

WRESTLING WITH SOCIAL VALUE: AN EXAMINATION OF METHODS AND APPROACHES FOR ASSESSING SOCIAL VALUE IN HERITAGE MANAGEMENT AND CONSERVATION

Case Study Report: The Hood Stones, Loch Eriboll

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Image 1: View from the higher/larger set of Hood Stones across the hillside towards the Loch mouth. The Stones are orientated towards the anchorage within the Loch and are not clearly visible from the road below.



Image 2: Cairns above the upper set of Stones, looking towards the anchorage and the island of Eilean Choraidh, used in the past for naval target practice.



Image 3: The lower/smaller set of Hood Stones with names painted on rocks above.

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1. Summary

This report is based on a relatively rapid investigation (approximately two weeks over a period of one month, with some subsequent observation) into the social values associated with ‘the Hood Stones’, two sets of stones that spell out the ship’s name ‘Hood’ on the hillside above Loch Eriboll in Sutherland.

The research suggests that the Hood Stones are valued by a variety of communities, including **people living in the area and people who have never visited**. Some of the values are common across and between these communities and others diverge. There was a particular focus on reaching non-geographic communities of interest, given that H.M.S. Hood was mobile, of national and international renown, and most of the crew and others directly connected with the ship were not local to Loch Eriboll. Key findings:

- For those with an interest in H.M.S. Hood, the Stones are one of the physical sites or objects that were known to and experienced by the crew, thereby providing a **connection** with the ship.
- One of the functions of the Stones is as a **memorial** and a focus for commemoration. There is an interest and emphasis on passing on these memories to future generations.
- The location is part of **a network of places** connected through their association with H.M.S. Hood, including sites in the UK and abroad (reflecting the global scope of the ship’s missions).
- In contrast to narratives of remoteness, the presence of the Hood Stones links the Loch and surrounding communities to the wider world and events of national or global importance, establishing it as a **place of significance**.
- Shared practices (leaving a ship’s name and other mark-making on the hillside and repainting the names) contribute to **community identity** and are expressions of **continuity** with the past.
- It is also noted that the area more widely is of significance to communities for reasons unconnected to the presence of the Hood Stones *per se*. These range from geology to artistic inspiration to local history (which from the 20th-century onwards intersects with the naval/military presence). These interests also contribute to the values of **belonging and connectedness**.

Implications for future consideration and management of the site include:

- **Maintenance** of the site without attention to the aspects of shared memory, inter-generational dialogue, and connections between people and places could impact on the social values.
- **Access and information** are important to communities of interest as well as local residents.
- There is **potential for conflict** between the values associated with the Hood Stones and other land-use priorities or practices, although the research did not identify any immediate issues.

2. Description of Site

The Ship: Launched in 1918, the battlecruiser H.M.S. Hood was Britain's biggest warship, earning it the nickname 'The Mighty Hood'. The vessel undertook missions and exercises around the world during the inter-war years before being mobilised for operations in 1939 at the outbreak of the Second World War. H.M.S. Hood was sunk by the German battleship Bismarck on 24th May 1941 during the 'Battle of the Denmark Strait'. Of the 1,418 members of crew on board at the time, only three survived the encounter.

The Stones: In 1934, H.M.S. Hood was anchored in Loch Eriboll, Sutherland. During their stay, it is believed that members of the crew came ashore and set-out the ship's name in stones on the hillside above the village of Laid. The word 'Hood' appears twice on the hill: the larger monument, with lettering of about 6ft in height, being at a higher elevation (image 1, 58°30'25.0"N 4°43'25.7"W); and a smaller monument sited a few hundred meters away and lower down the slope (image 3, 58°30'29.6"N 4°43'17.3"W). The term 'Hood Stones' is used in this report to refer to both sets of stones collectively.

H.M.S. Hood is not the only ship whose visit to the Loch has been recorded in this way; there are at least 10 other ships and submarines whose names appear on the same hillside, including other vessels sunk during the Second World War, such as 'Swift' and 'Whirlwind'.¹ Naval records indicate that five ships accompanied H.M.S. Hood to Loch Eriboll in June 1934² and the name 'Valiant' may also have been set-out at that time, while other names are potentially earlier or more recent. When H.M.S. Sutherland visited the Loch in 2002, the crew set-out the name 'Sutherland' on the hillside close to the lower setting of 'Hood'.

The ships' names were all created using the rocks available on the hillside, which are mostly a light-coloured Cambrian quartzite. It is not known whether the older names were originally painted or not. After the names were laid-out, they remained undisturbed for many years, known to some local people but becoming gradually overgrown. In 1992/3, prompted by the interest of the headmaster at nearby Durness Primary School, efforts were made to 'rediscover' the ships' names. Pupils were involved in clearing foliage and painting the names white, which increased their visibility. There has been regular maintenance since, by local residents, visiting students and members of the Royal Navy, clearing plant growth and painting the names white (with masonry or outdoor paint). Through the continued involvement of the local school, more than one generation of pupils have now been involved in the practices of maintaining the site.

Although enquiries have been made in the past through various channels, the Hood Stones are not currently covered under any formal heritage designation. The site is logged in [Canmore](#) with 2 images: a close-up of a group of names (including the lower set of Hood stones) and a more distant shot of the hillside. It is difficult to make out from the more distant image if the second set of Hood stones, higher up the hillside, have been captured. There is no written explanation of the site.

Other 'Hood' sites: The Stones at Loch Eriboll are one of several sites associated with H.M.S. Hood, including sites in Portsmouth (home port after a refit in 1929-31) and the location of the wreck itself (though this is not accessible under most circumstances). The H.M.S. Hood Association website highlights many of these

¹ Lists of the names appearing on the hillside vary, suggesting some may have been lost or reinterpreted and others added. Records kept at the Durness Primary School from the investigations in the early 1990s include: HMS Blake, H43 (appears now as H48), Hood, Johanna, Lucretia, Swift, Union (possibly originally Orion), Ursa, Valiant, and Whirlwind. Sutherland and Bulwark now also feature (see images in Canmore via link referenced above).

² H.M.S. Comet, H.M.S. Halo, H.M.S. Valiant, H.M.S. Crusader and H.M.S. Horizon.

(see [here](#)). There is one other site near Laid – Eriboll Church, on the opposite shore of the Loch, where a plaque in memorial of the crew of H.M.S. Hood was erected in 1997. Its presence there is largely in recognition of the actions of local people in maintaining the Hood Stones, although it is possible crew members would have visited the Church during their stay. The plaque was removed from the Church ahead of renovation work that was on-going during the site visit but, according to a local newspaper [report](#), it has since been reinstated.

Other points of interest: Although H.M.S. Hood may have been the Loch’s most famous visitor, the ship was never in the area for very long - only between 17 and 26 June 1934 according to the *Ship Manoeuvres Book* (see searchable database [here](#)), although return visits when the crew was based at Scapa Flow may have occurred. Arguably the most significant naval event to take place at the Loch was the mass surrender of German U-boats at the end of the Second World War (9 and 10 May 1945).

There are several points of interest in the immediate area that relate to other periods of history. The Laid Heritage Trail identifies two sites in particular, an iron-age wheelhouse and a series of bronze-age cairns. It also highlights the role the wider area played in the development of the science of geology, as the location for pioneering studies in the 1800s. The surrounding hillside is home to typical moorland wildlife and plants, including protected species, and a biological survey was recently completed of the island opposite Laid, Eilean Choraìdh (see map in Annex IV), which is still pitted from past naval target practices.

3. Research Process

The research informing this site report took approximately two weeks and was conducted primarily over a period of one month. It included a short visit to Laid (23-25 May), timed to coincide with the anniversary of the sinking of H.M.S. Hood, during which I was able to meet with local residents and walk up to the Stones on several occasions for observation.

This case study used a rapid, researcher-led approach. The activities carried out were:

- semi-structured interviews, in person or over the phone (4 site-specific plus discussions with a respondent at another study site, who was also a member of the community of interest); and
- netnography, engagement with online communities, principally through the H.M.S. Hood Association Facebook page (direct messages, posts to the page and observations), but also exploring other online platforms or websites dedicated to H.M.S. Hood.

In addition to the research activities at the site and online, a couple of days was spent on preparatory work, identification of social media groups and liaison in the preceding month (April). I also continued to monitor posts to the online community in the months that followed my visit.

4. Communities

The site in this case, the Hood Stones, is located on the hillside above Laid. However, an important factor that has to be considered in understanding the communities for whom the Stones are significant is that H.M.S. Hood was mobile, of national and international renown, and (with a few exceptions) the crews and others connected with the ship were not local to Loch Eriboll.

The research identified a number of **communities of interest, identity and location** for whom the Stones were of significance:

- Members of the H.M.S. Hood Association (The Association was established in 1975 with the aim of perpetuating the memory of H.M.S. Hood and her crew. In total there are around 500 members, but many people who have an interest are not formal members, as indicated by the 2882 members of their Facebook group);
- Relatives/descendants of crew serving on H.M.S. Hood when it sank;
- People with a personal connection to H.M.S. Hood (i.e. contributed to the construction, served on the ship prior to her final mission, visited the ship during its tours) and their relatives/descendants;
- People who remember and were affected by the sinking;
- People with an interest in the military history with which H.M.S. Hood is connected;
- Current and past crew of H.M.S. Sutherland;
- Members of The Royal Navy;
- Local residents;
- Laid Grazing and Community Committee;
- Pupils at Durness Primary School and George Watson’s College, Edinburgh (involved in painting and services at the Stones) and their family members.

This is not necessarily an exhaustive list and individuals may identify with more than one of these groups simultaneously or move between them depending on time and context.

The communities of interest are **geographically dispersed** and not limited to the UK. Membership of the H.M.S. Hood Association Facebook page includes individuals in North America (USA and Canada), Gibraltar (with a post describing H.M.S. Hood as “el Hood, *nuestro barco*”, which translates as ‘our ship’), New Zealand, Australia, South Africa and many other countries besides. This is complemented by the sharing of stories and images of H.M.S. Hood at ports around the world, many of which were visited as part of the ‘Empire Cruise’ (1923-1924). The Battle of Denmark Strait, during which H.M.S. Hood was sunk, took place between Greenland and Iceland, and a member of the current H.M.S. Hood Association Committee is Icelandic.

5. Findings

There are some overlaps between the different communities, but values and interests in the wider area also differ and diverge. For those with an interest in H.M.S. Hood, the Hood Stones’ significance is not derived from why they were originally placed there but what they have come to signify and as such they have **multiple values and functions**. It is not a war memorial or a grave or a relic of the ship, but it has aspects of each of those; “a bit of everything” as a member of the H.M.S. Hood Association indicated.

5.1 Physical link - the Hood Stones are one of the sites or objects that are associated with the ship and her crew. That the names were originally set-out by crew members is important in making them “the real deal” (H.M.S. Hood Association Facebook page comment). This sense of **authenticity** and **connection** is not diminished by the subsequent (re)painting or adjustment of individual stones, which is seen as ‘maintenance’ and, far from being detrimental to the material integrity of the monument, is viewed positively as illustrative of the network of on-going relationships (also see point below on respect).

5.2 Imagined Place - For members of the community of interest in H.M.S. Hood, Loch Eriboll and the Hood Stones are not necessarily places that they have direct personal experience of.

- They are therefore constructed in the *imagination*, from pictures and descriptions (shared through verbal or online exchanges).
- The location is *part of a global network* of places connected through their association with the crew and the ship that reflect the scope of her missions.
- There was not universal *awareness* of the Hood Stones among members of the online community, but a lack of prior knowledge did not limit expressions of interest in the site. In response to a 2015 post about the Hood Stones, a member of the H.M.S. Hood Association Facebook page said, “I genuinely didn't know the stones existed. I have no personal connection with the crew of Hood only a huge respect for those who served on her. I'd gladly take time out to help maintain them.”

5.3 Memory and Memorialising – As mentioned above, one of the functions of the Hood Stones is as a memorial and it is described as such online.

- For some descendants, the site serves as a focus for *commemorating* the lives of those who served on H.M.S Hood and died in the sinking.
- The desire to keep the crew's memory alive is also expressed by the wider community of interest and reflected in the views that the Hood Stones warrant *care and attention*.
- The regular repainting of the Stones by school children is valued as an opportunity to pass on these memories to *future generations* and appreciated as a sign of *respect*. The practice of painting the Stones, which now dates back over 25 years, has for some local children sparked a wider interest in H.M.S. Hood and led to engagement with the community of interest through the online platform.

5.4 Belonging and Connections – the shared practices of leaving a ship's name on the hillside and the repainting of those names already present, are means of expressing community identity and continuity with the past.

- Both these practices serve to highlight the on-going relationship between the *Navy* and the local area. There were mixed feelings towards the wider military presence (principally at Cape Wrath); as one local resident expressed: “Some people round here like the association with the military and some people don't. I don't. I wish they weren't here, blowing things up and using deadly chemicals.”
- In contrast to the narratives of remoteness, the presence of the ships' names links the Loch and surrounding communities to the wider world and events of national or global importance, establishing it as a *place of significance*. The ships' names feature in the 'Laid Heritage Trail', developed by the local Community and Grazings Committee to highlight local sites of interest and the area's *distinctiveness*.
- It is also noted that the area more widely is of significance to other groups for reasons unconnected to the presence of the Hood Stones *per se*. These range from geology to artistic inspiration to local history. There are also indications of other mark-making practices on the hillside. These interests also contribute to the values of *belonging and connectedness*.

6. Implications

The *connection to other people and places* is a significant aspect of the site.

- The practice of repainting the Hood Stones maintains a connection between the local residents/school children and the more distant members of the community of interest. This connection has also been fostered through the exchange of letters, occasional visits and through social media. Repainting of the names without the aspect of memory sharing and inter-generational contacts could impact on the values expressed.

The capacity to **visit and experience** a place that was known to crew members of H.M.S. Hood is important to members of the community of interest:

- The current practices of maintaining the Hood Stones *in situ* do not seem to interfere with these experiences and, far from undermining the **authenticity and integrity** of the site, as noted above, they serve to maintain the connection to the crew and wider networks of relationships. It is unclear what the acceptable parameters for ‘renewal’ are and changes may impact on these values.
- Although there may not be many visitors to the site, the direct experience of those who do go is shared with others through word of mouth and online. Therefore, **access** to the site **and information** on what is happening there is important to non-resident populations.
- There is potential for conflict between the values associated with the Hood Stones and other **land-use** priorities or practices, though the research did not identify any immediate issues.

The approach taken in this study was to engage with the formally constituted groups associated with H.M.S. Hood and with local authorities as an initial point of contact. In terms of addressing the **limitations in representation and scope**, complementary research could be conducted with:

- **Local Residents:** having visited the site and spoken to local residents, this research revealed that the Hood Stones have social value for place-based communities, as well as through their association with H.M.S. Hood. This is an area that would warrant further investigation.
- **School pupils:** speaking to participants involved in maintaining the ships’ names and reviewing the documentation at Durness Primary School, it is apparent that the relationship with the Hood Stones and wider community of interest has been an important activity since the 1990s. As key participants in maintaining the Hood Stones and sharing memories, it would be interesting to know how this practice is seen by the children from the two schools (Durness Primary School and George Watson’s College, Edinburgh), perhaps through joining them while engaged in painting.
- **Descendants/relatives:** there were no memorial activities taking place at the site when I was visiting but speaking to a sample of people who had visited the site as a memorialising activity could add nuance to the understanding of this aspect of significance.
- **Communities associated with the other ships:** This study has focused on the Hood Stones specifically but it is reasonable to assume that the other ships’ names featured on the hillside may also be of interest and importance. Apart from the on-going engagement with the site by the crews of H.M.S. Sutherland (see Royal Navy 2013), noted as part of this study, identifying the communities associated with the other names has been beyond the scope of this research. Investigation of these other monuments and the significance of the assemblage as a whole would potentially reveal additional values and connections.

Annex I: Statement of Social Value

This Statement is an attempt to illustrate the range of values associated with the Hood Stones site. Values are not static and are liable to change over time. In addition, this Statement is based on a limited number of inputs from individuals who do not claim to speak for or represent the views of their entire community. It should therefore be considered as indicative of the diversity of values for communities with interests in the site, rather than comprehensive or definitive.

Physical link – For those with an interest in H.M.S. Hood, the names are one of the sites or objects that are associated with the ship and her crew that provide “a way in which to some extent at least we can engage with the life that these men led” (H.M.S. Hood Association member).

- Interviews and comments on the Association Facebook page (particularly regarding issues of access and display of the ship’s bell, retrieved from the wreck in 2015) highlights the importance that **things and places that were known to and experienced by crew members** can assume. According to one H.M.S Hood Association member, reflecting on a former crew member’s interest in the site, “they [the Hood Stones] were an echo of the past - of the ship he lived in and called home for more than two years. The ship was gone but there survived various places with a link. And the stones were made by crewmen, like him. So that was special.” (also see memory and memorialising below).
- Many sailors served on H.M.S. Hood and, due to crew rotations, between 1934 and 1941 there would have been significant transition. Nonetheless, the fact the Stones were created by fellow crewmen provides a sense of **authentic connection**, to the crew and to wider networks of relationships. As one member of the H.M.S. Hood Facebook community commented in 2015: “the best part is that they were originally placed there by members of the actual crew. Its [sic] the "real deal"” (also see points below on authenticity).

Imagined place – For members of the community of interest, Loch Eriboll and the Hood Stones are not necessarily places people have personal experience of, or have visited frequently, if at all.

- They are therefore constructed in the **imagination** and from pictures. The Loch was described by one non-resident as having a “mystique of remoteness and mystery”.
- However this ‘imagined place’ is somewhere that people expressed an **aspiration to visit** and experience personally, as is evident from the following comments, made on the H.M.S Hood Facebook page in response to one of my posts: “Hope to be able to see them for myself someday”; “It’s somewhere I’ve always wanted to go ever since I was first told about the stones by Hood veteran Ken ‘Nobby’ Clark... Nobby is gone now and, sadly, he never got to Loch ‘orrible’ as he called it. I got there and I like to think that, vicariously, Nobby did too and that, by doing so, we keep alive the story of Hood and the men who served in her.”

Memory and memorialising – Following on from the above points, although the sailors who placed the Hood Stones on the hillside could not have anticipated the loss of the ship and so many lives, today the site is described by some people as a memorial and serves as a means to share memories across generations.

- As one H.M.S Hood Association member said, “unlike the fallen from land forces, there are no cemeteries for people to visit with naval casualties so places like the stones become important for that reason - it’s the nearest that we have got”.
- There was no evidence of **memorialising** activity at the site when I visited on the anniversary of the sinking, but local residents indicated that descendants of those who lost their lives do visit the site. Comments on the H.M.S. Hood Association Facebook page also support this: “We also visited the

memorial stones on the hillside which the crew members put in place”; “As for a new memorial to Hood there...not sure its [sic] really needed. The stones themselves serve that purpose quite well.”

- The **involvement of young people** in maintaining and learning about the Hood Stones was seen as important (perhaps especially considering the names had been ‘lost’ once before) and was framed as a “link with the future”: “Good to see a new generation will respect HOOD’s memory” (comment on the H.M.S. Hood Association Facebook page); “If the kids are involved then that perpetuates the local awareness” (H.M.S. Hood Association member).

Care and Attention – the Hood Stones are regularly painted white (with masonry or outdoor paint). Although it is not known whether the Cambrian quartzite rocks used to spell out the names were originally painted, this practice has been undertaken since 1993 and does serve to increase their visibility.

- This **renewal** of the Hood Stones, through shared practice of painting by school children and the crews of H.M.S. Sutherland is appreciated and supported by more distant communities of interest. Comments on the H.M.S Hood Association Facebook page included: “its [sic] nice to see that the locals look after them still after many years, and that the people are still remembered and not forgotten”; “I’ve always felt that we should do more to help maintain the stones. We have at least been sure to express our sincere thanks to the children as well as the crew of Sutherland for their work in maintaining the stones in the past. I hope we can do more for the effort in the future though.”
- The repainting is described as ‘renewal’ and ‘upkeep’ and does not seem to impact on the perceived **authenticity** of the monument, even though individual stones may fall out of place and need to be replaced: “The stones have been renewed several times over the years and have survived the test of time” (extract from post about the Hood Stones on the H.M.S. Hood Association Facebook page, 2013). Far from undermining the integrity of the site, these activities serve to maintain the connection to the crew and wider network of relationships.

Belonging and Continuity – the shared practices of leaving a ship’s name on the hillside and the repainting of those names already present, are means of expressing community identity and continuity with the past.

- The practice of **repainting** the Hood Stones links classes of children over the last 25 years, through shared experience and knowledge of the local area. For some people, this activity led to a wider interest in H.M.S. Hood and connection with that community of interest. The involvement of school children also ties back to the values of inter-generational sharing of knowledge and memories.
- Although H.M.S. Hood is probably the best known of the ships named on the hillside, there are several others. How and when the practice of **setting a name in stones** started is unclear, but it may well have pre-dated H.M.S. Hood’s visit. More recently, in 2002 when H.M.S. Sutherland anchored in Loch Eriboll, crew members added the name ‘Sutherland’ to the hillside.
- Both these practices serve to highlight the relationship between the **Navy** and the local area, in the past and today: “This is a special place for me... Joins two parts of me together [navy and home county] – particular power” (member of H.M.S. Hood Association); “Durness can be quite noisy! Planes and boats” (local resident).

Connections – in contrast to the narratives of remoteness, the presence of the ships’ names links the Loch and surrounding communities to the wider world and events of national or global importance, establishing it as a place of significance.

- The ships’ names feature in the ‘Laid Heritage Trail’, developed by the local Community and Grazings Committee to highlight local sites of interest and the areas **distinctiveness**.

- The connection with H.M.S. Hood was seen as a **unique** selling point by a prospective commercial venture, the Loch Eriboll Distillery Company, who purchased a large model of H.M.S. Hood at auction in 2016, with the intention of restoring and displaying it in their premises (Munro 2016).
- The desire for greater official **recognition** of the Hood Stones was expressed by several people: “Community feeling for them – very disappointed when not listed” (local resident); “I think we should see what we could do to help ensure the site is stabilised, more routinely maintained and officially acknowledged as something historically significant. Does it qualify as a heritage site or for one of those blue discs?” (comment on H.M.S. Hood Association Facebook page).
- Loch Eriboll (the Hood Stones and the local Church) are part of a **network** of places connected with H.M.S. Hood and her crew. More broadly the notions of being remote and on the edge of the land is contrasted with being at the centre of a maritime and naval world connected by the sea.

Location – This study focused on the values associated with the Hood Stones, but it was also apparent that the location supports the values of **belonging and connectedness** in other ways.

- The hillside is common grazings land and is crossed by a ‘coffin trail’, which linked settlements with the local graveyard. It provides a perspective on the **history of occupation** in the area from the more ancient (e.g. the wheelhouse) to the forced resettlements of the Highland clearances that led to the establishment of Laid.
- In the last 30 years more of Laid’s crofts have been reoccupied, leading to comments such as “We’re all incomers” (local resident), contrasted with those few inhabitants on a “family croft”. However, this ‘incomer’ status is countered through demonstrating a **knowledge** of the area’s human and natural history and **commitment** to its future potential.
- The area is also **internationally known** for the role it played in developing understanding of thrust tectonics and is described as “hallowed ground” for geologists (Butler 2010).
- The landscape inspires **artistic** responses, the most local and high profile of these being the pottery croft and workshop of Lotte Glob in Laid.
- The observation of cairns on the summit of the hill above the Hood Stones (see image 2) and the painting of names on the flatter rocks in similar paint to that used for the names (visible in image 3) suggests wider on-going practices of **mark and memory making**, either by the identified communities or others.

Annex II: Comparators and References

A distinction can be made between the Hood Stones as a **place of experience** and part of a known landscape and as a **place of imagination**, with a significant community of interest that has no first-hand contact with the Hood Stones but for whom the site is nonetheless important. There are potential tensions between these different ways of knowing a place and the values and priorities therefore ascribed to it (see e.g. Watts 1992).

Although the Hood Stones are land based, it was helpful in thinking about the nature of the values and attachments to consider studies of **wreck sites**, in terms of the approaches and associations that apply. These factors are highlighted in the below excerpt:

[A] sense of place from a wreck does not only arise from the location of the wreck itself. Again different from most monuments on land, ships and aircraft appear to have sense of place associated with their being ‘movable places’. So as well as the wreck site, there may be a sense of the ship or aircraft in terms of its place on its ‘normal’ or last route – the air or sea not far

removed from its current location. Similarly, a wreck site may invoke a sense of the ship or aircraft as a place itself, in which people lived, worked and died. The sense of place of a wreck site is also – at least in part – a sense of event, in this case, a sense of the event of wrecking. This prompts the thought that in many case – both on land and at sea – what we experience as a sense of place is really a sense of the events that have happened at that place (Firth 2011: 153).

As well as a connection to events, Jones' (2010) work highlights how connections between people, objects and places in **networks of relationships** combine to create an authentic personal experience. Her article explores how materiality impacts on these experiences, with authenticity seen not as an intrinsic quality but as an expression of the relationships connected with the objects. This is seen in the case of the Hood Stones, where the connections associated with the creation of the names and subsequent maintenance are integral to how the site is experienced and values associated with it.

The absence of a grave site for crew who died at sea and development of **memorialising activities** at the Hood Stones as an informal site of memory mirrors the spontaneous commemoration of other “sudden, untimely, or unexpected” deaths, as seen for example in motor accidents, as well as for soldiers sent to war, in which the commemoration has a public performative element (Santino 2006: 9-10). Repainting the names is a form of ‘memory work’, an “interaction between the object as historical and material witness, and the moment of recall in the mind of the person in the present” (Leslie cited in Harrison et al 2008: 5). In addition to performing the memory of the crew of H.M.S. Hood, it is a practice that has become part of local belonging and of actively affirming connections, similar to those described by Smith as ‘heritage work’ (2006: 1).

For local people, the maritime and naval connections to the area provide a **recognition of importance** for a place frequently described in terms of remoteness and the periphery, reframing it as a place of significance at the centre of national and global events. This is also seen in other studies where residents leverage outsider interest and recognition as part of local place building (see e.g. Jones 2004: 46-47). The connections between the local school children and residents involved in actively maintaining the Stones and the more dispersed community of interest, as well as the practices that maintain that community of interest, exemplify “cyber-cohesion (the new relationships that transcend place)”, as described by Harrison et al (2008: 1).

There were elements of this narrative that reflect other studies looking at **the sea and maritime practices as a point of connection** and a focus for shared heritage (see e.g. the New Connections Across the Northern Isles project: <https://irc.hw.ac.uk/new-connections.html>).

Links in text:

Canmore listing: <https://canmore.org.uk/site/334079/portnancon-loch-eriboll>

Hood Association (various pages): <http://www.hmshood.com/>

Article on Eriboll Church: <https://www.northern-times.co.uk/news/celebration-to-mark-eriboll-church-renovation-188453/>

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Annex III: Table of Respondents

Respondent 6.1	Local resident and county official
Respondent 6.2	H.M.S. Hood Association official
Respondent 6.3	Local resident and community official
Respondent 6.4	Ex-local resident and community official
Respondent 6.5	H.M.S. Hood Association member
Respondent 2.6	Part of community of interest
Public posts/comments	Members of the H.M.S. Hood Association Facebook page
Private correspondence	Files at the Durness Primary School/High Life Highland office

Annex IV: Map of Location

Maps downloaded from Canmore. Black spot indicates the location of the Hood Stones in both cases.

