



anthropology as ritual:  
building sanctuary.  
in a hut.  
in a forest.  
charlotte french

MA Fine Art AMD7000

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# manifesto

This project has been a working study for the past fourteen months, starting as far back as June 2020. Beginning as a simple lockdown- daily walk around local woodlands and finding a secluded spot that felt calming and tranquil, transformed into a site of daily ritual and transformation experiences. This site became the start of a long period of study of this area, building physical artefacts and establishing ritual performances with the intent to establish how ritual can promote mending, and how ritual is the constant across a constantly changing environment, signifying regeneration and renewal. The ultimate aim is to become the active participant between site and ritual, providing a link to objects, a terrestrial environment and the manifestation of a process. With an ancestral link to Scottish druid ritual and magick, my understanding of the practice had already been established, if not cast aside for more modern approaches. I had memories of ointments and medicines being made from grown herbs and mud in our family kitchen, and small trinkets being made as protective talismans to be hung at windows and doors. With this in mind, my approach to this site instinctively meant a place of safety and experimentation with the transition from old into new but also new into old, with the application of old practices into a new situation. The site sits directly over a county boundary line, which at the time, held two different Covid-19 restrictions and rules for engagement. After several weeks of visiting, it became clear to me that the site had become a place of sanctuary, and a space of rebuilding. As a result of two weeks in the July sun, a hut built directly in the centre and across the boundary line became this space of nurture and understanding. This hut would be the stage for ritual performances and general site maintenance over the coming months. The anthropological element of this study came to be my method of documentation across the entirety of this project, a method of observation of my own development and rebuilding. My aim is to embed layers of meaning from personal experience, ideas of sustainability, locality, and craft production within the material object. Humans are encompassed within this world they objectively bound to the determinations of an evolved human nature which they had no hand in shaping; conversely they are able to shape their own destined only in so far as they issue from a historical consciousness that is constituted without the material world, in an intersubjective or social domain of mental realities, that stands over and above the sheer materiality of nature.

Experimentation in everyday life, by contrast, is a matter not of testing conjectures in arenas of practice, but of enrolling practical activity in the very process of following a train of thought. It is to do our thinking in the open, out-of-doors. We learn more by engaging directly with the materials themselves, following what happens to them as they circulate, mix with one another, solidify and dissolve in the formation of more or less enduring things. This includes preparing the land for growing, nurturing and harvesting natural fibres to produce hand-spun linen yarn; handweaving linen and creating natural dyes and paints from local plant, animal and mineral resources. The builder perspective sets the maker, as a bearer of prior intentions, over and against the material world, the dwelling perspective situates the weaver in amongst a world of materials, which he literally draws out in bring forth the work. Plants, provide and endless source of materials for further processing and transformation. As Tim Ingold states, **'An environment, does not exist in of itself. It only exists relation to the being whose environment it is. To perceive an environment is not to look back on the things to be found in it, or to discern their congealed shapes and layouts, but to join with them in the material flows and movements contributing to their ongoing formation' \***. **By interacting with an environment, you become an element of the space.** With this mingling, the wind, the light, moisture of the sky bind with the substances of the earth forging a way through the tangle of lines that comprises land. Life is lived in the open, rather than being contained within a confined structure. A room is not an enclosure but an opening that affords for growth and movement. It holds no walls, no ceiling and only the sky arching overhead. This space was built as a sanctuary space to aid with my reconnection rebuilding during a challenging period. As I tell this story, I desire that these ritual and production methods be taken forward and used by others in need of aid, without an alter of belief. The space becomes a place.

- Charlotte French \* Ingold, T. (2011) Being Alive: Essays on movement, knowledge and description.





Ritual Site Before Hut Build [Morning walk around the local area]

(14.07.20, 8:40am)

ritual: **ritual has and serves a purpose, whether its's**  
a daily event of a very special occurrence  
An effective ritual connects with that purpose  
and signifies to our brains, bodies, and spirits  
that something has been  
accomplished.

# a spell to decide a ritual site

this spell will help you choose a ritual site to perform your spells.

\*\*

you will need:

a pair of sturdy walking shoes

a map

a coat (this may take a while– weather permitted)

a pencil and notebook

camera

this spell can take place at any time of day

the purpose of this spell is to help choose a ritual site in order to perform your spells and rituals. the site is the most crucial element of ritual performance as it contains and holds all built up energy , charged through ritual performance. choosing a site should be done carefully.

\*\*

gather all of your materials together and lay them out on a flat surface.

sit back (ideally in complete quiet) and think about a serene outdoor spaces, significant to you.

choose several outdoor areas to explore, and mark them down on your map.

visit each one by one with your ritual intention clear in your mind.

before entering the space, approach the boundary of the site and state:

let nothing or no one bring me harm to me,

shield of protection, I call to them,

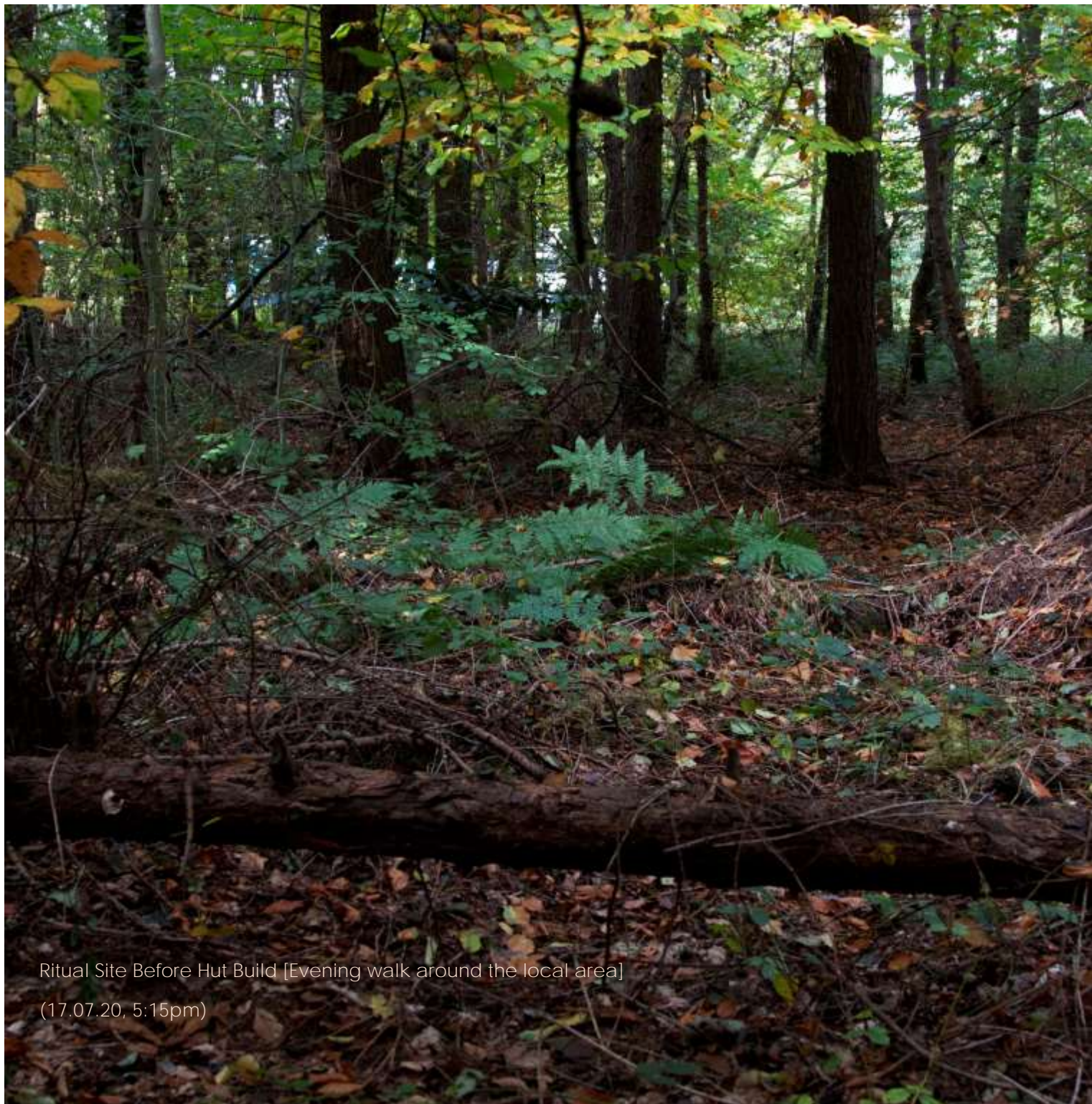
to all directions, so mote it be.

step over the boundary and stand completely still and experience each sense.

use the mud under your boots as your anchor to the earth.

if this space is liminal and tuned to your intention, you will feel the will and push to pursue your purpose.





Ritual Site Before Hut Build [Evening walk around the local area]

(17.07.20, 5:15pm)

spell:

spell craft is the application of magick through means of a formula. An idea becomes a thought, which becomes an action- international and conscious as well as deep into the subconscious, activating change.



# a spell to help establish a ritual site

this spell will help you prepare a ritual site to perform your spells.

\* \*

you will need:

salt, chalk, stones or string

an offering (food or gold)

a pencil and notebook

compass

camera

this spell can take place at any time of day.

now you have chosen your ritual site, you will need to prepare it for any future spells and activity. you will once again need to ask permission to enter this space, and ultimately change it from a liminal state of quiet into a charged area of private power.

\*\*

before entering, stand on the boundary of the site and state:

*let nothing or no one bring harm to me,  
as I call on those who reside and the powers that be.  
shield of protection, I call to them,  
to all directions, so mote it be.*

*\*you have requested permission from the guardians of the site to pass into their space*

walk into the centre of the space, clasping a handful of chosen material in both your hands (chalk, salt or stones).

stretch out your arms fully and slowly turn in a full circle (starting in either direction that feels most comfortable to you, clockwise- or anti clockwise).

gently release the material as you turn, until you complete a full 360-degree circle.

bring your arms down, firmly planting your feet into the ground.

use your compass to face North.

# a spell to help establish a ritual site (cont.)

by facing north you are calling for the cailleach (goddess of life) by saying:  
*hail and welcome within the circle.*

Turn to the East and call upon the Fae Folk (guardians of the earth) by saying:  
*Hail and welcome within the circle.*

Turn to the South and call upon the Ancestors (those who have walked on this land) by saying:  
*Hail and welcome within the circle.*

Finally, turn to the West and call upon the gatekeepers (guards of the between lands) by saying:  
*Hail and welcome within the circle.*

Return to the North and thank all of those who you have welcomed into your circle.

You may now exit the circle.

Leave behind an offering of thanks inside the circle.

\*\*

You have now established an honourable and respectful connection to the land. Rituals and spells can now be performed here in safety, peace, and protection.

# site map- terrain



this first map outlines the density changed in terrain within all three of the segments. the darker the segment, the denser the woodland. using a geographical mapping method, I was able to outline significant area markings, especially within the ritual hut field. the small brown dots and lines both represent key trees and logs. all of these trees or logs that are outlined have been key to ritual performances, or anthropologically studied in some way.



# site foliage



himalayan ivy variations  
poisonous beware when harvesting



hairy maiden fern  
sweet flavouring used in teas



rowan leaf  
best used in tea to aid digestion



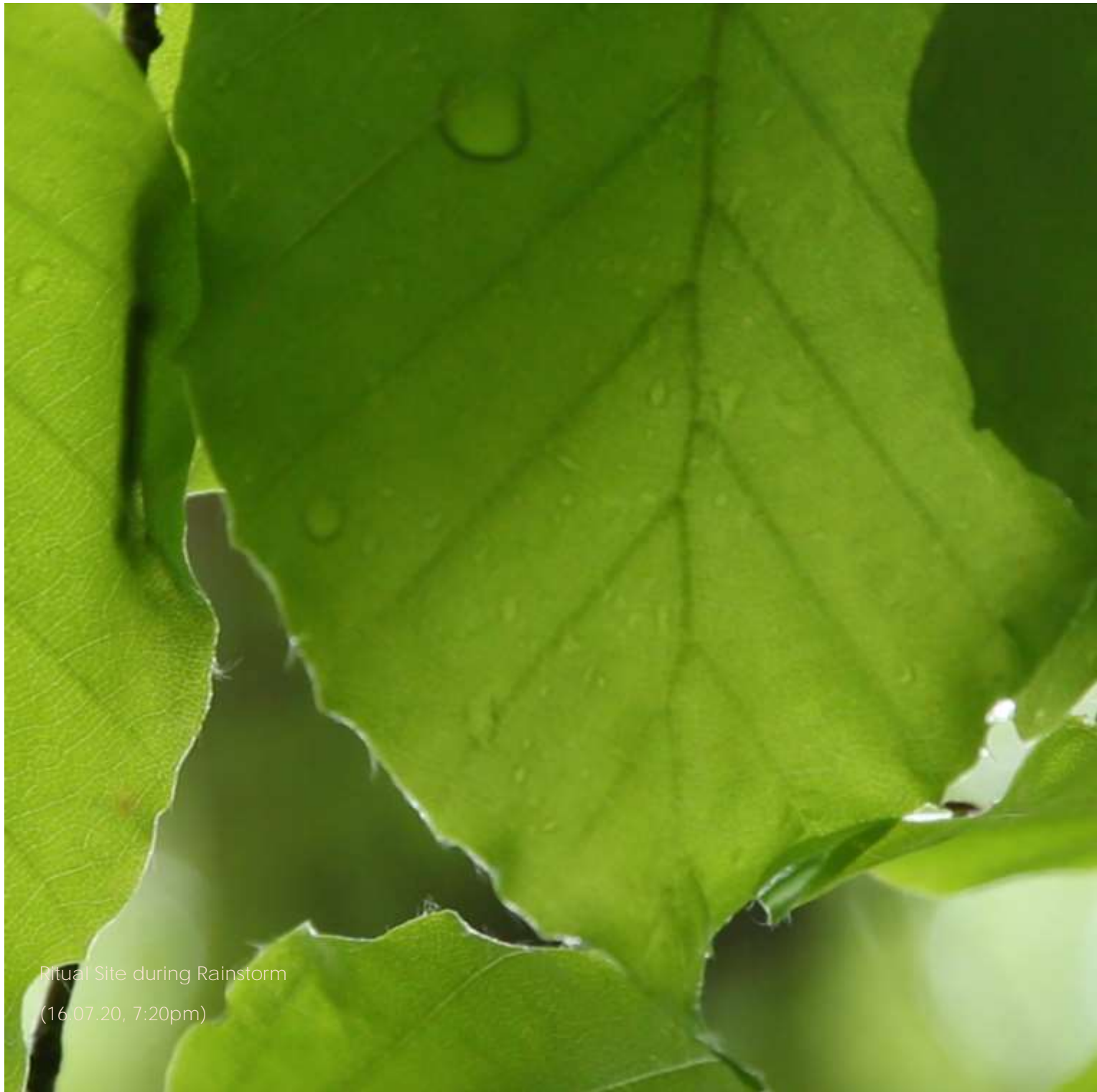
leafy fern  
provides relief from toothache and cramps



cherry plum  
edible with a sour taste



sycamore maple  
leaf sap used as a wood varnish



Ritual Site during Rainstorm  
(16.07.20, 7:20pm)

# a spell to help prepare for a ritual

This spell will help you prepare and cleanse all your materials for a ritual.

You will need:

Cutting Sheers

Shovel

Method of storing tools (pouch, box)

Piece of cloth

Bowl

Fresh Water

White Candle

Matches

This spell can take place at any time of day.

In order to perform any ritual or spell, you need to have a selection of materials ready to go. To keep the energy flow pure, it's best to cleanse all of your materials before going out to your ritual circle/area.

\*\*

Layout all your materials onto a piece of cloth, separating them to give them all their own space.

Light the white candle and place it directly behind the bowl.

Fill the bowl about half way with water.

Place both of your hands directly over the bowl and say:

*Element of water, wash me clean,  
So I may no longer be unseen.  
Out of the darkness into the light,  
Help me to shine my light bright.  
So mote it be.*

Now place each tool into the bowl of water one by one, swirling the water with your fingers and say:

*Magick hammer in hand, I strike a blow,  
To remove this darkness, so I may go.*

Lay out your cleansed tools to fully air dry.





Ritual Site After Hut Build [Site visit to photograph area]

(31.08.20, 2:00pm)

# a spell to arrive to a ritual

This spell will help you arrive to your ritual site and prepare to perform your ritual.

\* \*

You will need:

Your cleansed tools

An offering (food or gold)

(Optional)

Salt, Chalk or Pebbles

This spell can take place at any time of day.

You already have a ritual site prepared, but each time you arrive, you must ask permission to enter the boundary. It is not a given that you may come and go as pleased. Your intention but be accepted each time your visit your site.

\*\*

During your walk to the site, consider your intentions for your ritual.

As you approach the boundary to the site, try and keep as quiet as possible.

Stand at the edge of the boundary and say:

*Let nothing or no one bring harm to me,  
As I call on those who reside and the powers that be.  
Shield of protection, I call to them,  
To all directions, so mote it be.*

You can now enter the site.

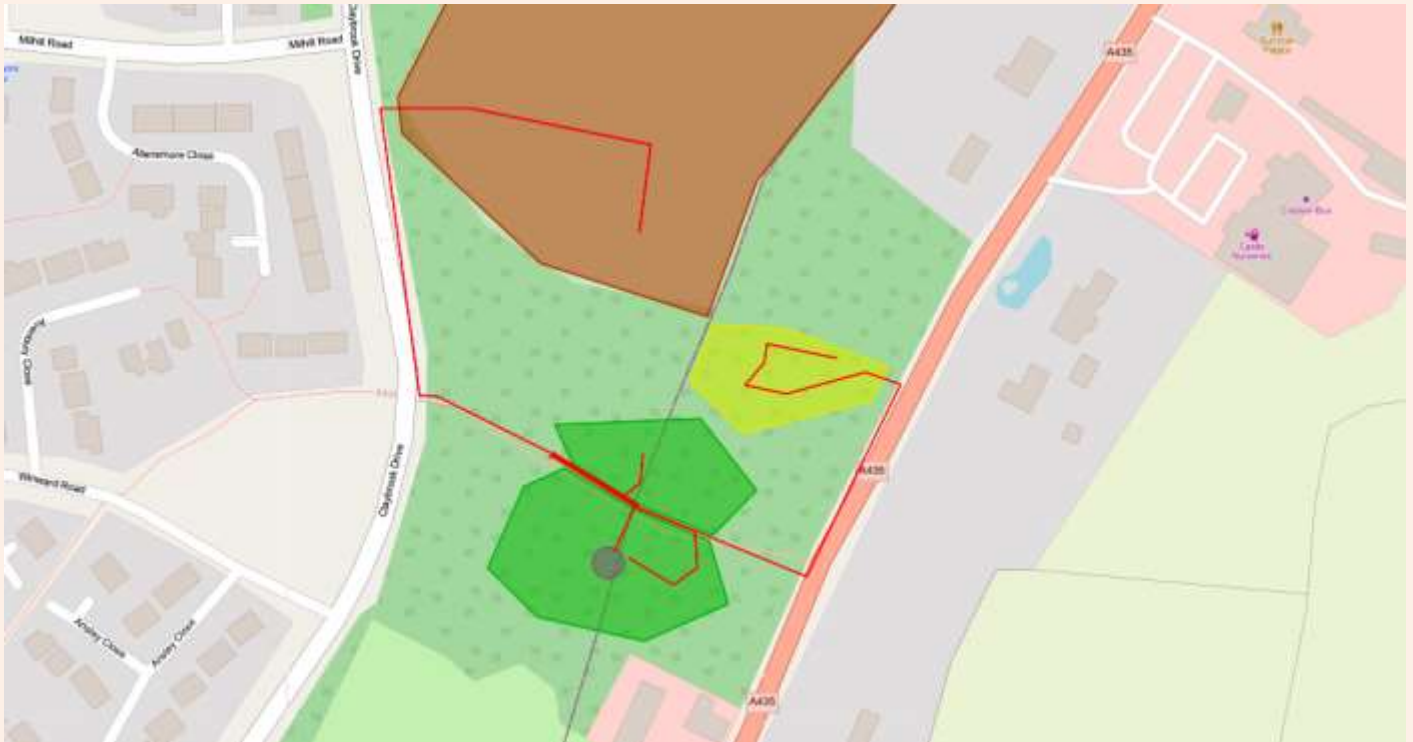
Set down your materials and stand with your feet completely panted an on the ground and say:

*Witches of old, I draw on your power  
To awaken my wisdom upon this new hour.  
I rise up and harness my wisdom deep,  
Journey's to take, secrets to keep.  
Invoke the magick to bind us as one;  
By alluring enchantment, united, it is done.*

\*\*

You are now free to perform your ritual within the accepted site space.

# site map- arrival



this second map outlines every arrival and departure paths to and from the ritual hut site, the allotment and material gathering area. all paths link at some point creating a hive of activity, with the ritual hut in the centre. the coming and going from one place to the next creates a gateway between each area, linking them with action and intent. The large brown segment of the map outlines the allotment, the yellow signifies the fibre field and the green section outlines the dense woodland with the ritual hut in the middle.





Ritual Site After Hut Build [Site visit to photograph area]

(05.09.20, 4:10pm)





Ritual Site After Hut Build [Site visit to photograph area]

(11.10.20 10:15am)

# a spell for the collection of material

This spell will help you work within your ritual site and collect material to take elsewhere.

\* \*

You will need:

Boots

Cleansed tools (shovel, sheers)

A basket or method of transporting the material

Jars (if collecting fine or wet material)

This spell can take place at any time of day.

Each time you visit your ritual site, you will need to ask permission to enter and collect the material you seek. The material does not belong to you, it will always belong to the guardians of the forest.

\*\*

As per normal practice, stand at the boundary of your ritual site and consider what your intentions are for this visit.

Stand at the edge of the boundary and say:  
*Let nothing or no one bring harm to me,  
As I call on those who reside and the powers that be.  
Shield of protection, I call to them,  
To all directions, so mote it be.*

You can now enter the site.

Consider the area before you take anything. Take a small amount from multiple areas to avoid over-foraging.

Show anything collected with respect. Be careful with your handling of it.

Think and consider how the material has come to be there. How did it grow and what purpose does it serve to the area?

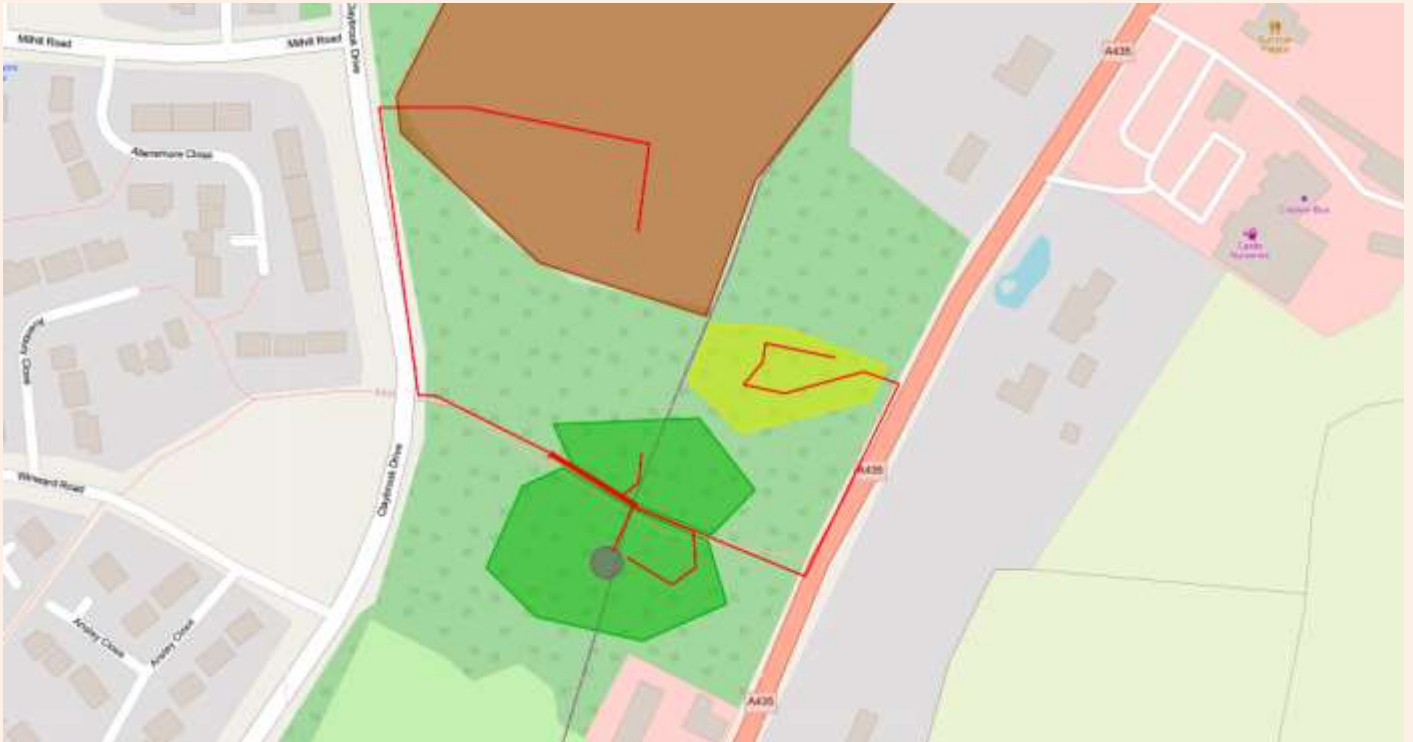


Collecting plant material.

(14.06.21, 10:00am)



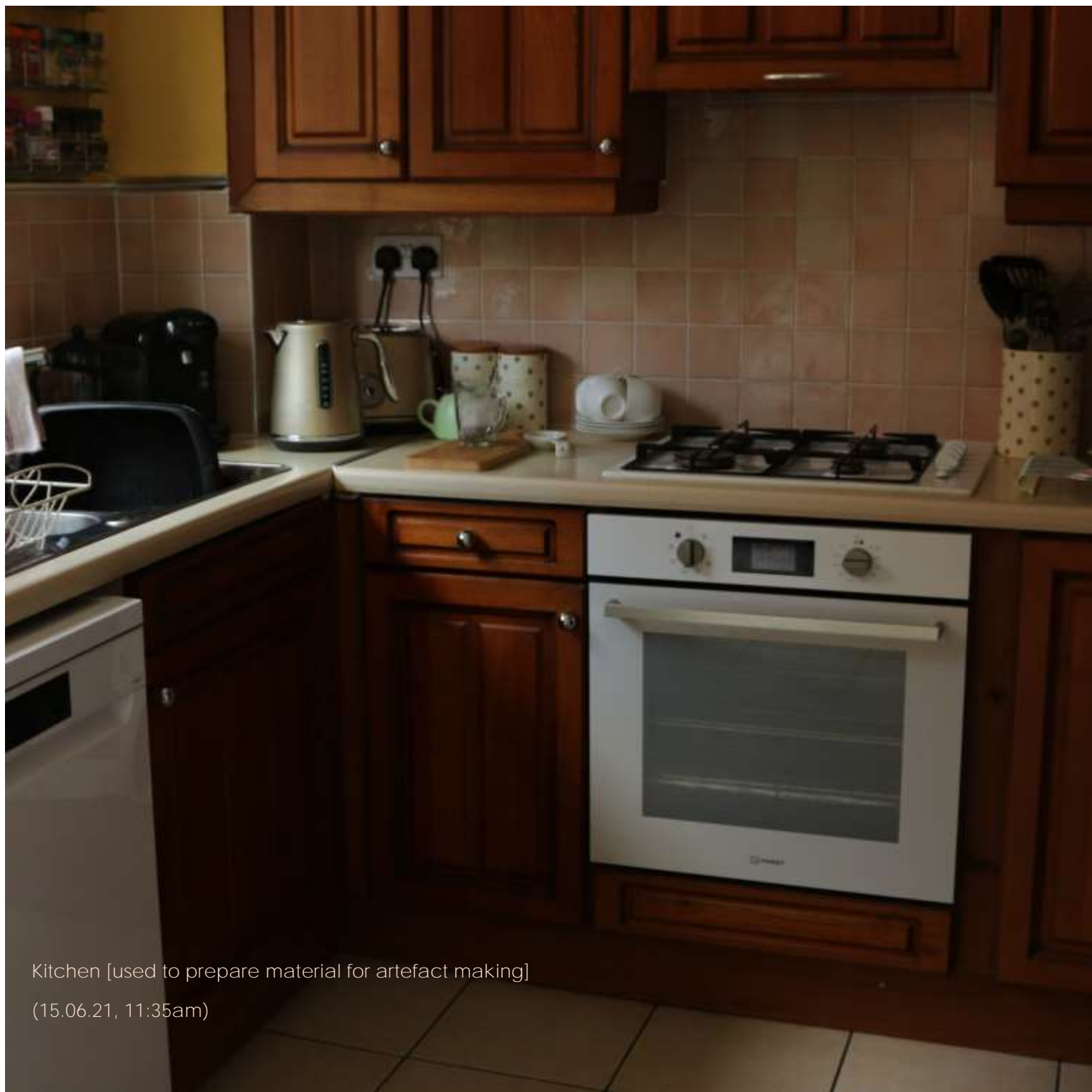
# site map- activity



this final map holds the most amount of information, with arrival routes, terrain density and activity all mapped onto the one map. using a gps tracking device, I was able to track my movement through the areas during the arrival and activation portions of this area study. orange lines represent typical activity: photographing and sketching. red lines signify arrival routes, the purple line shows the route taken during a spring equinox thread walk and finally the blue line represents a midsummer thread walk performed as a ritual in the area.

# green kitchen practice :

she embraces the power of nature; she draws energy from the Earth and the Universe. she relies on natural objects like stones and gems to commune with the land she lives off of; she uses plants, flowers, oils, and herbs for healing; she calls on nature for guidance; and she respects every living being no matter how small.



Kitchen [used to prepare material for artefact making]

(15.06.21, 11:35am)

# a spell for the preparation of material

This spell will guide you in the way of taking raw material and transforming it into a workable substance.

\* \*

You will need:

*(depending on your material type: for dried grass and shrubs)*

Material collected from ritual site

Two blocks of wood (roughly 1 ft in length and a hand sized piece)

or

*(food material)*

Chopping board

Sharp knife

This spell can take place at any time of day.

For the preparation of material, a lot of hard work will be needed. You are actively changing the material into another state. Once this spell is complete, the material is forever changed.

\*\*

Gather all of your collected material into one place.

Sort through the material and pick out any dead, or non-usable pieces.

*(for dried grass and shrubs)*

Take hand- sized chunks of material and lay it out onto the 1ft long piece of wood.

Hold the material flat onto the board using one hand resting at the top of the board, use the small wooden block to rub the material down the length of the longer board.

This process has be repeated until the material becomes fine, but does not break apart.

Keep repeating the 'chocking' process until all the material has been stripped down.



# a spell for the preparation of material cont.

*(for food material)*

Pull away any leave or stems from the collected material.

Use your sharp knife to carefully chop each individual food type into small pieces.

Fill a saucepan or pot 2/3 full of tap water.

Add the chopped pieces into the saucepan or pot.

Leave the material to stew in the water for 1-1 1/2 hours.

Any prepared material is now ready to be further transformed into a component for artefact making.

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Boiling plant material to make dye

(17.06.21, 12:00pm)

# a spell for the boiling of material

A step in the making of artefact objects, this spell with aid in the production of charged dyes.

\* \*

You will need:

Your chopped material.

A pot or saucepan.

A stovetop or cooking fire.

A spoon.

A strainer.

Jars (2 per colour/material)

This process will involve steeping the material in water over a heat for a period of time. The breakdown of the substances then infuses in the water.

\* \*

Fill the saucepan or pot 2/3 of the way with clean water.

Place the pan over a low heat.

Add the chopped material to the pan.

Gently stir every 5 or so minutes, and allow to slowly steep for 1-2 hours.

After the material has fully broken down and the water has cleared transformed, take the pan/ pot off the heat.

Scoop out the material and place in a jar to cool.

Separate the small left over bits and the water by pouring it through the strainer.

Add this discarded substance to the same jar as the boiled material to cool.

Pour the dye into a separate jar to cool.

After 2-3 hours, place the jar on the lid and place the jar outside to steep in the moonlight overnight.

Take the jar of dye and stir any settled material.

Allowing the dye to sit outside overnight under the moon charges it with potent lunar energy. This energy can then be transferred into any cloth or material dyed.

weaving : a craft or action of forming an object by  
interlacing threads



A close-up photograph of a fabric edge. The left side is a dark, blurred brown color, while the right side is a textured, greenish-brown color. A small, light-colored mark is visible on the greenish-brown fabric.

Dyed Fabric

(30.06.21, 3:50pm)

# a spell for the dyeing of material

This spell will help infuse fabrics and material with the energised dye.

\* \*

You will need:

Material to dye.

Large container or bowl.

Clean Water.

Jars of Dye.

Space to hang material to dry (preferably overnight).

This spell can take place at any time of day but will need to be completed after a night has passed.

Material dyed using infused dyes will also need to be charged with energy to maximise potential.

\*\*

Layout your material (sized before dyeing)

Fill the bowl/ container 1/3 full of clean water

Pour the jar of dye into the water and ensure it is fully mixed.

Fold the material to fit the size of the container

Place the material inside the bowl

*Make sure the material is fully saturated in the water/dye mix*

Allow the material to sit in the container for 1 hour

Remove the material from the bowl and allow to air dry outside

Leave the material outside overnight (ideally in moonlight)

Once the material has fully dried and lunar infused, this process can be repeated to achieve the desired pigment strength.



Fibre Spinning

(10.07.21, 11:20am)

# a spell for the spinning of material

This spell will aid you in transforming your raw material into spun thread.

\* \*

You will need:

Split/ Chocked Material

A Spindle

This spell can take place at any time of day.

This spell requires some physicality and time.

\*\*

Gather all the material that you stripped and chocked during the previous spell.

Section out the material into small segments, enough to pinch between your thumb and forefinger.

Comb through the strings of fibre to remove any knots or tangles.

Twist one end of the fibre onto the spindle hook.

Turn the spindle gently to begin the twist.

Slowly twist the spindle pulling the thread tight, making sure the thread is evenly twisting and not gathering.

As you twist the spindle say:

*Staff of wisdom, power of light,  
Connect me to the ancients with all of your might.  
I feel your presence deep within;  
Now the time has come for it to begin.  
A magickal connection with one and all,  
Tree of Life is my wherewithal.*

Continue to spin each segment of thread until all the material has been spun.

Now each and every twist is unfused with power and ready to be threaded into a loom.



# a spell for the weaving of material

**This spell will explain how to use your energised thread into a weave.**

\* \*

## **You will need:**

Spun Thread

Weaving Loom

**This spell can take place at any time of day.**

To be able to weave, is to be able to stitch the fabric of time: past, present, and future into the hands of the weave maker.

\*\*

Set your loom to an appropriate and comfortable position.

Thread your loom using the specific method for your particular loom and your energised threads.

Thread your fibres using up and down movements, using the middle beater to make the stitch taught.

As you continue to stitch and establish a rhythm say the following:

*From the powers of the west,  
Memories call, the water blessed.  
Remembrance flows deeps and vast,  
Souls connecting from the past.  
Lighting up my path today,  
To know myself- for tis' the way.*

Continue to weave until all threads are stitched.

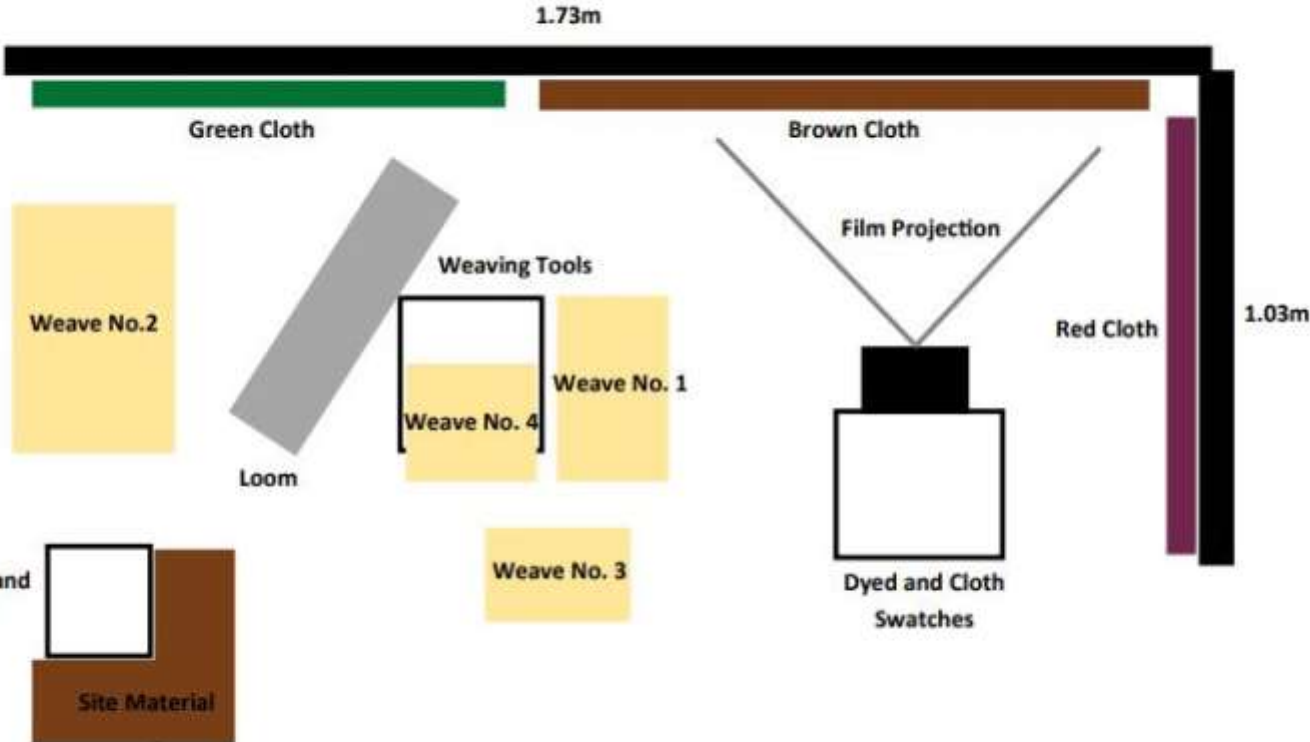
This process of creating an enchanted artefact from an anthropological site is now complete.



Weave No. 4.

Woven Material made from site foliage  
and dyes.

# installation:





Studio Installation


Photo taken 3.8.2021





Studio Installation:  
Plinth Three (Cloth  
Swatches and Fibre  
Wound Bobbins

Photo taken  
3.8.2021



Studio Installation: Red Dyed Cloth

Photo taken 3.8.2021



Studio Installation.

Kitchen Utensils and Site Material

Photo taken 3.8.2021

# post-MA plans

As this is an ongoing, live project, fieldwork will continue to be done at the site. My post-MA plans involve working directly with the local government council to form a protective order on the land. We are in talks to officially document the site, and my research so far, as an historical area. We are working on establishing the hut build as a permanent feature of the land, with the hut becoming a part of the history of the site. These conclusive findings, recognised by local authority are going to be published in the town archives. These archives were fundamental to the growth of this project, starting with **the research in practice module back in September 2020. This work has come full circle with it's** recognition, ending where I began.

After establishing connections with local practitioners in the area, I have lined up a collaboration with Joseph Lindsey to continue working on our joint loom project. We have plans to extend production on looms using found recyclable material. We will have access to more space, warehouse and workshop equipment, as well as industry connections through the recognition of my fieldwork at the site. We aim to build a more sustainable method of working through found material. We also hope to present home-making as a successful method of rebuilding, through the production of useful material.



[anthropologyasritual.com](http://anthropologyasritual.com)

exhibition

[charlottefrenchmajorproject.co.uk](http://charlottefrenchmajorproject.co.uk)

major project blog

# acknowledgements

emma yorke  
videographer and editor  
@emma\_yorke25  
emmayorkevideographer.co.uk

joseph lindsey  
3d printer and engineer  
@jl\_3d\_printing