



Jess Allen

Originally a biologist, Jess gained a PhD from Aberystwyth before joining Herefordshire Council as officer on the Lifescapes project – a landscape-scale habitat mapping and community conservation scheme. She then went on to train in contemporary dance, latterly with an MA in Dance Making and Performance from Coventry. She has since worked as a landscape officer (Worcestershire County Council), dance lecturer (Bristol), community arts facilitator ([Multi-Story Water](#)) and as an aerial performer for Blue Eyed Soul Dance Company, Full Tilt and everyBODY Dance. She is currently doing a second PhD with a [President's Doctoral Scholarship](#) from the University of Manchester, developing what she calls 'tracktivism': walking and moving in rural landscapes as an activist arts practice. She uses walking to facilitate talking and listening; creating unexpected encounters in unusual places. Her curiosity lies in how the aesthetics of a walk and intention of the walker can open a space of embodied dialogue around politics and sustainability. In 2012, from her then home in South Herefordshire in the heart of the rural agricultural economy, she developed a month-long walking performance "All in a Day's Walk", first performed in the winter of 2012 and repeated in summer 2013.

We arranged to meet on Offa's Dyke, I walking north from Chepstow, she coming south from Herefordshire on her way to the Green Gathering <http://www.greengathering.org.uk/>, however, our rendez vous wasn't so successful, as we found ourselves on parallel paths, and had to retrace our steps.

Notes from the podcast interview by Andrew Stuck: Recorded on the Offa's Dyke Path extension to Chepstow in August 2013 and published in July 2014 on <http://www.talkingwalking.net>

In 2013 Jess contributed a 5 year walking forecast - you can listen to it here: <http://www.talkingwalking.net/5-year-walking-forecast/jess-allen-walking-5-years-from-now-2/>

All in a Day's Walk (2012-13) <http://allinadayswalk.org.uk/>

Other recent projects of Jess's:

Tilting at Windmills (2010): <http://www.tiltingatwindmills.org.uk/>

Drop in the Ocean (2013): <http://dropintheocean.org.uk> | <https://vimeo.com/96427826>

Dropped in the Ocean (2014): <https://vimeo.com/87669240>

Some academic papers: <http://manchester.academia.edu/JessAllen/Papers>

Eco-activism: http://www.theecologist.org/blogs_and_comments/commentators/other_comments/962947/where_next_for_ecoactivism.html

Slacktivism <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Slacktivism>

Inventor of 'Mumpets' (<http://allinadayswalk.org.uk/about/winter-performance/winter-recipes/>) from local produce with a consistency between a muffin and a crumpet, the key ingredient of which is beetroot, she distributes these whenever she gives a talk. The day we meet, Jess had also baked Three Counties Flapjacks (Shropshire oats, Herefordshire honey, Gloucestershire butter) for the cafe at which she working at the Green Gathering. (Oats from Shropshire became a necessary 'cheat' on the summer performance as she explains here <http://allinadayswalk.org.uk/2013/07/27/oats-on-cheating-and-eating/>)

Jess is an ardent environmentalist, with friends and acquaintances often remarking that for Jess it is a religion. She is also a fast and long distance walker, becoming irritated with herself should she miss a turn or not know the way to follow. She has even contemplated becoming a running artist, but feels Gregg Whelan may have that covered: <http://www.lonetwin.com/>



Dee Heddon <http://www.gla.ac.uk/schools/cca/staff/deirdreheddon/> and Cathy Turner <http://exeter.academia.edu/CathyTurner> - you can listen to an interview with Dee Heddon on the Talking Walking website: <http://www.talkingwalking.net/deirdre-heddon-talking-walking/>
The poems of Robert Frost, the Dymock poet <http://www.dymockpoets.org.uk/Frost.htm>

Jess Allen recommends these walks:

1. Her all time favourite walk is in the Doethie valley from Rhandirmwyn to Soar-y-Mynydd, in the Cambrian Mountains between Llandovery and Tregaron

Handy website for potential walking routes

<http://walking.visitwales.co.uk/walking-areas/south-wales/the-south-wales-valleys/>

2. Some beautiful walks in Herefordshire - "there are so many" she says - anything that loops onto the Wye Valley walk or the Herefordshire Way. Also Yatton Woods, between How Caple and Much Marcle are beautiful in the snow. To get to it you have to pass through Chapel Farm, an extraordinary farm with a chapel in the yard...

<http://www.explorebritain.info/locality-herefordshire-how-caple-so6030>

3. Jess recommends the experience of walking up to wind turbines - in Mid-Wales the easiest to access might be the Ystwyth wind farm on the A44 between Ponterwyd and Ystumtuen; or Mynydd Gorddu wind farm between Bontgoch and Talybont <http://www.rwe.com/web/cms/en/311442/rwe-innogy/sites/wind-onshore/united-kingdom/in-operation/summary/> Get carried away with wind farms at http://www.midwaleswind.co.uk/photo_7647002.html