

Land Words



A Celebration of Life, Land and Literature
Inspired by Falkirk's Callendar House



LandWords was a special collaboration between the Edinburgh International Book Festival and Falkirk Community Trust, in which Falkirk's wonderful Callendar House provided space and inspiration to explore questions of place, identity, history and story. How do we relate to Scotland's stories, old and new? Are we telling our own tales of the places we love?

Situated in the heart of the industrial central belt, surrounded by business parks and high rise flats, with the ruins of the Antonine Wall and the John Muir Way running through its grounds, the house offered a unique context to explore these questions.

Over the course of a six-week residency, twelve S3 pupils from Graeme High school worked with award-winning author Kerry Hudson and performance artist Donna Rutherford to produce their own responses to the house and the area. They were encouraged to engage with their personal stories, and to reflect on how they related, if at all, to the 'official history' of the area.

We also hosted two public LandWords Festivals over separate weekends in April and May 2016, bringing together artists, musicians, authors and storytellers with audiences old and young, frequent visitors and first-timers. Building on and showcasing the creative work of the project, the festivals opened the LandWords questions to a wider audience.

This booklet is a celebration of the pupils' experience and creative work during the project. It also provides a taster of the weekend festivals and the public engagement with Callendar House – a building steeped in history and with a keen eye on the future.

The LandWords Project participants were

Ellie Anderson, Boglárka Balla, Laura Beurskens, Ruby Emmett, Poppy Hepburn, Abbey Marland, Kay McPherson, Elise Pearson, Sarahjane Polson, Katie Shields, Nicole Thompson, Miriam Wylie



The LandWords Project

Introduction by Kerry Hudson

Who are we? What part of our story is worth telling?
What's important to us? Why should we speak up and
what is worth shouting about?

What do we feel about where we live? The people with whom we
share our home and our town? What do we remember and why?
How do we document those special places, times and people?
How many ways can you tell a story?

“...a celebration of our shared experiences...”

These are just some of the questions performance artist Donna Rutherford and I have been lucky enough to explore with S3 students from Falkirk's Graeme High School through the LandWords project.



Over six weekly sessions we came together at Falkirk's Callendar House and worked with the girls, encouraging them to be creative, examine what they found important at this time in their lives and reflect upon what they remembered and why.



Callendar House was not only our venue - it was a space that constantly fed the imagination.

We roamed the grounds, sought inspiration from the exhibition spaces and archives, cooked and ate together in the Georgian Kitchen and the girls each chose a place they felt best represented them to have a final portrait taken. Here are a few examples; you'll find more at the end of the booklet.

And if Callendar House inspired the girls, then the girls certainly inspired Donna and I. 'Each week of the project they were more open and courageous, more engaged and imaginative.



There are so many ways to tell a story and much of our work was in exploring the different forms a story can take: a hint of a memory hanging from a tree; an anecdote told to a stranger; in the cooking of a meal and the conversation as you eat; a call for change on a placard; a postcard written; a statement of celebration hanging brightly from bunting.

During our time together the girls used these methods and more to explore ideas of identity, home, family, memory.

This booklet is a celebration of our shared experiences and of the girls' creativity; a means of documenting the concerns, loves and lives of these Graeme High School students.

The hope is that it will give a sense of what it means to be a young person living in Falkirk in 2016, of their imaginative minds and creative bravery.

These young women are after all, living, breathing history in the making.

Kerry Hudson
Author & LandWords Project Lead

HOUSE HISTORY

Callendar House was the seat of power in the Falkirk area for almost a thousand years with just four careful owners - the Callendars, the Livingstons of Callendar, the Forbes family... and Falkirk Council!



A memory about home
Lacy's

When my cousin Anna was born. She was born on the 5th Jan 2016. First girl in family. It was middle of night.

A memory about home
Making Pancakes with my Gran around the table in the kitchen

House and Home

“I really like Falkirk because I’ve lived here all my life and I have so many memories here.

There’s not much to do but it has got really nice nature and it’s quite good to go out on walks about the place.”

LandWords participant





The Ghost of Callendar Park

Boglárka Balla

"Julia, why don't you go to that beautiful park your friend was talking about?"

"Mum, I'm still scared to go out, I don't have many friends since we moved to this city."

"Oh darling, I'm sure Grace would love to show you around. She's a very nice girl and she became your friend on the first day you started high school here."

Grace was my friend who I trusted more than anything, and we only knew each other for three weeks. Suddenly, after my dad's death, my mum decided to move and start a new life. That's why we moved to Scotland.

I went to my room and called Grace to see if she wanted to come to Callendar Park and show me around.

It was a beautiful, sunny day, which was very unusual as Scotland is rainy most of the time.

As we reached the park a beautiful large house started to appear between the gigantic trees. It took my breath away.



We stepped into the house and waited at the reception to get in. So many tourists were waiting. I couldn't help looking around, it was so gorgeous.

I spotted a sign - "We are looking for people to help out, age fourteen and over."

"We should do this, the summer is just a few days away."



We signed up and a lady took us to the kitchen, where we had to prepare some food for the visitors. We got our aprons on and started to follow the recipe.

The kitchen was huge and very beautiful. It was decorated with loads of old cutlery and pots and at the end there was a big furnace.

"Did you hear the history of Callendar House? They say that this house is haunted. There lived a family hundreds of years ago, who once left their daughter here, while they went to visit their family and the girl died, because she fell off the stairs. They say that she still haunts this place and the people who disturb her."

As soon as she finished a knife fell off the table.

My heart started pounding so fast. I shivered and I felt like someone touched my shoulder. I screamed and turned round quickly.

"Are you okay? I'm only kidding. You look pale as a ghost." We laughed and started to clean up.

Our next job was to interview people about what they think of Callendar House.

"So what is your favourite part of the house?"

"I think that it..." but I didn't hear the rest of it, because something caught my eye.

A lady dressed in old fashioned clothes was looking directly at me with her huge eyes. She looked too good to be real.

I finished the interview and decided to go and find Grace. I looked everywhere but I couldn't find her. I shouted, but there was no answer.

I ran up the stairs and found a big oak door that looked as though it hadn't been opened for about a hundred years. I tried, but it was shut. I tried again... and this time it worked.

I stepped in slowly, one foot after another. It was very dark so I went to the window and opened the blinds. I turned around. I felt my legs wobble. There she was. The pale lady. And Grace lay at her feet.

I wanted to cry, but no tears. I wanted to shout, but no voice came out. I wanted to step, but I couldn't move. A few minutes passed and finally I was able to move.

“...I shouted, but there was no answer...”

“She’s alive,” said the lady. I didn’t know what to say back. I kneeled down, next to Grace and started shaking her gently. She woke up immediately.

“I wanted to look around, but as I stepped into the room I got a shock,” she said.

“It’s okay girls.” We both turned our heads towards the voice. The lady was talking to us, teardrops running down her face.

“I don’t want to hurt anyone. All I ever wanted was a friend, but whenever someone stepped into this room, they died of shock. So they shut it down.”

I didn’t know what to say. “A friendly ghost?” I thought to myself.

“We’ll be your friends.” Grace and I said together.

From that day I had another best friend. A ghost. I’m fifty-four now and I still go there to visit her. I’m glad we made that decision.



The Lonely Wolf

Elise Pearson

They told me to run. Run as far as possible. Run as fast as possible. Run until your body collapses under you. That's what I did but I didn't run far from them and I turned and said "come near me I dare you".

I'm in a school for humans and "creatures" - or the words we aren't allowed to say, "half humans". This school doesn't give rights to creatures like me and I'm the last of my kind, part girl, part wolf.

I'm on my own, no friends, no family, just me and my earphones listening to Rhett and Link while sitting at the back of the class.

I do listen because I'm the smartest in my year. I'm the strongest too so I usually take fencing on Mondays, swimming on Tuesdays, singing on Wednesdays, football on Thursdays and track on Fridays.

The worst part is deciding things in a matter of time and Mr. Pearson is the worst of all because he goes crazy if I don't think in a matter of time.

I'd almost had it with all the other creatures looking at me. But this one girl had the same life as me and I thought we could be friends. I had brown hair and purple eyes while she had blonde hair and blue eyes but she was a fox, the last of her kind too.

HOUSE HISTORY

The original structure occupied a prominent position at 'Palace Hill', just behind the Antonine Wall at the east end of what is now Callendar Park.

It was a huge wooden hall, some 80ft long by 30ft wide, with massive posts supporting a thatched roof, and dating back to around 981AD.

We had gotten to know each other and though we never spoke in front of people, we were best friends.

We'd decided for freedom and escaped to our own free rights where we could do whatever the mind might think of. I'd had it with people making me rush and making me feel like I can't do anything like get a job or leave the house. In my world I was free and that world was called The Wild.

I HAVE HAD IT WITH NO TIME, NO PEACE! My rights are my rights no one owns me or controls me. I own myself and myself is me.



I ran into the woods and screamed it all out until there was no anger left, then I was full animal and I was free to roam. I was on my own, left in the cold by myself but I realised I could do anything.

Suddenly, there was a noise and two boys jumped me. At first I thought they were humans, then I realised they were animals too.

One of them was a boy called Kyle who seemed different but was truly amazing. He was smart with English, Maths and Chemistry and we had a lot in common.

"I'm Elise. You're a wolf? I thought I was the last of my kind"

"Yes, I am a wolf too. I thought I was the last of my kind but now I've found you." He whispered this as his friend was getting a bit excited, or should I say, 'on the wild side'?

Anyway, we talked and talked about free rights and why we were out here. I had to hide my earphones, as animals don't really listen to music, but who cares? We weren't listening and we were goners.

A human girl jumped out of the bushes and pinned me down. It was hunting season, which is pretty rough for animals, but it beat having to deal with humans all the time.

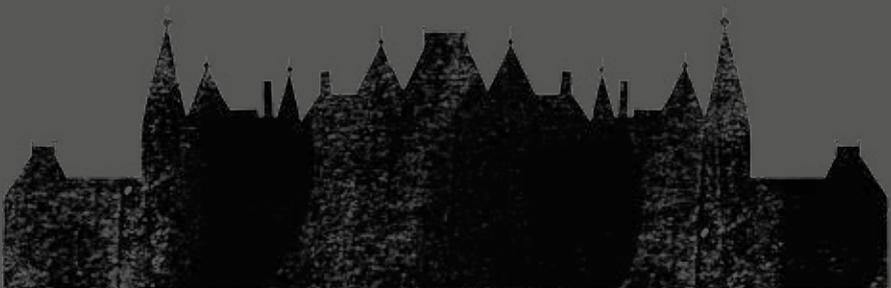
"... I was on my own, left in the cold by myself..."

Kyle protected me but he was badly injured, so I took him to Jake. Jake took him away, then half an hour later brought Kyle back good as new. I made a wolf den.

I felt something and black wings came out of my back and then white wings.

I said to Kyle, "Is it me or is this magical?"

Then we ran and ran until we reached a den and I looked at Kyle and said, "We can be whatever we want if we put our minds to it. We can do whatever we want if we fight for it."

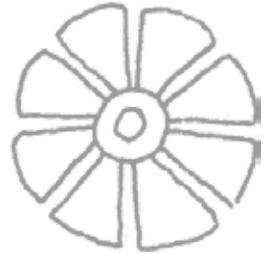




The Smallest Coffins are The Heaviest

Laura Beurskens

Another mother lost her child,
another plot gone at Grandstable.



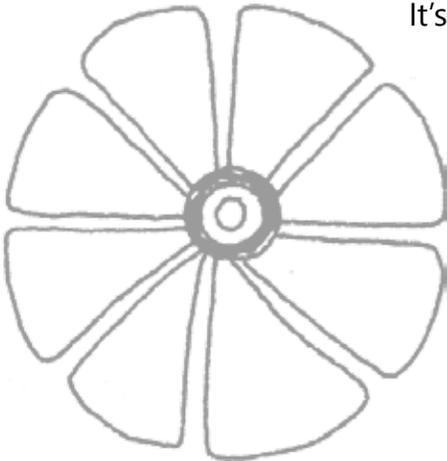
Another funeral filled with, "sorry for your
loss" or "my condolences". The sky is crying
for the families.

Another funeral another day. They say, "the smallest coffins are the
heaviest" and I couldn't agree more.

To someone who has never experienced loss it won't
make sense, but to a mother who has lost a child, a
child who lost a parent, it does.



It's the heavy heart and
soul that you can't
bear to let go.



Some see letting go
as forgetting but
you never forget
death, the raw harsh
pain you feel when
a loved one is stolen
from you.





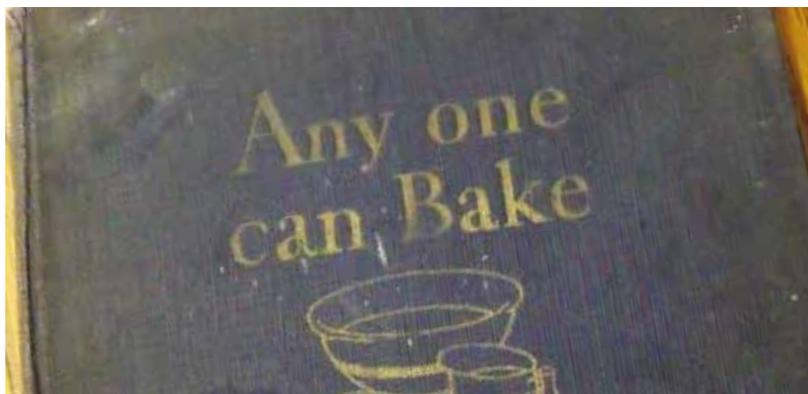
Recipes for Life

“When the girls’ grandparents were fourteen the very term ‘relationship to food’ did not exist - just as the term ‘teenagers’ in Scotland hardly existed!”

“As we cooked together in Callendar House’s Georgian Kitchen, it was striking to hear how the girls already verbalise a nostalgia about family cooking, before they’ve even left home.”

Donna Rutherford, LandWords artist





Food

Sarahjane Polson

Food, oh food, the key to my heart,
Hot and steamy on my plate.
The smell from the kitchen is my favourite part,
Although vegetables I do hate.



Food, oh food, boil and simmer away,
The sizzling sound from the meat.
Slow cooker on all day,
Not long now till it's ready for me to eat.



Food, oh food, my granny makes it best,
A pot of soup and a nice Sunday roast.
Always in the kitchen with her shouting "Get away you pest!",
But the best I can make is jam and a slice of toast.



Food, oh food, I love you very much,
Brings memories of the present and the past.
Not good at making it as such,
But when I'm around, let's say it doesn't last.



*“A couple of summers ago I put a blanket
out on the grass at the back of the house
and sat on the blanket and stared
at the house for ages to discover that
the door isn’t centred.
That really annoyed me”*

LandWords participant



HOUSE HISTORY

In the 14th century the site of the old hall was abandoned, and a new structure was built to reflect the latest in architecture and style. This was a stone towerhouse with walls 8ft thick.

Over the following centuries the castle was slowly extended. In the 16th century the entrance was placed at ground level.

Georgian Recipe

from the Falkirk Cookery Book

Lamb's Head With Brain Sauce



Boil a lamb's head until the meat leaves the bone; brains to be boiled in a piece of muslin.



When sufficiently tender, skin the tongue and cut the meat into small pieces.



For the sauce take one ounce of flour, one gill of milk.



Melt butter in a saucepan, stir in flour smoothly, then add milk gradually, stirring all the time; add brains, slightly minced, with pepper and salt to taste.



Arrange meat on dish, pour over sauce and serve hot or cold.

We found this recipe in the Archive and wondered if it might ever have been served up at the Forbes family table in Callendar House.



Generation Gap

*You can see them aa, the lads o' the fair
Lads frae the Forth an' the Carron water
Workin' lads an lads wi' gear
Lads wha'd sell ye the provost's dochter
Sodjers back frae the German wars
Peddlers up frae the border
An lassies wi an eye for mair than the kye
At the tryst an' fair at Falkirk*

The Lads o' the Fair, folk song by Brian McNeill



During the project, we explored clichés and assumptions surrounding generation gaps. The girls quizzed their parents and grandparents about their teenage selves.

HOUSE HISTORY

Mary, Queen of Scots spent part of her childhood at Callendar House and re-visited in the 1560s. Her rival, John Knox, is also said to have stayed at the House.

In 1651 the castle was held for the King against Cromwell, but was bypassed as being too much unnecessary trouble. Finally, Cromwell did lay siege to it, and stormed the building on 15 July. Cromwell slept in the ruins that night.

Abbey's gran spoke of being poor and that life was hard in Dundee, but there was food on the table and fire in the fireplace, so life was good for her.

Ruby's grandad was fourteen years old in 1964. The music revolution was taking off. Fear of nuclear war pervaded. And a whole lot of sledging was going on, on the hills of Port Glasgow.



The LandWords girls asked for views on modern teenagers, and got a variety of responses, as the opposite page shows!

The girls also expressed themselves through placard-making and protest planning.

They're never outside
playing There's too much
pressure on them with
school and exams They
aren't eating properly
They're unfit They're
addicted to technology
They're hopeless and
lazy They don't have as
much freedom as their
grandparents did

**Some of the older generation's
responses to modern teenagers**

YOUR RECIPE FOR HAPPINESS

BE YOURSELF

BE NICE

FEEL GOOD

Dear My Younger Self,

I am 37 years old now and I live in Falkirk in Scotland. You would never think that I would ever come here or end up living here, but here I am with my beautiful family, my lovely husband and my two gorgeous children.

I am the luckiest person in the world.

I couldn't give you any advice because I'm afraid it would change your future and I am extremely happy like this.

The only advice I would give you is that you should learn English harder and move to Scotland as soon as possible!

Good luck and follow your heart...

Viktoria Balla

The girls encouraged their parents to write a letter to their younger self. Looking back, what advice would they offer themselves? How has life changed for them?



With Love

Abbey Marland

Dear Damon,

I'm sorry you're reading this. I wish I could tell you in person but I can't take my aunt anymore. She is controlling, she wants me to get married to Edward, but I can't. I love you and only you.

I know she doesn't approve of us and a life without you is not worth living, so that's why I am leaving Callendar House. If you love me you will find me.

*With love,
Avia*

I leave the tear-stained letter on my bed where I know he can find it. I don't want to leave him, I love him too much, but my aunt is killing me.

The train is nearing the station. I doubt my choice but no matter what, I'm leaving. I don't know where I'm going yet, but I'll get off at any stop to get away from her. She is no longer a part of me. I'm trying to hold back my tears.

A little girl walks over to me. "Miss, would you like a tissue?" She was shy but not afraid of me.

"Thank you very much, that will help a lot."

"You are welcome Miss. If you don't mind me asking, why are you crying?" she says, hoping for an answer.

"I just left someone I loved a lot," I say, trying to hold back the tears.

"I'm sorry Miss, but I have to go, bye" and she runs off.

My train pulls into the station. I hold back my tears but not for long.

I arrive in Oban. It is nice, but it doesn't feel like home. I want to leave, but that means giving in and I'm not prepared for that.

I like the smell of the seaside, the look of the shore but not the atmosphere. It feels weird to me, like I'm in the wrong place at the wrong time and something is going to happen, but I'm not sure what the feeling is or what's going to happen.



It has been what feels like a lifetime here. I'm in the café across from the shore.



Something compels me to go down to the beach, so I follow my instincts. I walk across; the feeling is getting stronger and the next thing I know I'm on the ground, losing consciousness.

I can't breathe, my sight is blurry, I want to stand but I can't. It's like a force is pushing me to stay on the ground. I'm lying in the middle of the street helpless, people are crushing around me and I just want to be away from here. I know something is wrong.

I wake up somewhere I have never been before, not in my own clothes, something on my wrist. I start to feel panicked and my breath is heavy. There are what I think are doctors but I'm not sure.

"Avia, stop panicking, you are in the hospital. You were hit by something, we don't know what it was, but you have a serious concussion. You need to rest.

"We have booked you a hotel but you will be here for a few more hours so we can run some tests".

I have calmed down by this point, "Okay doctor, I will try to sleep" I say in a groggy way. The doctors leave.

There is a strange figure in the corner. I sit up and the figure emerges from the shadows, someone who looks like Damon. Then he starts speaking to me.

"Honey, it's me, Damon. I finally found you, but on the ground. I can't believe I finally found you. It took me weeks and I am never leaving your side ever again.

"Your aunt wasn't in the house when I left to find you. I think she has gone missing because no one has seen her. I saw someone like her in the street but I don't think it was her."

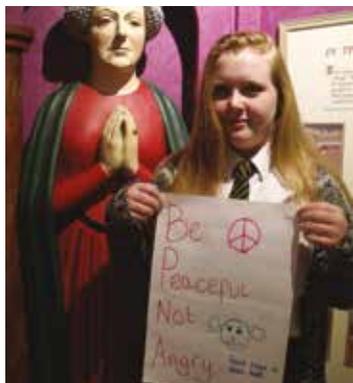
"Damon, I... I can't believe you're here. I'm so sorry for leaving. I just needed to get away from her. I'm sorry. I love you," I blurt out.

He had a huge grin on his face.

HOUSE HISTORY

In 1660 the Earl of Callendar was able to return and restore the tower as part of his family heritage. The area around it was cleared and a new mansion in the revived Continental Classical style extended east from the tower.

In September 1745 Bonnie Prince Charlie was entertained at the House, on his way to the Battle of Prestonpans, by Lady Anne Livingston and her husband, the Earl of Kilmarnock.



Putting Yourself in the Picture

Closing Thoughts from Donna Rutherford

During our first tour of Callendar House, as Kerry and I prepared for the project, I was struck by the notion of architecture and intimidation, of the wealth that created this grand house and vast grounds, which established an 'Us and Them' scenario.

This building, which began life as a defence tower in the 14th Century and grew into an enormous family home, was protected and private until the mid-1960s.

Walking through the exhibits I began to think about the choices that have been made about what to include, what to exclude, what was not on display.

In this building which houses the area's Archive, it struck me: who is telling Falkirk's story?

As with our own personal histories, consciously or not, decisions are made regarding what to include and what to leave out. What is remembered and what is forgotten?

As I continued to explore the House, snapping photographs around the space, I noticed that in one of my photos I had captured my own reflection in the glass of one of the display cabinets: I had accidentally placed myself in the picture.

HOUSE HISTORY

In 1783 Callendar House was bought by William Forbes, a copper merchant from Aberdeen, who added a two-storey wing with octagonal turrets to either end, presenting a true Scottish Baronial style. This was out of favour in the following century, and his son and grandson reworked the exterior to produce a French Chateau.

HOUSE HISTORY

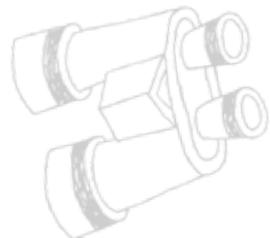
Callendar House was purchased by Falkirk Burgh Council in 1963 and lay empty for over twenty years, before being brought back to life as the headquarters of Falkirk Museum.

Through the LandWords project, Kerry and I came to explore the ideas behind these divisions - the 'Us and Them', the 'Then and Now' - with the Graeme High girls, and created space for ordinary Falkirk folk to place themselves in the picture.



We hope that, through the LandWords experience, the pupils were encouraged to recognise the validity and power of all of our personal stories, and that they truly view themselves as Archivists of their own lives.

Donna Rutherford
Performance Artist & LandWords Project Lead



There is a house near Falkirk town

To be sung to the tune of 'The House of the Rising Sun'

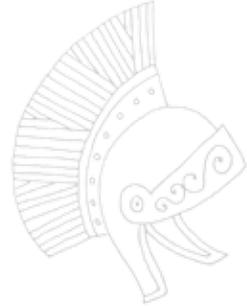


*There is a house near Falkirk town
with twelve months in its name.
And it's been a ruin for many a long year,
but now it's rebuilt again.*

*The old owner he was a steel man,
Copperbottom was his name.
He called that House, Callendar,
and he brought it fame.*

*This house is filled with stories,
of Romans, Lords and Things.
But the only tale that I was told,
was the one the Sandpitmen sing.*

*Well people, go tell your children,
about your visit here today.
Tell them of the house at Callendar,
and what the Sandpitmen said.*



*Yes, tell them of the house at Callendar,
and of what the Sandpitmen said...*



Storytelling duo Macastory's musical tribute to Callendar House, performed in the Record Shop of the house's permanent exhibition during the LandWords Festival.

Biographies

Kerry Hudson, Author



Kerry was born in Aberdeen.

Her first novel, **Tony Hogan Bought Me An Ice-Cream Float Before He Stole My Ma**, won the Scottish First Book Award in 2012 and was also shortlisted for the Southbank Sky Arts Literature Award, Guardian First Book Award, Green Carnation Prize, Author's Club First Novel Prize and the Polari First Book Award.

Kerry's second novel, **Thirst**, published in 2014, won France's most prestigious award for foreign fiction, the Prix Femina and was shortlisted for the Green Carnation Prize. Her books are also published in the Unites States, France and Italy.

Kerry founded The WoMentoring Project and has written for Grazia, Guardian Review and YOU Magazine. She teaches with the National Academy of Writing, Arvon Foundation, Writers' Centre Norwich and is a mentor for IdeasTap Inspires.



Biographies

Donna Rutherford, Performance Artist



Donna has been creating theatre and video work since 1990 crossing the roles of writer, performer, video maker and director.

Starting from a Live Art background she developed solo and collaborative projects in the UK and abroad with a wide range of artists, musicians and also community-based participants. Her work stems from personal storytelling while combining psychology, social history and the distortion of personal memory.

Donna's work manages to make difficult subjects such as displacement, family relations, ageing, and miscommunication in relationships accessible to wide audiences while developing innovative forms of personal storytelling.

Her most recent work, **Broth**, is an exploration of the experience of older people in 21st century Scotland, told through the tradition of soup making.





LandWords was presented as part of Edinburgh International Book Festival's Booked! programme, which takes the energy and excitement of the book festival on the road around Scotland, throughout the year.



Produced in collaboration with a variety of partners, this wide-ranging programme of events and activities brings authors, artists and audiences together to inspire each other and to be inspired, to share stories and experiences, and bring books to life for people of all ages in their own communities.

For more information on Booked! visit edbookfest.co.uk/about-us/booked

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- Falkirk Youth Theatre
- The people of Falkirk – past, present and future!





LandWords



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