



The Atlantic Islands Festival and Geopoetics Summer School

Our Festival and Summer School on the Isle of Luing in July 09 were very successful with top quality musicians, artists, writers and speakers attracting appreciative audiences from Scotland, England, Ireland and the local area. Many useful connections were made, the understanding of geopoetics was strengthened and, thanks to an Awards For All grant of £5000, we managed to balance the books.

The For Argyll online newspaper published 5 glowing reviews of the event and H-Arts reviewed the Atlantic Islands Suite. You can read these at www.forargyll.com and www.hi-arts.co.uk and find out more on "www.atlanticislandsfestival.com"



Atlantic Islands Festival, Slate Sculpture Competition: Prizewinner

The Atlantic Islands Centre

The Isle of Luing Community Trust has received over £22k development funding to progress its plans to build an Atlantic Islands Centre in Cullipool to include heritage exhibitions, courses and conferences and arts activities. This would include space for the Scottish Centre for Geopoetics to rent to provide a research and resource

base for study purposes. Further information is available at www.isleofluing.org. Some site preparation has taken place and an application for European funding has recently been made.



The site of the proposed Atlantic Islands Centre

Kenneth White Lecture

There will be a lecture by Kenneth White at the National Library of Scotland, George IV Bridge, Edinburgh on Wednesday 9 September 2009 at 7pm.

Unfortunately, all places for this event are booked but it may still be worth putting your name on the waiting list in case of cancellations: at www.nls.uk or phone 0131 623 3918.

The title of the lecture will be: **Moving out – the Extension and Expansion of Scottish Intelligence.**

In this talk, while making an understanding gesture in that direction, Kenneth White will be less concerned with the forced clearances and hopeful emigration schemes that have so marked Scottish history than with what he considers to be an endemic urge in the Scot to move, to cross territories, to open up new existential, intellectual, cultural space.

To illustrate his argument, he will examine the itineraries of a whole line of Scots ranging from the early travelling monks to Robert Louis Stevenson, via Duns Scot, the wandering scholars of the Middle Ages, George Buchanan and David Hume.

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For previous Newsletters and links check out the International Institute of Geopoetics website: www.geopoetique.net.

For all the latest news about the Scottish Centre for Geopoetics go to www.geopoetics.org.uk. Please forward or copy this Newsletter to others who may be interested.

His own life and work being largely the continuation of this line, White will then give the talk a more personal, biographical turn, speaking of his moves in Europe, Asia and America, concentrating on France. He will evoke events, contacts and activities in Paris, the Cévennes area, the Pyrenees, Aquitania, and the North coast of Brittany where he now lives.

The accent will be, not on any simplistic opposition of inside and outside, or anything resembling Heimat complex and identity ideology, but on a wide field of radiant energy expanding in concentric circles.



Kenneth White

A new book of his essays *Les Affinités extrêmes* has been published in France and *L'Esprit nomade* has appeared in German: *Streifzüge des Geistes, Nomadenwege zur Geopoetik* (Waldgut Verlag), and in Portuguese. *House of Tides* has been translated into Serbian and *The Blue Road* into Turkish.



Magnetic North theatre company is touring its production of Henry Thoreau's *Walden* from August to October 2009 including an Atlantic Islands Festival event in Cullipool Hall on the Isle of Luing

on Friday 11 September at 7.45pm. Tickets £8/£5 concessions from 01852 314322 or Luing Store 01852 314243. There are only 40 places, book now.



On 4 July 1854 Henry David Thoreau, a 27 year old Harvard graduate, failed teacher and student of Eastern philosophy, walked into the woods near his hometown of Concord, Massachusetts and decided to stay. He found a spot next to a lake called Walden Pond, built a hut, and for the next two years he attempted to live entirely by his own resources.

Walden, Thoreau's account of his 'experiment in simple living' is one of the most extraordinary and unclassifiable books ever written. It is a classic text of living life simply and well.

Following rave reviews and a sell-out run in 2008 and in Glasgow and the Edinburgh Festival Fringe in August 2009, Magnetic North is touring its beautiful one-man adaptation of this classic meditation on self-sufficiency, the individual's relationship with the environment and the desire 'not to live cheaply or dearly but to live deliberately'.

'Amazing *****' *Edinburgh Evening News*,

'Works beautifully ****' *The Scotsman*.

Full details can be found at www.magneticnorth.org.uk.

A Day in Aberdour

**Saturday 24 October 2009
10.30am – 4.30pm**

We will be walking along part of the Fife Coastal Way starting at The Boathouse car park in Aberdour at 10.30am, returning there for a soup and sandwich lunch at 1pm, followed by our Annual General Meeting at 2pm and thereafter continuing our discussions with members of the International Futures Forum who came to Luing in August to find out about geopoetics.

Please let Bill Taylor know **by Monday 12 October** if you are coming and what your dietary needs are so that we can arrange the lunches in good time. Details of directions to The Boathouse can be found at

www.forthboathouse.com.

An Islay Weekend

February 2010

A weekend visit to the island of Islay in the Inner Hebrides is planned for mid-February 2010. We hope to spend almost 3 full days on the island (arriving Fri. evening and departing Mon. afternoon/evening). There is plentiful accommodation on the island, particularly in Bowmore, which might be the best place to have our meetings. The island is an excellent location for walking, viewing wildlife, and some famous distilleries. The visitor centre at Loch Gruinard is ideally situated for observing Barnacle and White-fronted Geese, as well as many wintering ducks, gulls and waders. Islay is also a good location for Golden Eagles and Choughs. Apart from outdoor activities, we plan to have discussions and talks by members of SCG - a winter 'colloquium.' Further details will be announced at our AGM on 24 October.

A Day Event in Northern England 2010

Plans are afoot to organise a day event in the north of England next year at which our members who live there and in the Scottish Borders could meet to discuss geopoetics and how to take it forward there. Please let us know if this would be of interest to you and what you would like to see in the programme for the day.

Archibald Menzies Exhibition

Castle Menzies near Aberfeldy

Earlier in the year Jim McCarthy gave a talk to the Scottish Centre, based on his book *Monkey Puzzle Man: Archibald Menzies, Plant Hunter* and led a short excursion into the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh to see some of the tree species associated with his discoveries.

A permanent exhibition on the life and work of Menzies has recently been formally opened at Castle Menzies, which is near Weem, a few miles west of Aberfeldy – appropriately since Menzies was born nearby and started working life as a gardener there. The exhibition has been designed by Bright 3D Design Edinburgh under the supervision of Jim's son, Ewan, while Jim has provided the text and some of the images and artefacts.



Castle Menzies Exhibition

Jim's next major work is a biography of the writer and traveller Capt. Basil Hall, RN (1788-1844) which has been accepted for publication, with a

foreword written by a direct descendant, the poet Sir John Hall of Dunglass.

Late September at the Peffer Burn

Retracing my steps across the timber bridge that spans the Peffer Burn, I place my telescope on the wooden railing and scan upstream where, earlier, I noted a dozen redshanks resting, some 300 yards distant. My brother is walking anxiously ahead — too anxiously I think — so I do a quick scan. I spot the tell-tale contrasting plumage of a greenshank asleep with the redshanks but almost hidden near the far shoreline. Hurrying to the middle of the bridge, I again scan, this time hoping for a better view of the greenshank.

Just then, my attention is drawn to the unmistakable grace of a spotted redshank feeding in midstream a little closer to the bridge. No mistaking this gem among birds. Yes, the long, fine bill looks right. No red at the base of the upper mandible, while the distinctive white supercilium converging at the forehead clinches it. The spangling on its wings and tertiaries marks it out as a juvenile. I think of the fragility of such an ephemeral creature, which, a mere three months previously, was a downy chick running about in the high-arctic tundra. Guided only by instinct, it is now on passage down the western seaboard of Europe to its winter quarters in tropical Africa. It is a bird that I never tire of seeing, not that I've seen many in my lifetime since that memorable first in the Kelvin Valley in the 1960s.

"Do you see the spotted redshank?" I call to my brother who seems oblivious of my excitement. "Get the tripod from the car-boot", I yell. This he does at an agonisingly slow pace, and after what seems an interminable time, I set up the tripod and telescope on the saltmarsh edge of the Peffer Burn and focus quickly. "It's still there", I quiver! "What a beauty." "Quick, have a look", as I pass the telescope to

him. We watch it for many privileged minutes as it feeds along the muddy edges, but more often almost up to its belly in deeper water. This perfectly-proportioned bird stands out clearly among its commoner cousins, who are graceful enough in their own right, but the sheer elegance of the spotted redshank is something to behold.



The tide is now ebbing fast and the waders are getting restless. Parties of redshanks, curlews and lapwings are passing over in increasing numbers and flying seawards to the lower reaches of the river. Suddenly, the spotted redshank is looking skywards and stretching its wings. "It is about to fly", I warn my brother, and, with a wide yawn revealing the delicate mandibles, it is instantly airborne and speeding towards us.

"Watch it as it comes past. Note the different wing-pattern, the lack of white trailing-edges to the secondaries and see how its long legs project beyond the tail. Here it comes, quick, quick!" "Chu-it, chu-it", I cry, as it rockets past us and over the timber bridge to land many hundreds of yards downstream. Among such fast-flying waders, the spotted redshank is one of the fastest.

"Well, what do you make of that?" I ask my brother as I begin to breathe again. "It was alright", he replied. "I think I've seen spotted redshanks before but I can't recall where. I'd never have been able to pick it out without a telescope."

"Just alright" I mutter to myself, which causes me to pause for a moment and consider how uniquely distinguishable the spotted redshank actually is among its congeners. Most birders wouldn't fail to pick it out, even if it passed overhead calling

once you are attuned to it, its characteristics are indelibly impressed upon you, but there remains this *willingness to be attuned*, to be attentive, and that, in the end makes the difference. "Chu-it, chu-it", keeps ringing in my head, and, with a beaming face, I return to the car as the evening sun glints over the wet mudflats of Aberlady Bay.

As we pulled out of the car-park, a fellow birder motions to us to wind the windows down. "Did you see the spotted redshank over there in the bay?" he asks. "We saw it upriver," I reply. Lost for adequate words to express the joy of the moment, I merely add, "It's a real beauty, isn't it?" He nods in silent affirmation.

Bill Eddie, 2008



Websites

Please check out our website www.geopoetics.org.uk and register as a member to take part in our discussion forum. Your views on how to develop our work and encourage participation would be most welcome. As a member you are entitled to your own pages on our website, just send us details about yourself, your interests and how they relate to geopoetics.

Our Atlantic Islands Festival website "www.atlanticislandsfestival.com" has talks, poems and post-festival discussion on it and we will be adding photographs and further items as they come in. Please take a look.

Publications

Open an Island boxes containing poems, photographs, artwork, songs, and talks from our last weekend event on Luing can be purchased for £11 with free postage from Norman Bissell.

Also available with free postage from him:

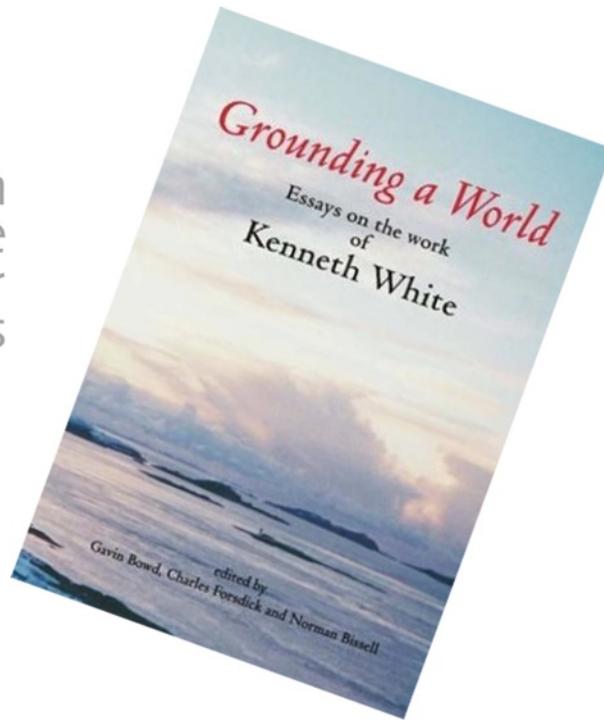
On the Atlantic Edge by **Kenneth White** at £6.95. An essay book based on talks given in the Highlands and Islands and in Edinburgh.

The Radical Field by **Tony McManus** at £7 is the most thorough analysis to date in English of the work of Kenneth White and geopoetics.

Grounding a World. Essays on the work of Kenneth White edited by **Gavin Bowd, Charles Forsdick and Norman Bissell** at £8 contains comprehensive critical analyses of many aspects of White's work.

Geopoetics: place, culture, world by **Kenneth White** at £5 provides a good introduction to the theory-practice of geopoetics.

Cheques should be made out to 'Alba Editions'.



Subscriptions: A Great New Offer!

Our Council has decided that all new members who join the Scottish Centre for Geopoetics or existing members who renew their subscription (£10 waged/£5 unwaged) by completing and returning a Standing Order form will receive a **free copy of *Grounding a World; Essays on the Work of Kenneth White*** edited by Gavin Bowd, Charles Forsdick and Norman Bissell (retail price £9.95) which contains comprehensive critical analyses of many aspects of White's work.

Just complete and take the Bank Standing Order Form to your bank and inform the Secretary, Bill Taylor 7 Wellpark Terrace, Newport-on-Tay DD6 8H or phone him at 01382 542462. The book will then be sent to you. If you do not wish to pay by Standing Order, please complete and return the subscription form and return it to him with a cheque for £10 waged/£5 unwaged made out to the Scottish Centre for Geopoetics.



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Please note that it is you who controls the Bank Standing Order. This means that if there is a change of subscription or you decide to end your membership it is YOU who must inform YOUR bank. The Scottish Centre for Geopoetics will remind you of these events if appropriate action is not taken by you.



Subscriptions

Please send your name, postal and e-mail address with a cheque for £10 waged/£5 unwaged, payable to the Scottish Centre for Geopoetics, to Bill Taylor, secretary, 7 Wellpark Terrace West, Newport-on Tay DD6 8HU.

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