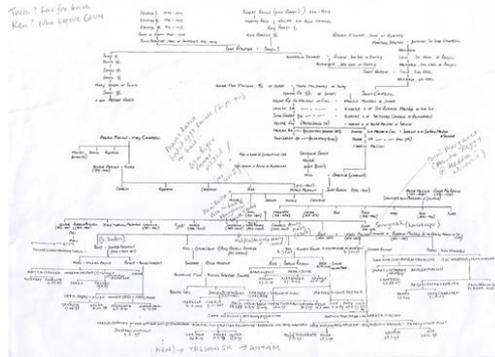


COMMUNION:

for those who have gone before and for those who have yet to come



The images entitled *Communion* form part of an extended work commenced in 2008. The inspiration for the work is a place called S'Airde Beinn on the Hebridean Isle of Mull, a personally significant site where I performed a quiet work to camera in April 2008. The piece continues to evolve and comprises a DVD (a 15 minute artist film; a collaboration between myself, poet Anna Saunders and composer Robert Perry with film and sound editing by Josh Biggs), a book (photographs and poetry, Anna and myself), and a live performance work. *Communion* is an extended response to the experience of, as well as an intimate acquaintance with, a specific and enchanting landscape.

From the starting point of family histories, for the past decade I have been exploring my ancestral connections with the island of Mull. On Mull I have been following in the footsteps of my maternal ancestors, both literally and metaphorically – gathering information from family members and from the archives at Mull Museum; visiting and staying in places where family once farmed; investigating the neighbourhoods where they lived; walking where they walked and, importantly, exploring my mother's favourite haunts on the island, her 'special' places, her walks.

I have wandered and lingered ... hearing in my imagination the voices of relatives re-telling familiar tales of picnics and gatherings, relating tales of friends and places, those whose names reverberated throughout my childhood ... and recalling stories of 'Pop and Grannie' and all the many aunts, uncles and cousins (including all those once, twice, thrice removed) that gathered together at any and every opportunity ... and configuring in my mind a relay of further narratives and interactions and wondering what these might add up to, what they might mean.



Mull has been in my consciousness since early childhood; this mythical land where boys walked to school with baked potatoes in their pockets to keep their hands warm, potatoes they would later eat for lunch. So it was related (or perhaps this was only as I remember it told); in the manner of Chinese whispers, this potato was in truth a slab of peat, a necessary daily contribution to school life, added to the pile for the classroom fire. Mull, the island where my mother and aunt went each summer to join other members of our extended family, the Morison clan; an island full of magical names that kept recurring, names of people and places I could only imagine, people and places that all seemed to somehow connect although I could never work out exactly how or why. As I grew older, I grew none the wiser, in fact the 'stories of Mull just seemed to get thicker, the ancestral relationships ever more complicated.



My first visit to Mull was aged eighteen when the island finally became a physical reality, a series of places recalled made tangible. My great aunt, my mother, my aunt, my sister and I made the long journey north, the pilgrimage to Mull. I was taken to meet friends and family on the island, we went 'calling' and we went on walks where the waterfall flowed 'faster than ever before'. The hidden loch was revealed, the family cairn saluted and Grauntie's stone indicated as family picnics were relived and old friends remembered. Stories retold but here on Mull coming to life, those absent regaining a presence in our midst, in the places where they once stood. Names were attached to rocks, beaches, farms, paths, lochs and lighthouses, and names were (re)found after picking out the moss on gravestones.

