

'Stone Talks'

by Alyson Hallett

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In her latest book, Alyson Hallett tells the story of the day, nearly twenty years ago, when she climbed the Welsh mountain Cader Idris and came upon a small, unusual, out-of-place looking boulder. Another passing hiker, who happened to be a geologist, explained to her that it was a 'glacial erratic' – a stone carried to that spot, aeons ago in the icy arms of a glacier.

I stared at the boulder – it had travelled hundreds of miles across the country, the glacier making gorges and valleys as it sawed through the ground with its icy prow. And all the while the little boulder inside like a baby waiting for the sun to melt the ice and release it.

It took a while for the geologist's words to sink in. Stones moved. They migrated from one place to another. They did not stop for borders or boundaries...they weren't just fixed in one place; they were travellers.

And, as she remarks elsewhere in the book, often it is we who help them. Who among us has never brought a special pebble home from the beach? I have several on my desk right now. Furthermore, as she asks in one of the poems in her book, what is it that makes me so sure, when I pick up a pebble, that out of all the millions on that beach this is...*the one... I want... without question.*

Alyson's encounter with that stone on Cader Idris turned out to be the start of an ambitious and fascinating art project – 'The Migration Habits of Stones' which has taken her to many places around the globe including Australia, and is still ongoing.

This little gem of a book contains transcripts of some of the talks Alyson has given about her work over the years. For me, its charm is that it enables us, through her poet's eyes, to see stones, large and small, from huge mountains to tiny pebbles, as a living part of the shimmering fabric of our world rather as some static, unnoticed backdrop to our lives. I love her stories. I love her poetry. I am endlessly fascinated by the way her mind works and the ideas and insights her words evoke.