



SEINN NA TALMHAINN, FIGHE NAN SGEUL

SINGING THE LAND, WEAVING THE STORIES

A retreat of weave and song in the Scottish Highlands

Monday 8<sup>th</sup> – Friday 12<sup>th</sup> April 2024

(Accommodation available Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> – Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> April)

**Take time out to focus on your creativity, inspired by the Gaelic song, landscape and weaving traditions of the Scottish Highlands, with creative leadership from tapestry weaver Joan Baxter and musician Mary Ann Kennedy, supported by Anna Wetherell and Irene Evison from Nearly Wild Weaving.**

- Intertwining music and song, wool and weaving, landscape and language for a creative melting pot of a week – take your pick for what you want to focus on.
- Dedicated time from creative leaders Joan Baxter and Mary Ann Kennedy, combined with freedom to ‘do your own thing’.
- Enjoy the company of like-minded weavers and tapestry weavers, share ideas, learn from one another, be enthused by one another. Explore song, sound and rhythm to inspire your weaving.

There will be a choice of activities which include:

- Exploring the local landscape of Ardgour in the Scottish Highlands, finding out how the Gaelic place names help to interpret the landforms that you’re seeing, and discovering the Gaelic colour circle.

- Joining in to weave a twill cloth collectively, inspired by traditional Gaelic songs of the land. No handweaving experience necessary!
- Listening to and joining in with waulking songs traditional to the Scottish Highlands, a song form sung by women as, together, they beat newly woven cloth to consolidate the warp and weft (fulling it).
- Generate ideas, try out some samples, create your own woven or sung piece in response to the landscape. Or, just bring your own weaving project and enjoy the music, song and surroundings!

Dip in and out, do as much or little as you like, make this week your own.

There is more information on the Gaelic colour circle and the tradition of waulking songs on our website: <https://nearlywildweaving.wordpress.com/singing-the-land-weaving-the-stories/>



The retreat will be based at the Watercolour Music studio near Ardgour, not far from Fort William. We will work from their light-filled studio which looks out over Loch Linnhe and across to Ben Nevis.

We start on the morning of Monday 8<sup>th</sup> April and finish on the evening of Friday 12<sup>th</sup> April. We have reserved self-catering accommodation at Watercolour and a cottage close by, both of which are available from Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> April., although you may wish to make other arrangements.

There are a maximum of 10 places available. Please do book early to guarantee a place.

Tapestry weavers are expected to have some previous experience, although you certainly do not need to be an expert! Handweavers and musicians interested in woven textiles: you are also welcome! But note, this isn't a taught course as such, rather an opportunity to be inspired, develop ideas, try out new things, take time to think creatively, and to share your

enthusiasm with other like-minded people. Joan and Mary Ann are there to help bounce ideas around, provide advice, challenge us and support us with our creativity, as well as developing some ideas of their own! Do talk to us if you're not sure.

No previous experience in Gaelic is necessary. You're welcome to participate in any of the Gaelic song or culture activities, or just to observe or absorb them as you work – community works in many ways.

Participants are not expected to be expert singers or musicians, although being open-minded and interested in how music and song can inspire creativity will be helpful! If you have experience, we look forward to sharing our musical knowledge and passion together. You need nothing other than your voices, but musical participants are welcome to bring instruments. We will provide copious learning resources. Recording of sessions exclusively for subsequent personal study is permitted.

### **Cost**

~~£550~~ £450 per person, to include: studio space; expert guidance and support from Joan Baxter and Mary Ann Kennedy; participation in projects; refreshments and simple lunches; pick-up from either Fort William or Corran ferry.

Deposit of £150 payable on booking. The deposit is non-refundable unless we can fill your place, but will, of course, be refunded if we have to cancel.

Accommodation costs will be confirmed when we know numbers and preferences, but will require an additional £200 deposit at the time of booking, unless you prefer to book your own elsewhere.

### **Outline of activities**

Every day will be different, but we will have a pattern to our days, which you may join in with or not as you wish.

Monday	Welcome and introductions  Weaving and tapestry weaving inspired by Scottish landscape (Joan)  Traditional Scottish music and song associated with the Highlands and the Lochaber area (Mary Ann)  An introduction to the collective twill weaving project (Anna), and a start on the project.  A gentle stroll to begin to explore the local area (Irene).
Tuesday – Thursday	Mornings (10am – 1pm) Mary Ann and Joan available for guidance and support. Irene and Anna available to take you out to explore the local area.

Afternoons    Your own creative time

Any time      Contribute to the collective twill weave (Anna available to help as needed).

Friday            Waulking our collective twill cloth.

Conclusion and review of our work.

Evening celebration pizza at Ardgour Ales.

## Equipment

Tapestry weavers: Please bring your own warp, frame, clamps, or whatever equipment you would normally use to weave. Alternatively, let us know on the Booking Form if you need us to provide these for you (small additional hire charge). We will have a variety of yarns available for sample use free of charge, as well as having a weaversbazaar pop-up shop should you wish to stock up on yarn or simply find the right colour for your project.

Handweavers: We will set up a loom for use to weave the collaborative twill woven cloth. Please bring your own table loom, warp and yarns if you wish to work on your own piece as well.

Musicians and singers: You need nothing other than your voices, but musical participants are welcome to bring instruments. We will provide copious learning resources. Recording of sessions exclusively for subsequent personal study is permitted.

## Accommodation

We have reserved self-catering accommodation on site and also a short walk away, available from Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> to Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> April 2024.

Watercolour: 3 rooms (1 double, 1 twin, 1 with 4 bunks). Expected total cost £1044, to be split fairly between those staying there.

An Tigh Beag: 4 rooms (2 twin, 2 double). Expected total cost £1540 (assuming 4 staying), to be split fairly between those staying there.

<https://www.conaglen.co.uk/tigh-beag/>

These will be booked on a first come first served basis. Please give us your first and second preferences on your completed Booking Form. We will require a £200 deposit for your accommodation booking, balance of payment to be confirmed according to numbers and property.

Should you prefer to book your own accommodation elsewhere, we suggest a few options here, all of which are a short drive away. Irene lives nearby so may be able to help with lifts if you're without a car.

- The Inn at Ardgour <https://www.ardgour.biz/accommodation> . Hotel B&B. A short drive away. Discounted per night B&B price for participants £130 double occupancy, £120 single occupancy.

- Two different sets of camping pods (both very comfortable) in Clovullin, check Airbnb.
- Self-catering croft cottage in Clovullin  
<https://www.furtherafield.com/properties/croft-11-clovullin-stylishly-renovated-croft-house-in-the-highlands-on-further-afield/>

It may be possible to stay in your own campervan / motorhome, but there are no sites nearby. Please ask if you wish to discuss this option.

## Food

Each participant is responsible for providing their own breakfasts and evening meals, but if you are staying in the self-catering accommodation provided we expect there will be an element of team work for this! We are happy to put 'housemates' in touch with one another ahead of time, as sharing food and cooking can be a fun part of the week.

Please note – there are no local shops. Each house will need to arrange for purchase of food en-route (eg Fort William or Ballachulish). If we are picking you up from Fort William we can include a supermarket run in this.

We may be able to organise a run out to a local store during the week to top up essentials (30-minute drive away, minimum), but we recommend that the majority of your food should be brought with you, and that you liaise as a group – we can help with that.

We will, however, provide refreshments and lunches. These are included within the price of the retreat. Please inform us of any dietary requirements and allergies on your completed Booking Form.

We propose a social pizza meal at Ardgour Ales on Friday night, a celebration to end our week together.

## Getting to and from the retreat

The retreat will be held at Watercolour Music, Ardgour, PH33 7AH.

<https://maps.app.goo.gl/uKAzRMyCCjezYehKA>

Getting here by public transport is straightforward:

BY TRAIN: The nearest train station is Fort William; with pre-arrangement, we can pick you up from there. If you're travelling from southern England, the overnight sleeper is a very comfortable option <https://www.sleeper.scot/>

BY BUS: There is a direct bus from Glasgow and Glasgow Airport to Corran. Walk a few hundred metres down the hill to get the Corran Ferry across to Ardgour, and with pre-arrangement, we can pick you up from there.

BY CAR: If you are coming by car and intend to use the Corran Ferry, please check their website for the timetable for first and last crossings of the day. Up-to-date information can be found on their social media <https://www.facebook.com/CorranFerryService> and on

X/Twitter <https://twitter.com/corranferry?lang=en-GB> . Currently, a one-way ticket for a car plus passenger(s) is £10.

If you are interested in sharing transport, please let us know where you are travelling from and we will put you in touch with others in the group.

*If you have any queries about the retreat, you are welcome to contact Anna ([annawtapestry@btinternet.com](mailto:annawtapestry@btinternet.com)) or Irene ([irene@nearlywild.org](mailto:irene@nearlywild.org)).*