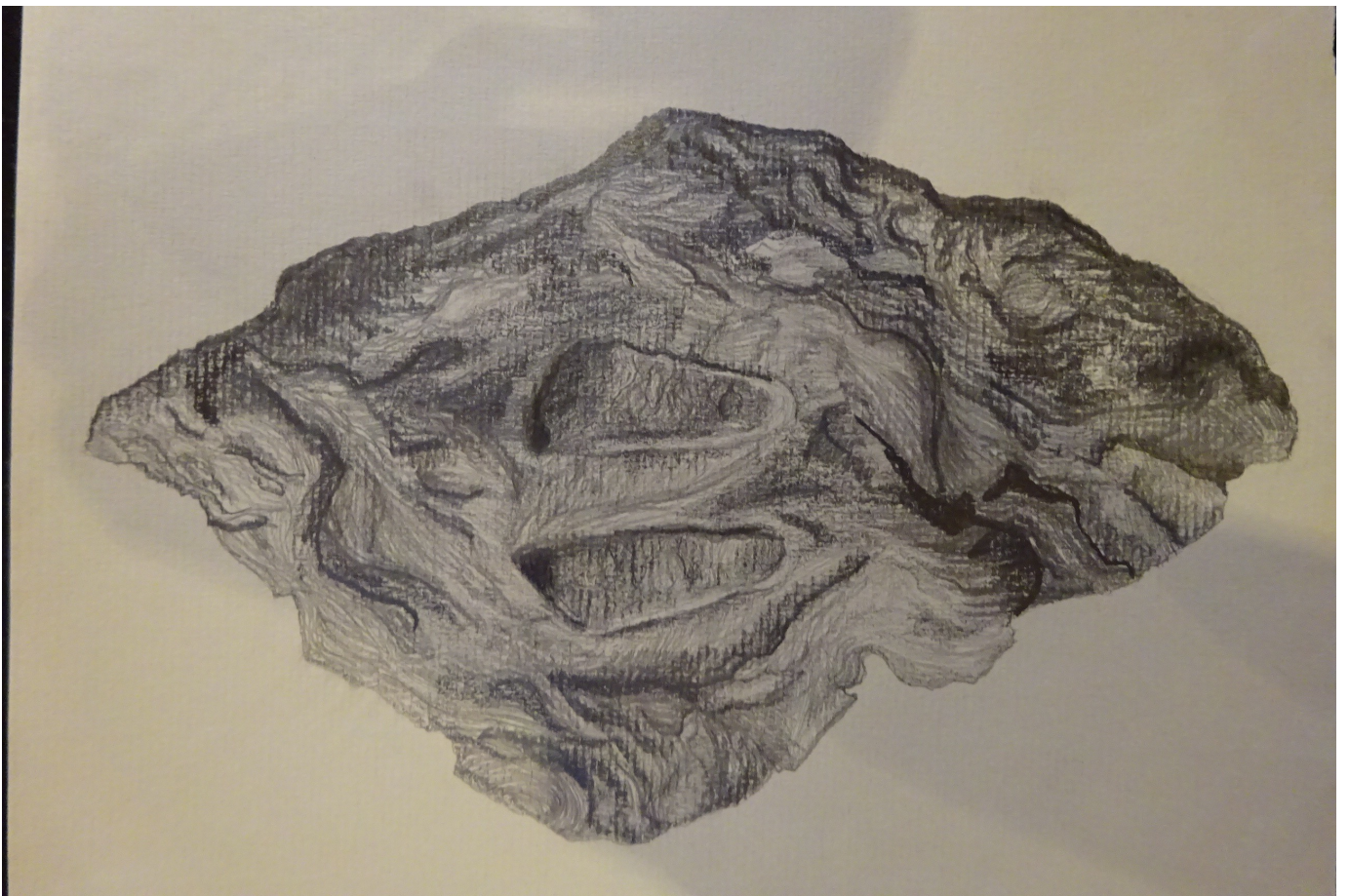
Whether to lead, to exercise one's democratic right or to undertake a journey, all who stood in a footprint stone wished to be empowered by the act, deriving the wisdom, strength and resilience that could be harnessed by direct contact with rock.

For the Journey and Return references varying utilities and mythologies surrounding these stones. It is a project of three parts:

CARVING A NEW STONE: THE ORKNEY BOAT

I will carve my own footprint stone in old red sandstone. This stone is particular to the geology of Orkney; it was chosen from the cliffs at Yesnaby. Old red sandstone also forms the Old Man of Hoy and the sea-rounded boulders at Rackwick Bay. This new stone will be named and known as The Orkney Boat. This stone will not be a historical replica but a contemporary and interactive artistic tool.





THE JOURNEY

I will make a journey with the stone, carrying it with me at all times. The journey begins with the St Magnus Way, a new walking route soon to be opened in Orkney. From Orkney I will travel, with the stone, by boat to Shetland and on to Bergen, then we will go by train to Oslo. From this point onwards travel will be on foot. I will bring the stone along on a Monowalker Wanderanhanger, drawn from my waist, through the Gudbrandsalen Valley and over the Dovre Mountains, descending after a 650km walk, to Nidaros Cathedral in Trondheim. During my journey I will set down the stone to stand in it. Rather than being a stationary object, left and returned to, the stone becomes an anchor to the land, a portable piece of Orkney, a way of being in contact with the islands wherever I go. It is integral to the project that the stone makes a significant journey and that I too prove my commitment to be in sustained contact with it, by carrying it with me over a long duration and some challenging terrain, accepting the inevitable slowness that comes with a journey on foot. Like Kings of old, something of the stone's strength and resistance can be harnessed by direct and sustained contact with it. In the current climate of mass, often forced migration, carrying part of a beloved landscape or homeland takes on an additional and importance resonance. I will then return the stone home to Orkney.



STANDING IN THE STONE

Before taking it on its journey I will stand in The Orkney Boat and dedicate it to the people of Orkney. I will also read a short manifesto that sets out the purpose and intention of the stone. A written copy of the manifesto will accompany us on our journey, available both English and Norwegian. Toni Watts, Illuminator to Lincoln Cathedral, is making an illuminated copy of the manifesto to remain in Orkney.

As the stone makes its journey it accumulates a powerful narrative of its own. Fellow travellers, participating artists and members of the public are invited to walk with me and to stand, barefoot, in the stone. Furthermore, they are invited to speak out from it. Like Pictish subjects, when people stand in the stone they are literally ‘taking a stand’ for something and are welcome to exercise their democratic right. Their reason for standing, if they wish to state it, will be documented. Their democratic franchise is validated and empowered by the stance they take, in an powerful, resilient, slow moving, wise, ancient stone. Stepping into The Orkney Boat is a distinct and deliberate act; an unambiguous action. In this way the person planting themselves in the stone is making clear their commitment to democratic principles at a time when very powerful plebiscites are impacting us all.

I will be particularly inviting politicians, campaigners, ambassadors- all that would seek to proclaim and endorse its message of democracy and renewed human connection with landscape. Liam MacArthur MSP for Orkney has expressed his wish to stand in The Orkney Boat before it begins its journey.

INVOLVEMENT WITH MAGNUS 900

The Magnus 900 programme is being planned by the Orkney Islands Council to remember and commemorate St Magnus of Orkney, who himself stood for harmony and peace.

This project meets the declared aims of the Orkney Islands Council in that it will:

- a. celebrate the life of St Magnus
- b. educate the public in the life and times of St Magnus

- c. promote and further the work of St Magnus as a means of exploring the contemporary relevance of St Magnus today
- d. provide an art work that will be an enduring legacy for the people of Orkney.

OUTCOMES OF THE PROJECT:

The revival and modernisation of a little known, ancient tradition that celebrates Orkney's rich Pictish and Norse culture, that they can keep and continue.

Promotes a focus on connection to landscape, raising questions of belonging and journeying.

An endorsement of and commitment to creating democracy and harmony and renewing human sympathy and connection with landscape.

A celebration and telling of part of the St Magnus Story.

The making interactive of an ancient tradition

Exchange of knowledge, stories, hospitality and conversation between artist, the community of Orkney, Norway, travellers and all who I meet along the way.

Strengthening and promotion of cultural and historic links between Orkney and Norway.

I will document the journey through photographs, maps, drawings and writing, along the way and subsequently. I hope to produce a publication of these outcomes that will be available to purchase and given to artist libraries.

The Orkney Boat will be installed at St Magnus' Cathedral, alongside the stone sculpture of Frances Pelly, specially commissioned to mark the St Magnus Way.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS:

- **February 2017: Live event, the making of The Orkney Boat on St Magnus Cathedral green.**
- **March 2017: Launch of the public Kickstarter campaign.**
- **April 16th, 2017 (St Magnus Day):** Launch of the Magnus 900 programme and first leg of The St Magnus Way (Gurness- Birsay.) The public are invited to walk the first leg of the route; I will be walking with the stone. The manifesto will be read for the first time.
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- **May 27th and 28th 2017: Orkney Folk Festival Weekend:** The second leg of the St Magnus Way (Birsay- Finstown) will open, to co-incide with the festival weekend. Once again the public are invited to walk with me and the stone. Orcadian musician, James Watson, will accompany us and play his composition, "Music for a Departure" on the Hardanger fiddle, specially commissioned for this project.
- **W/C 29th May, 2017: The Swan sets sail from Orkney.** The stone and I will leave Orkney on The Swan, an ex-herring fishing vessel, originally launched in 1900. We will go via Shetland, from which we can sail directly on to Bergen.



- **Date TBC: Arrival in Bergen** (Orkney is twinned with Hordaland and I am discussing our arrival with the Cultural Department)
- **Date TBC: Arrival in Oslo** (centre of governance in Norway; I am currently inviting political and environmental figures and campaigners to meet with us and stand in the stone)
- **Date TBC: Arrival in Trondheim** (I am discussing the reception of the stone with the Stonemasons of Nidaros Cathedral)
- **Date TBC: Return to Orkney.** It is hoped that the stone will be used again by the people of Orkney, for whom it has been created.
- **Date TBC: Installation of the Stone.** The Orkney Boat will be installed at St Magnus' Cathedral, alongside the stone sculpture of Frances Pelly, specially commissioned to mark the St Magnus Way. Together, these two sculptures mark the end of the St Magnus Way route.

- **December, 2017: Norwegian tree lighting in Orkney and Symposium about Pilgrimage** (religious, secular, contemporary, historical, the reason for and the act of walking.) I will be speaking about the project.