

## **Elliptical Sky of Stars**

**Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> August 2013**

On the first night we returned to the elliptical sky of stars framed by black crenellated trees. Whilst rinsing rice for supper, we were subjected to a massive midge attack, clouds of gyrating black dots which tap danced wearing stilettos on any inch of unshrouded skin. But that did n't deflate the balloon of anticipation. Safe in our tents on spongy grass, we lay listening to a turbulent river.

### **Sunday**

Faffing in the morning. Forgetting where the place for everything is; and everything, even if it was in its place. Too much stuff leads to incoherent mislaying of essential items. Need to check what is required for my own personal journey – not necessarily someone else's list. Beginning to recall my travel survival kit, a swiss army knife of useful habits from decades ago.

Eleanor our new guide is bright, funny, strong and "simpatico".

I don't know why I am here. Yet.

The whole day spent in a walk-talk with an interlude of companionable silence.

Chance brought Rosie and Joe to join us, inviting a new blend of conversation, infused with land lore, peppered with Latin and Welsh names. As we travelled trees were unravelled. The alder, with indented leaves plus miniature loo brush attachments became a recognisable character, pointed out by the green lichen man of this year's Edinburgh Beltane.

Talks of transformation and balance.

### **Ynysymaengwyn**

An invisible furry friend visited last night, six inches from my head, the other side of the tent flap. A soft purring warmth which expanded till it touched my hair, staying till the hint of dawn, when it started scratching, clawing at the waterproof fabric. A sharp reprimand. A swift silent invisible departure. But I knew it had gone. Leaving me to listen intently to the vociferous rookery.

Drowning out tinnitus, beckoning me to poke my head out in time to catch a lilac cloud over the mountain.

## **Bird Rock**

Bird Rock makes me strong. It is an eyrie to turn us into eagles. Into a mad Sweeney, careening aloft. The first time I came here alone with a sketchbook to draw for the WMC manifestation. That particular drawing was censored by the health and safety officer, too high and too low and nothing in between to prevent people walking into the glass. So it was changed beyond recognition. But the real rock lives on.

Last year, after enthusiastically unscrewing light bulbs to Raj's Bollywood recorded music, it was Malcolm, Valerie and I that made it to the 360 degree view. Then we talked geology. This year it was Fern, Eleanor and me. We bathed in the altitude and became birds.

## **Cadair Idris**

A memorial to Mary Jones at Llanfihangel–y- pennant. Sobering, salutary, steeling us for the slow gradual ascent of Cadair.

Feet hurting, twinging hot toes.

So much warmer and clearer than last year without the mythical drama of mist and rain.

At the summit, flies swarm around, as we celebrate with flapjacks and jelly babies. In the bwydden the mad poet's ghost and conversation lingers.

Descent was a question mark of anxiety for Isobel and Donna. Eleanor was sure everyone could surf down the steep shale. She waved a carrot. A swim in the pool at the bottom as a reward.

Permitted to go ahead I went down like a bat out of hell, heels digging in, to send the slate splinters flying. Starting a slatallance, invoking the Alexander Technique. Going down, but thinking up, knees and hips loose, sliding and side-stepping down in a flurry of stones. In a trice it seemed, I was down through the rushes to strip on the pebbles, wading into rippling clarity reflecting the backdrop escarpment. Swimming breast stroke with hair nicker knotted, I watch my dear friends in profile slowly descending the rough outline of Cadair.

Later, walking through the lush green valley of tormentil, moss and mountain ash and before we reached the road sadly silently saying good bye to the mountain.

Fern, Donna and Isobel get picked up by Rosie.

Eleanor, Sian and I run on the road down the hill, blister reckless into the small streets of Dolgellau. At the campsite we relish the bliss of hot showers amidst shrieks of satisfaction.

## **Wild Camping**

Welcomed by a fragrant green bowl of Lucy's maternal intelligence and her father Michael's courtly kindness.

Smokey aubergines, puy lentils, hot potatoes and salad. Orange chocolate gluten free tart dressed with crème fraiche, blackberries and wine. Luxe camping extraordinaire

Running in my wingeing birkenstocked feet to open and close the five barred gates, waving the angelic walking sticked visitors farewell.

Limped back to a pit of slate containing orange fire. Kinetic spark fringed flames against a lop sided black mountain.

Niall and Gary providing laconic scouse commentary, Donna's generous Abba songs, triggering an explorative circle of campfire sounds. Eleanor's rainbow fairy poem delivered with chiaroscuro gestures. Rembrandt, then Goya came to mind,

Fern's Czech and Slavic deep sonorous full blasted tunes, Isobel's refined voice, my "Ar lan y mor"- while the ewes in the darkness thought it was an eisteddfod and bleatedly competed above the noisy stream.