



Common Ground

You and I are already connected
so deeply related – bound by invisible kinship
beyond this window into which you peer.
Let's return to common ground
to walk with each other in silence
and remember together
our place in the family of things.

I have to thank you for this opportunity to share about the arts programme developing in *Common Ground*, the new 25 acre center in Tattenabuddagh near Fivemiletown. I have taken my writing outdoors, sat with the trees and grasses whilst planting Hazel, Rowan Birch and Willow. As a boy I used to listen to the Corncrake in these fields.

Robert Graves, in his poetic manifesto *The White Goddess*, wrote that modern poetry's function was to lay bare the results of humanity's break from the rest of nature:

Once a warning to man that he must keep in harmony with the family of living creatures among which he was born ... it is now a reminder that he has disregarded the warning, turned the house upside down by capricious experiments in science, philosophy and industry, and brought ruin upon himself and his family.

Common Ground has a mission – that the farm will be a place where people will come to deepen their awareness of their relationship with themselves and each other, with a clear primary focus on nature and the other than human beings that inhabit its spaces.

Thomas Berry, the writer and eco-philosopher proposes that we are entering the "Ecozoic Age" where we must reestablish our connection to nature and work toward sustainable lifestyles that reverse the destruction we are currently inflicting on the planet. We as human beings now have that responsibility to care for and help the 'earth community' developing and flourish again.

We hope to engage all kinds of people – those new to any kind of

creative/artistic activity and those already established in a practice. We know there are many ways of relating to ourselves in nature through our creativity and hence we are offering a range of expressive arts – writing, land art, environmental movement, music and storytelling. We recognize that these relationships are dynamic – our sense of connection changes, yet we are always connected in nameable and unnamed ways to the nature all around us. This is a way of engaging in the biggest challenge of our time – the unfolding reality of environmental degradation and the catastrophic effects of climate change on Earth's life.

Our primary concern is that people have the experience of being part of nature as a living breathing whole, and that they embody the experience. The expression of it does not necessarily have to be in poetry, art or prose – if they walk away changed by the experience of being here, more connected and alive – then our job is done.

'Whatever great, beautiful, or significant experiences have come our way must not be recalled again from without and recaptured, as it were; they must rather become part of the tissue of our inner life from the outset, creating a new and better self within us, continuing forever as active agents in our [becoming].' (Goethe)

If you would like learn more or get involved then visit the website – or come to our Annual Gathering on 20th August.

Robbie Breadon has worked in complementary health for 25 years and is co-founder of Ecotherapy Kernow