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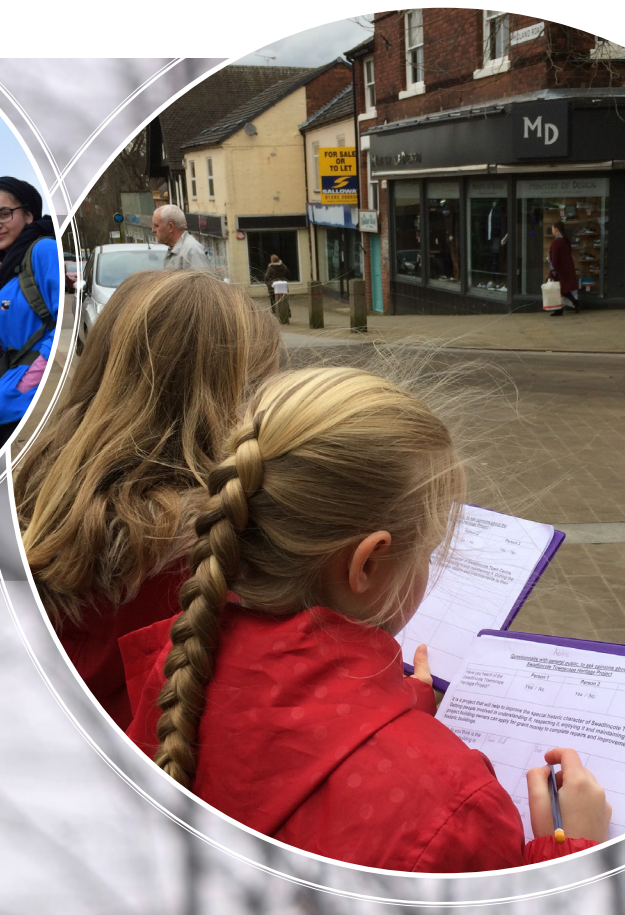
Institute for Outdoor Learning

HORIZONS

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN OUTDOOR LEARNING

IN THIS ISSUE

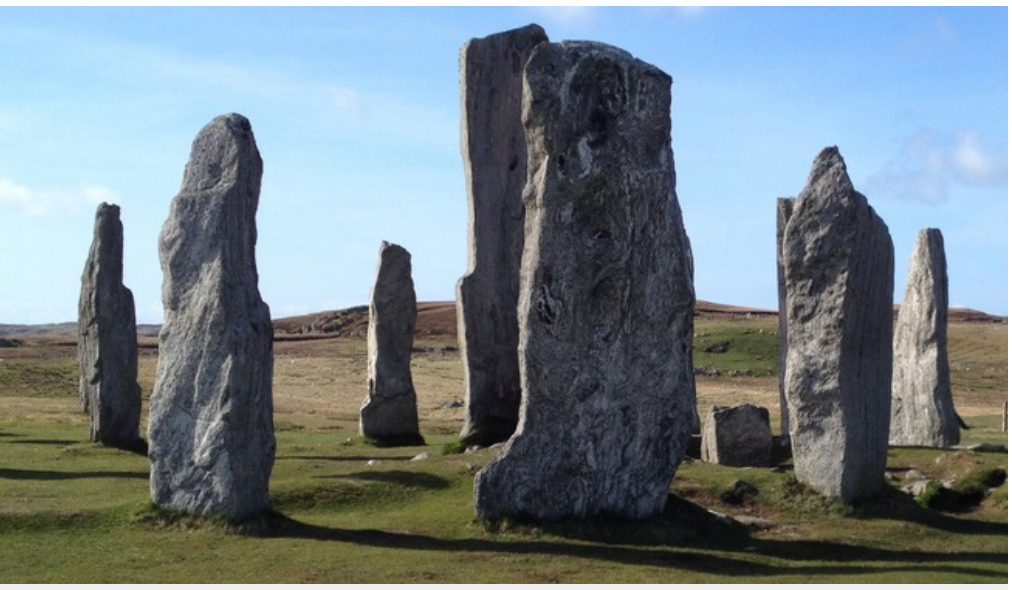


GOING VIRTUAL
ONLINE LEARNING CASE STUDIES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR DEVELOPING GOOD PRACTICE

ISSUE 92 WINTER 2020/ 2021

BE A VISIONARY
UNLEASH DETECTIVES, MIX UP MYTH AND MATHS, GO WILD, TELL A GOOD STORY

SCANNING
THE HORIZON



GUIDE

Stony adventures

Resource:
The old stones: a field guide to the megalithic sites of Britain and Ireland by Andy Burnham (2018).

Why it's useful:
If you are interested in past cultures, places and artefacts, perhaps inspired by childhood stories, myths, legends or, like me, Hollywood fantasy, this book can encourage and support you to get out and about exploring! There are over 30 maps and hundreds of colour photos to help you find prehistoric sites, and detailed expert insights to help you understand them.

Where to find it:
To find out more about this book and ancient sites visit www.megalithic.co.uk

Recommended by:
Danny Towers, Outdoor Education Lecturer, University of Cumbria.

Go to page 23 to see Danny's article about place-based Outdoor Education in Cumbria.

WEB

Layers of leadership

Resource:
The Army Leader.

Why it's useful:
This website features many articles about leadership that are always thought provoking, whilst many are very practical. They are organised into levels from those just starting out as leaders, to those right at the top of organisations. They might be written from a military perspective but the lessons are generally applicable in many other situations.

Where to find it:
https://thearmyleader.co.uk

Recommended by:
Alex Hudson, CCF Contingent Commander.

Read Alex's article about virtual instructor training with a school-based cadet movement which uses military style activities, from page 14.

BOOK

Decoding buildings

Resource:
How to read buildings by Carol Davidson Cragoe.

Why it's useful:
I have turned to this fantastic book on many occasions. It has a simply layout with lots of illustrations that will help you become confident in decoding building styles, and be able to look for clues to a building's age, original use and how it has changed over time.

Where to find it:
Available at good bookstores.

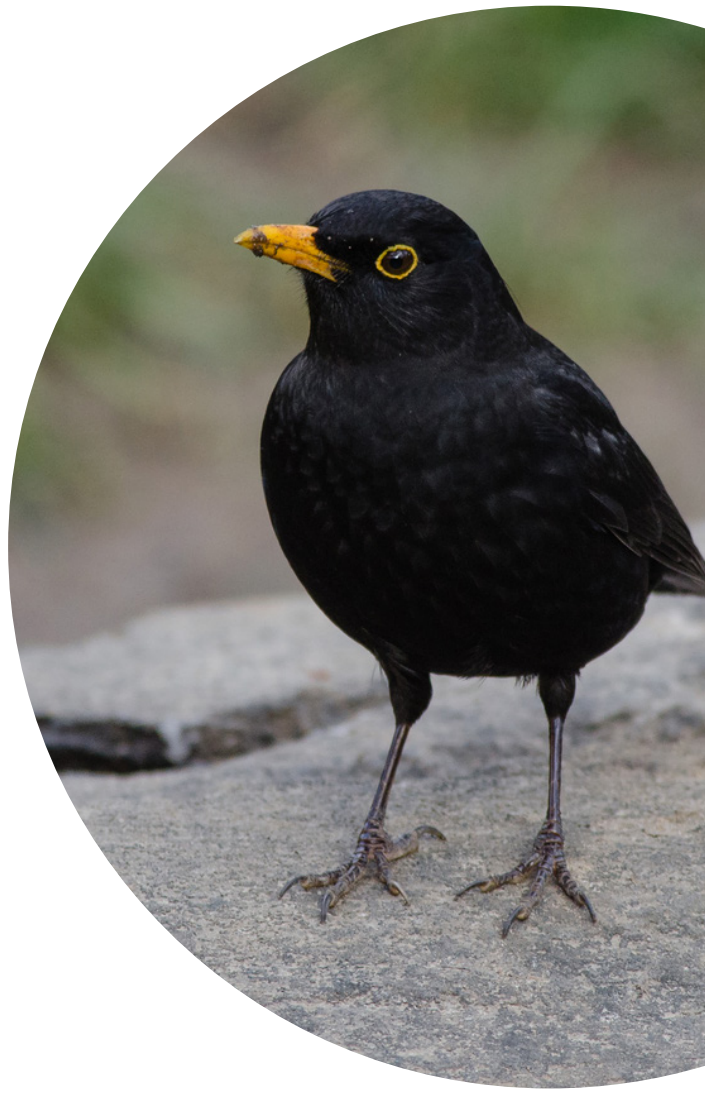
Recommended by:
Ingrid Reeves, Education Visits Leader.

See how young people have been involved in decision-making for their local built environment. Read Ingrid's article from page 7.

Resource recommendations by readers for readers

MAG WEB

Wondrous wildlife



Resources:
1. *Garden Bird Watch* by the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO).
2. *British Wildlife* magazine.

Why these resources are useful:
Garden Bird Watch: I found this 'citizen science' project and associated website really useful for carrying out the wildlife surveys in our garden over last three years and teaching others how to do same. It is an accessible site that encourages engagement with wildlife and learning about wildlife gardening, which this year the BTO has provided free to new members in response to the pandemic.

British Wildlife magazine: I've subscribed to this magazine about ecology, conservation and natural history since its inception in October 1989 as it is the go-to source for information and guidance. It is brilliant at maintaining a balance between accessibility for the lay person and scientific credibility for the professional. It is a constant feature of my own CPD and a resource I provide for my learners.

Where to find them:
1. www.bto.org/our-science/projects/gbw
2. https://www.britishwildlife.com

Recommended by:
Paul Ritchie, Sorbus Learning.

Paul puts his professonal experience into practice and shares his learnings from re-wilding his garden from page 11.

TIP

What does a bat eat?

Idea:
Leaving space for creativity and imagination in a programme is important.

What to do:
Often after a bug hunt and watching how insects hunt, feed and adapt to their habitat, I have asked learners, *"What is that insect missing? How can the insect be more efficient? Move quicker? Live longer? Does it need that many legs?!"* This helps to embed the learning objectives of a programme as the learners are involved in their own learning. The practitioner gains insights to children's knowledge, and their creative ingenuity; the quote below reflects this!

> *"What does a bat eat? Moths and worms!*
> *Who here has seen a flying worm? I have, when I threw it!"*

Recommended by:
Dr. Sarah O'Malley, EU Projects Officer, Limerick City and County Council, Ireland.

Read Sarah's research from page 30 to see if children are really disconnect with nature.

APP

Remotely inspired

Resources:
FlipGrid

Why it's useful:
This is a great (free!) resource where students can record thoughts, ideas or activities and get instant feedback from either a staff member or their peers. Perfect for remote learning.

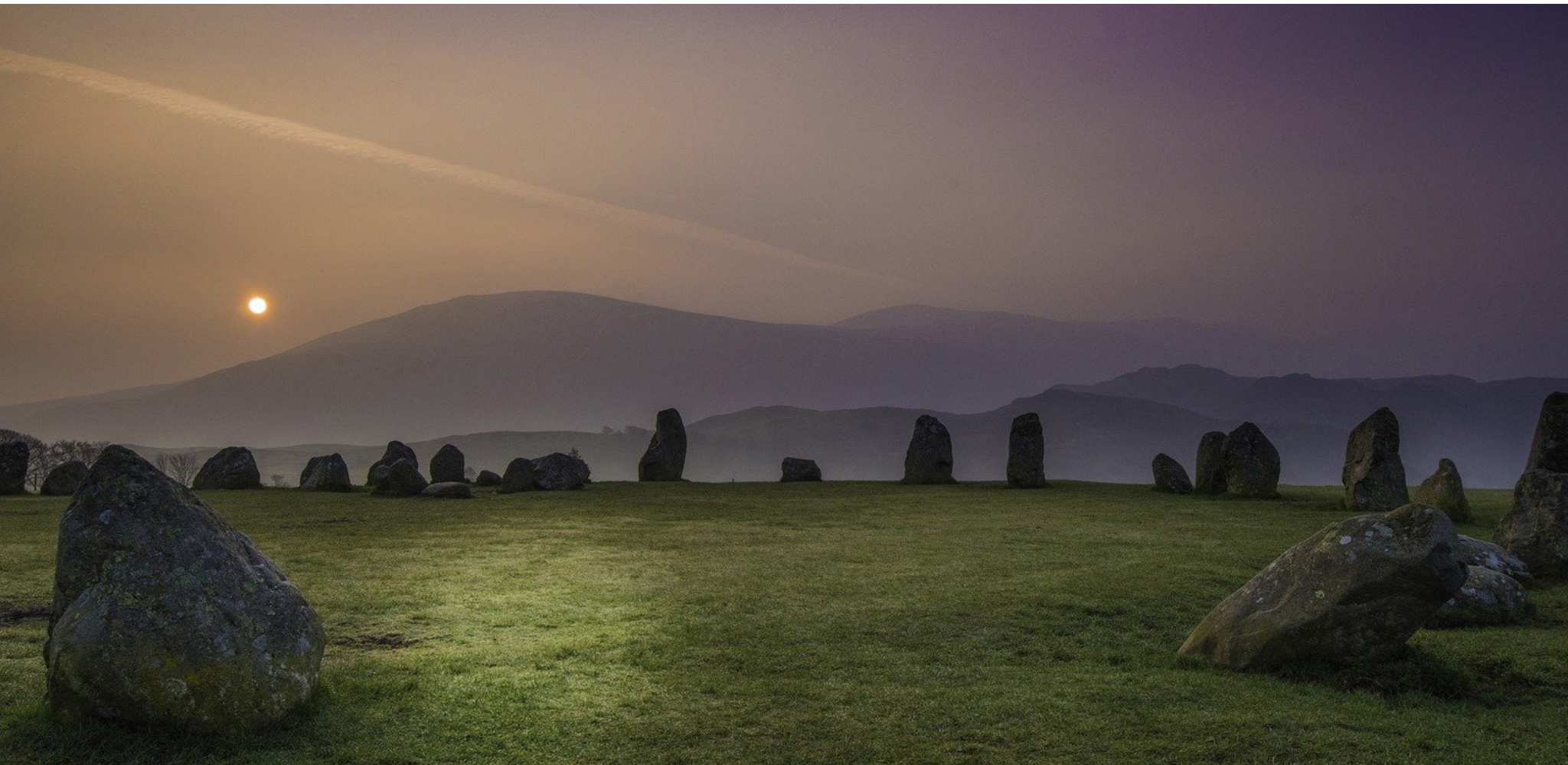
Where to find it:
https://info.flipgrid.com, or search for *FlipGrid* in app stores.

Recommended by:
Ian Martin, Head of Outdoor Education at St David's College, North Wales.

From page 33, Ian explores ideas of expeditions and connections which move learners between digital and real-world experiences.

AT THE STONE CIRCLES

Place-based Outdoor Education in Cumbria



The morning mist rises to meet the dawn, perhaps to carry the spirits of the ancestors who so many centuries ago shaped this circle. As we watch, the stones emerge from the mist striking a stark outline against the looming mountain presence, inviting both reverence and cautious exploration.

As Outdoor educators we can facilitate our learners' developing affinity with the landscape and its inhabitants by exploring the past, present and future of a particular location (1, 2). A place-based or place-responsive approach can offer Outdoor educators a context which foregrounds the uniqueness of the local environment, rather than regarding it as a backdrop for the activity. Instead, each particular place can be seen as an active participant in a teaching strategy that is concerned with connection to and understanding of the environment and community through sensory engagement.

As part of an investigation into what place-based Outdoor Education could be, I visited two Cumbrian stone circles with a group of BA (Hons) Outdoor Education students on, what became, a sunny day in February. I encouraged them to consider the relationships of humans and the landscape over a significant passage of time so that we can, in turn, consider our own trace and the implications of this for future practice.

WHY STONE CIRCLES?

Stone circles are often thought to be enigmatic spaces and, as such, they can stimulate a wide range of creativity and thought. There are several key themes that can be discussed and explored during a visit to a stone circle.

People, past, events and societies:
Stone circles as social and political spaces

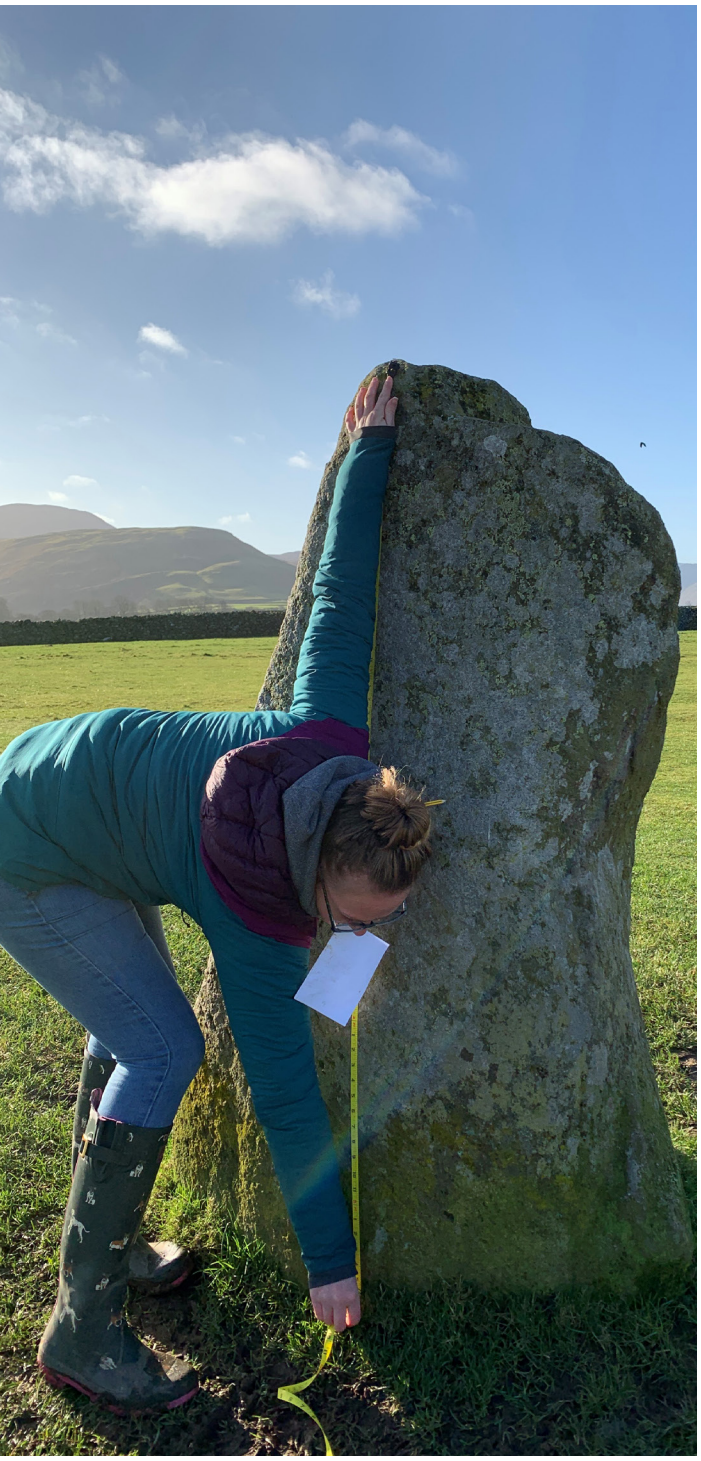
Planet earth and our solar system:
Links to the passage of the sun or moon; alignments to cardinal points or calendrical events.

Religious and moral education:
Explore how beliefs develop, recognising the diversity of beliefs in society, then and now.

WHAT WE DID

The first site visit was to Castlerigg stone circle near Keswick and the second was to Long Meg and Her Daughters in the Eden Valley. Primarily we sought to understand why these stone circles might have been created, both in their immediate landscape but also in a wider social, geographical, and perhaps celestial context. We hoped to bring these stone circles 'to life', through a series of place-based and seminar activities.

Stone circles give us a chance to explore the mathematics and the mythology behind cycles and circles and so we decided to test what



we know about the alignment of Castlerigg stone circle by mapping its physical shape; then we explored the myths and legends surrounding Long Meg through storytelling and ritual.

Using trundle wheels, measuring tape and compass bearings the students took measurements at Castlerigg and recorded them in a list of figures that could be interpreted and scaled to recreate an exact model out of clay back at university (1, 3, 4). Photographs were also taken for reference.

At Long Meg the students utilised the resources we brought with us to recount the local legend that claims Long Meg was a witch who, with her daughters, was turned to stone for profaning the Sabbath as they danced wildly on the moor. Wordsworth's poem *The monument*, expressing his feelings as he gazed upon this circle, was read aloud and the students endeavoured to 'break the spell' and bring the stones back to life by walking the perimeter and counting them twice. The stones of the circle are said to be uncountable and local legend explains that if anyone should ever reach the same total twice Long Meg and her daughters will live once more. The students even used the Old Norse and Old English method of counting to make sure:

> *"Yan, tan, tether…"*

WHAT WE FOUND OUT

Long Meg and her daughters did not come back to life in front of our eyes in a literal sense, although the sense of awe and respect was visible amongst the students' actions at the circle and audible in our hushed conversations. The ambience was created in part through the 'homework' we had undertaken as Andy Williams suggested in his *Horizons* article (2), through the reading and discussion of certain texts and online information and through the immersive activities we undertook, which connected us and this place with a larger picture and a larger purpose. However, the artefacts the students discovered under the stones and in the trees showed that people still seek/find meaning in this location and continue to pay their respects. This powerfully highlighted the temporal and cultural context, supporting Andy's notion of understanding past, present and future through a consideration of the cultural shaping of a place (and vice versa) over time.

Mapping Castlerigg was time consuming, but it stimulated investigation on an intricate level, encouraging the development of problem-solving techniques and observation of the stones in significant detail. The students gained a degree of empathy for the original creators through the complex nature of this task and this became a catalyst for the students' seeking further confirmation from the texts we brought with us (3, 4) and the information board at the stone circle. Another, unplanned, source of information came from the many interested and interesting people we met at Castlerigg, from archaeologists to geographers and knowledgeable locals, all contributing to our deeper understanding of this place.

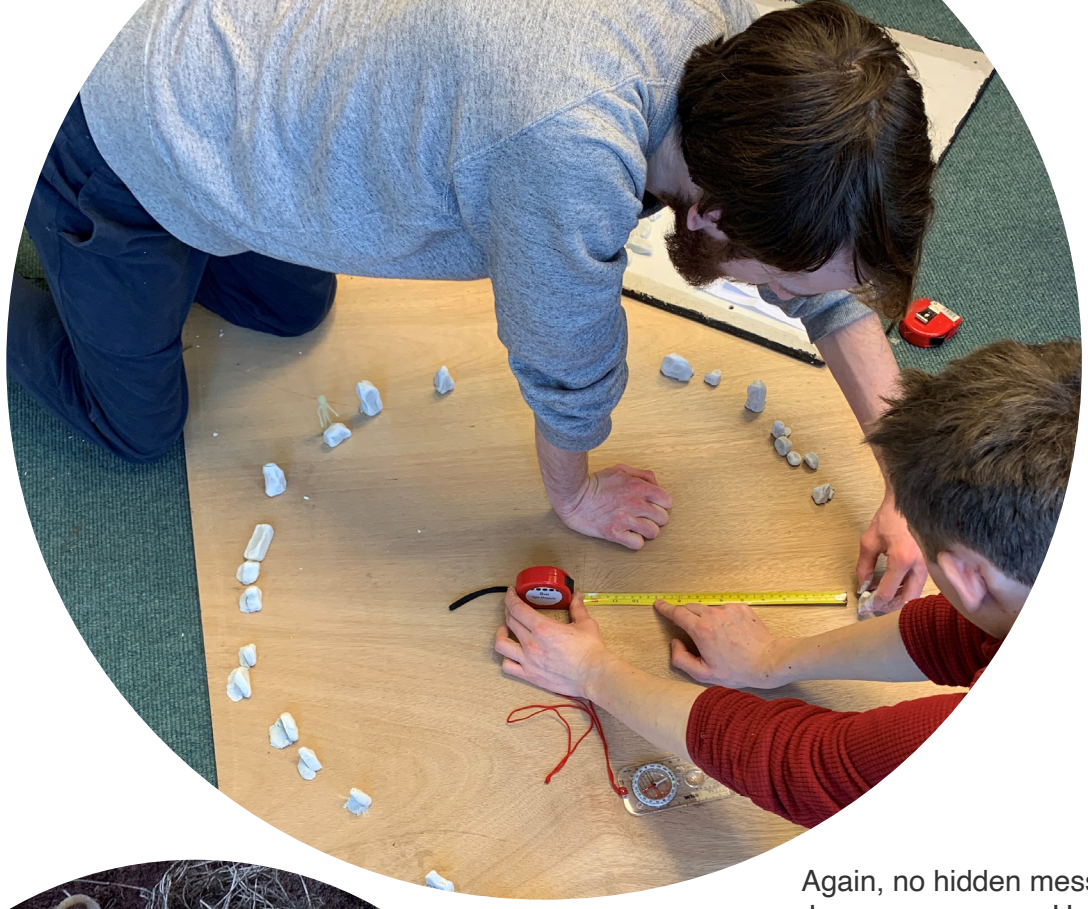
We created our own Castlerigg stone circle back at university using a scale devised by the students. This was a very tactile and almost meditative process which involved moulding the 'stones' out of clay by hand and precision placements on a plywood board to match the recorded alignment measurements and the visual confirmation provided by the photographs of the situated stones.

This process in itself seemed very rewarding for the students as they were actively engaged throughout, but it also offered a medium for further discussion as maps and reference books (3, 4) were available for the students to flick through whenever they needed a change in activity: the model of Castlerigg took nearly three hours to create. This clay model further allowed us to turn out the lights, close the blinds and recreate sunrise and sunset using a torch, at cardinal points and particular celestial and calendrical events like summer and winter solstice.

PLACE-BASED ARCHIVE SEARCH

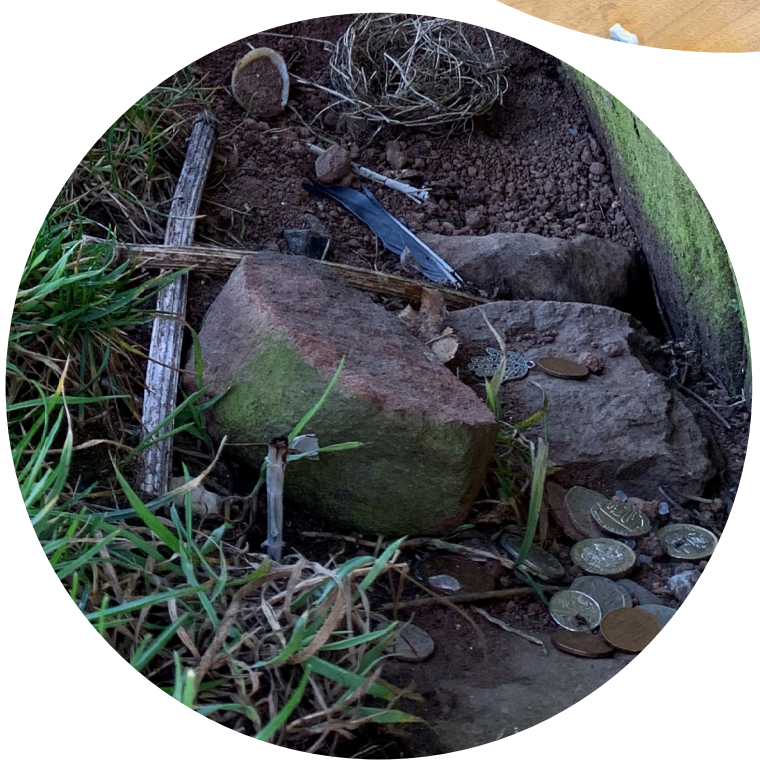
There's a whole archive of Horizons articles at your fingertips. Go to:

www.outdoor-learning-research.org/Horizons-Archive



CONNECT WITH RESEARCH

Have children lost their connection with nature? Find out more on page 30.



Again, no hidden message or pathway appeared in an Indiana Jones-esque way. However, the experience was certainly atmospheric and captivating.

STUDENTS' REFLECTIONS

This learning experience was a potent alternative to a traditional Outdoor adventure activity approach because it foregrounded the place and people.

Place:
These locations became 'places' rather than spaces because they now mean something to us. This meaning is even more powerful when it is derived from our own personal experience, not just that of someone else, highlighting a need for direct experience, not just 'second-hand' or 'abstracted'.

People:
Learning about the myths and religion in this way lead to an understanding of the cultures that were there before and how they have perhaps influenced ours. Also, such understanding can be related to modern times and issues, perhaps leading to tolerance and acceptance of other ideas.

SUMMARY

Although we could have studied the historicised aspect of these stone circles from the comfort of a lecture theatre, there seems to be considerable value in facilitating the students' sensory engagement with a place. This helped them to generate personal, and discover collective, knowledge of the unique locations we explored by developing a relationship with them. This relationship was deepened through the less controllable and replicable aspects of the experience: the people, the artefacts, the atmosphere and the animate nature of stones themselves ■

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1. Nicol, R. (2020). *Putting education into place and place into education. Horizons*, 88, 13-15.
2. Williams, A. (2018). Place is special: when we do a bit of homework. *Horizons*, 82, 20-23.
3. Watson, D. (2015). *A guide to Castlerigg Stone Circle.* Photoprint Scotland.
4. Burl, A. (1995). *A guide to the stone circles of Britain, Ireland and Brittany.* Yale University Press.

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Danny has worked extensively as an Outdoor educator and has been involved in the coaching of mountaineering techniques, paddle sports and sailing for over 25 years. He can be found on mountains, crags, rivers and lakes or at daniel.towers@cumbria.ac.uk