



## SETTING IN STONE: A CULTURAL GEOGRAPHY OF THE DRY STANE SYKES

Hayden Lorimer

[Hayden.Lorimer@ges.gla.ac.uk](mailto:Hayden.Lorimer@ges.gla.ac.uk)

**Research project context:** Dry stane dykes (dry stone walls) are a familiar enough sight in the Scottish countryside as to be easily overlooked. Dykes square off the scenery, and make contours show up. Dykes configure the agricultural landscape. Dykes are a settling and substantial presence, enclosing open ground into field systems, stretching across hillsides and snaking over mountain-tops. Dry stane dykes continue to have practical – and sometimes defensive – function: protecting property, clearing ground for grazing, marking boundaries, sheltering animals, and preventing livestock from straying. A traditional craft, once thought likely to disappear, dry stane dyking has since re-emerged as one niche in the artisanal sector of the new rural economy. Even so, the artistry and the industry necessary to build a dry stone dyke are less well recognised.

### Research questions:

1. By which regions, sites, styles, practices and personalities can the historical geography of dry-stane dyking in Scotland be understood?
2. What can be learnt about the history of dry stane dyking by its practice, and how can this experience inform arts-based methodologies?
3. How does an embodied knowledge of wall-building contribute to ongoing interdisciplinary debates concerning theories of landscape and materiality?
4. How are the knowledge-practices and building techniques integral to dry-stane dyking effectively transmitted and communicated?
5. How can this specific example of arts-humanities research contribute to the sustainability of a craft tradition and its knowledge-practices?

### Research methods

The project methodology is intended as ‘an ecology of interpenetration between past and present’ (Pearson and Shanks 2001) bringing archival and practice-centred research into closest correspondence. Thus, the study will have a historical dimension:

- “Handbooks”, such as Rainsford Hannay’s *Dry Stone Walling* (1957) and Callander’s *Dry Stane Dyking in Deeside* (1982), suggest exemplary regional landscapes (Stewartry in Galloway; Aberdeenshire), notable sites (the Royal Highland and the Royal Agricultural Shows, local walling competitions), archival sources (agricultural committee records and local newspaper coverage) and organisational histories (Dry Stone Walling Association; British Trust for Conservation Volunteers) by which lessons can be learned.

The study will also have a practical dimension, involving:

- learning-by-doing, helping to build walls in the company of expert craftsmen, and voluntary work parties. By developing this practice-based approach, the project will take seriously the prospect of acquiring craft knowledge (Sennett 2008), and the careful co-ordination of hand, eye and materials (Ingold 2000).

## Critical literatures

The project will be informed by a critical engagement with recent interdisciplinary theories of landscape, including: 'taskscape' (Ingold 2000), reflexive landscape archaeology (Tilley 2004; Bender *et al* 2007), post-phenomenology (Wylie 2007), memory and materiality (Lorimer 2006; 2009), and, place-based performance and autobiography (Pearson 2006). Situated topographical studies of stone landscapes (Robinson 1985; 1995) and functional works of land/rock art (Hutchinson 2006) will also be influential in refining methodological approach and narrative style. Ultimately, the project will produce a cultural geography of walls and stones by recovering topographies of memory, meaning, minerals and self-expression; into the bargain it will creatively rework a longstanding geographical tradition of field survey.

## Project supervision and synergies

Research project supervision will be led by Dr Hayden Lorimer <<http://www.ges.gla.ac.uk:443/staff/hlorimer>> and be framed by Departmental interests in 'Creative Geographies', one of the research themes of the Human Geography Research Group <<http://www.ges.gla.ac.uk:443/research/groups/humangeography>>

- Bender, B. Hamilton, S. and Tilley, C. (2007) *Stone worlds: narrative and reflexivity in landscape archaeology* (Left Coast Press, London)
- Callander, R. (1982) *Drystone Dyking in Deeside* (Finzean, Aberdeenshire).
- Ingold, T. (2000) *The perception of the environment: essays on dwelling, livelihood and skill* (Routledge, London)
- Lorimer, H. (2006) 'Herding memories of humans and animals' *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, pp. 497-513
- Lorimer, H. (2009) 'Caught in the nick of time: archives and fieldwork', in Crang, M. DeLyser, D. Herbert, S. and McDowell, L. (eds) *Handbook of Qualitative Methods in Human Geography* (Sage, London)
- Pearson, M. and Shanks, M. (2001) *Theatre/Archaeology* (Routledge, London).
- Pearson, M (2006) *In comes I: landscape, performance, memory* (University of Exeter Press, Exeter)
- Rainsford Hannay, F. (1957) *Dry Stone Walling* (Faber and Faber, London).
- Robinson, T. (1985) *Stones of Aran: Labyrinth* (Penguin, London)
- Robinson, T. (1995) *Stones of Aran: Pilgrimage* (Penguin, London)
- Sennett, R. (2008) *The Craftsman* (Allen Lane, London).
- Tilley, C. (2004) *The Materiality of Stone* (Oxford University Press, Oxford)
- Wylie, J. (2007) *Landscape* (Routledge, London)
- Hutchinson, R. (2006) *Calum's Road* (Birlinn Press, Edinburgh).

## Application procedure and deadlines

To be considered for PhD studentships to be held in the School of Geographical and Earth Sciences (GES), suitably qualified candidates should apply via the website of the College of Science and Engineering

(<http://www.gla.ac.uk/colleges/scienceengineering/graduateschool/prospectivestudents/essentialinformation/>). Closing dates for University and research council funded studentships will be in early in the new year, as stated on the GES studentships page: (<http://web2.ges.gla.ac.uk/~mlee/GES%202010%20studentships>).

Non- English speakers must meet the University's English language requirements. Candidates for ESRC studentships should also meet the ESRC's requirements for both academic qualifications and residential eligibility. For more information go to <http://www.esrc.ac.uk/ESRCInfoCentre/index.aspx> and please note that *non-UK European Union citizens will be awarded fees only by ESRC.*

For informal enquiries about the research projects please contact the relevant supervisors. Information on the GES graduate school and the application process can be obtained from Mrs Jean McPartland, the assistant to head of the School ([Jean.McPartland@glasgow.ac.uk](mailto:Jean.McPartland@glasgow.ac.uk)), or Professor Susan Waldron ([Susan.Waldron@Glasgow.ac.uk](mailto:Susan.Waldron@Glasgow.ac.uk)), the head of the GES graduate school.