

## **Mike Collier presentation for W.A.L.K.**

My work explores the interrelated nature of ecological and cultural ideas through a detailed study of local environments and (through walking) our embodied engagement with 'landscape'." For example, *24 Birds of Fisherman's Path* recalls a series of walks I did as in the early 1960's from Freshfield Station along Fisherman's Path on the Sefton Coast, through the pinewoods, slacks, saltmarsh and sand. It is based on memory and many of the names of the birds are historically local to Lancashire.

Craw (*Rook*), Woofell (*Blackbird*), Doney (*Dunnock*), Mawp (*Bullfinch*), Fell Peggy (*Willow Warbler*), Bodkin (*Reed Bunting*), Stanekaker (*Wheatear*), Chitty (*Meadow Pipit*), Swat (*Redshank*), Learock (*Skylark*), Doup (*Carrion Crow*), Throstle (*Song Thrush*), Ullet, (*Tawny Owl*), Spadger (*House Sparrow*), Deviling (*Swift*), Purres (*Dunlin*), Haggister (*Magpie*), Snent (*Sanderling*), Cruchet (*Woodpigeon*), Whaup (*Curlew*), Youlring (*Yellow Hammer*), Crakle (*Mistle Thrush*), Tewit (*Lapwing*), Gowk (*Cuckoo*).

These names are a poetic reminder that an understanding and feeling for the natural environment was not just the preserve of the wealthy and landed gentry. They are what local people called the birds – and they reflect more closely than current nomenclature either the look, sound or action of the bird in its environment. My use of text, therefore, has its roots in the very essence of our local use of language – how our use of language – local language – developed from our embodied experience of the world; the relationship between our sense of the world and the way, through language, we communicate this sense, suggesting that (early) language is not separate from, but very much embedded in, our environment – our sensual experience of the world around us.

The act of walking *through* the environment is central to my work. The experience of walking is arguably one of the most egalitarian ways in which we can perceive and interact with the richness of the world in all its natural, social and political complexity. Urban walkers from the northern industrial cities were amongst the first groups of people in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century to challenge the view that the rights of property in the countryside were absolute. Victorian 'ramblers' tore down illegal obstructions on footpaths and the most famous 'direct action' for access to the countryside in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century was the mass trespass on Kinder Scout in the Peak District.

These new works reflect a twenty first century perspective on the relationship between contemporary society and the routes from which our understanding of natural processes comes from; a relationship based more on our direct experience of the environment than on hierarchies of class and ownership