

# Walking Words



*Visual mediation by Deborah Barndt*



Chalk covered flint stones illuminate verdant fields  
Peek up through lovingly trod paths



Each crevice in the white rock hint at a story of Other Ages  
Shaped by tumultuous sea water, erratic wind and seismic shifts

Echoes of geological time more easily imagined  
In the layers of the white cliffs of the Seven Sisters





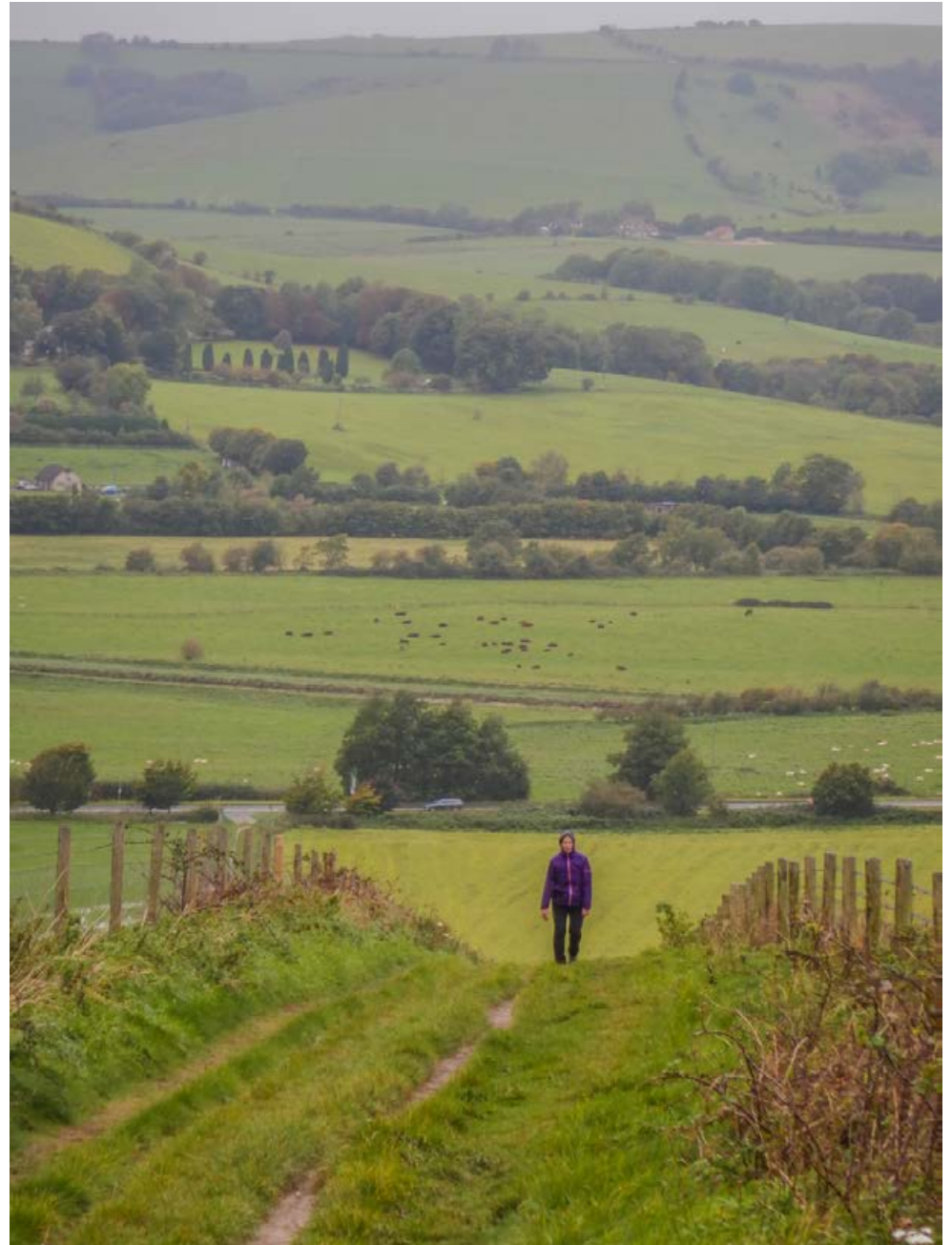
Walking the Southdowns Way, a rolling landscape  
Rising up between the sea and the weald  
Chalk hills a result of African and EuroAsian plates colliding,

I find my sense of time challenged,  
My feet moving into their eighth decade a mere speck  
In human history even more miniscule in the Earth's story



Searching for words to describe my probing  
I turn to other walkers and wordsmiths  
Follow Robert MacFarlane's and Edward Thomas's  
meandering and meditating on the Southdowns trail

Thomas: "I lay down to sleep, placed an ear to the turf  
and imagined the depths of history the soil held –  
Neolithic, Iron Age, Bronze Age, Roman, Augustan,  
Down through all of which the beech roots quested."





I wonder how my English ancestors connected to this land  
Did they have a sense of their own history deeper  
Than the 'new world' narrative conjures up in my settler mind?

How little I know about the land  
Where I live in so-called Canada

Now every stone on this path becomes a code  
What stories are hidden in each perforation?  
What sea animals once found their homes within?  
How were these ancient rocks transformed  
Into weapons, receptacles, fences, homes?



I'm intrigued by MacFarlane's book *The Old Ways*  
My younger self would have called them  
“Out-of-date practices” or “old fashioned habits”  
“Old” as stodgy, grey-haired, disintegrating  
“Ways” calcified customs or hardened practices





But thanks to MacFarlane and walking the SouthDowns Way  
“Old” transcends any notion of human mortality  
Ascends into the deep core of the Earth  
Helps me appreciate my place in this infinite universe  
Simultaneously physical, social, and spiritual

And “ways” are so much more than cultural forms  
They are pathways etched into that deep Earth core



Constantly reshaped by *all* living things,  
humans *in relation*  
to plant, animal, and mineral life  
to soil, sky, and sea



*Thanks to my 'old' friends/guides and walking partner John, England, October 2017*

