



Linda Cracknell

Linda Cracknell is the author of *“Doubling Back—Ten paths trodden in memory”* a moving memoir where she retraces ten walks undertaken by others, from the Highlands of Scotland to the Swiss Alps and Kenya. It was a *Book of the Week* on BBC Radio 4 in June 2014. Our interview explores how she sets out to write a narrative of a journey on foot, what she leaves out and how she draws in the reader to the journey or story she tells. Now living in Scotland, her surroundings offer her plenty of variety for walks, short or long, in the surrounding countryside, much of which is devoid of people since the Highland Clearances. Nature and isolation are both important elements in her writing, as are memories conjured or animated by other walks, some personal, some collective some political. Linda has been influenced by the land artist movement, and especially by Richard Long and Hamish Fulton, but is also stirred by the romance of ‘setting off’, as captured in the writing of Robert Louis Stevenson and Laurie Lee.

Notes from the podcast interview by Andrew Stuck: Recorded over the Internet in March and published in May 2014 on <http://www.talkingwalking.net> to coincide with the publication of *Doubling Back*, a collection of essays.

Linda’s own website: <http://www.lindacracknell.com/> Purchase here copies of *“Doubling Back—Ten paths trodden in memory”* <http://www.lindacracknell.com/mybooks-buyhere.asp>

The interview opens with Linda describing how she researched the Drovers’ road to Skye: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Drovers'_road and for Scottish droving which is perhaps a bit distinct historically from England and Wales, there’s a great book, <http://www.birlinn.co.uk/The-Drove-Roads-of-Scotland-9781841586953.html> To find out more about the Highland Clearances: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Highland_Clearances

Linda publishes her own series of miniature books that include individual stories and essays of walks as *Best Foot Books*. To purchase copies: <http://www.lindacracknell.com/mybooks-buyhere.asp> She writes regularly for the WalkHighlands magazine: <https://www.walkhighlands.co.uk/news/author/lindacracknell/> and runs walking and writing workshops in conjunction with them.

Linda studied English at Exeter University and Fine Art at Exeter Art College - for her dissertation she studied the White Chalk figures on the south Downs. This is where her interest grew in the land art movement and especially the walking art of Richard Long [http:// www.richardlong.org/](http://www.richardlong.org/) and Hamish Fulton <http://www.hamish-fulton.com/> You can listen to an interview with Hamish Fulton on the Talking Walking website: <http://www.talkingwalking.net/hamish-fulton-talking-walking/>

Other influences have been the essays of Kathleen Jamie <http://www.kathleenjamie.com/books/> the writing of Robert Louis Stevenson http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Louis_Stevenson and Laurie Lee http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Laurie_Lee

Linda’s first ‘away from the family’ holiday as a teenager took place in Boscastle: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boscastle>

Linda undertook a barefoot walk with a friend in Kenya, however, her first taste of journeys on foot in Africa took place in Zanzibar (Tanzania) <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zanzibar>

Linda is currently a Royal Literary Fund fellow at Stirling University <https://www.rlf.org.uk/helping-writers/fellowships/>



Call of the Undertow is Linda's first novel about a cartographer who isolates herself on the north coast of Scotland and becomes entangled with an unusual child. The publisher, Freight Books, went into liquidation in December 2017 and copies may only be available second-hand at present. Linda's second novel is currently seeking a publisher.

She has written many short stories for BBC Radio and some dramas including a play about the extraordinary floating church on Loch Sunart: <http://www.lifeandwork.org/features/looking-back---floating-church> and abridged books for radio, including Robert Macfarlane's *Wild Places* [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Macfarlane_\(writer\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Macfarlane_(writer)). Her BBC Radio 3 essay about quartz can be found here: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b087qjfq>

Summary of Linda's radio plays and readings: <http://www.suttonelms.org.uk/linda-cracknell.html>

Walks recommended by Linda Cracknell

1. When asked to recommend a walk, Linda suggested that one should choose a familiar route but walk it in different way than would do normally: perhaps walk it more slowly, or in a different direction, or in part blindfolded or in the dark.
2. She also suggested celebrating the life of a friend or relative through choosing a walk as a kind of pilgrimage.

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