

THE ROCKS IN OUR HEADS

Introduction

Dedication



At certain periods it becomes the dearest ambition of a man to keep a faithful record of his performances in a book; and he dashes at this work with an enthusiasm that imposes on him the notion that keeping a journal is the veriest pastime in the world, and the pleasantest.

But if he only lives twenty-one days, he will find out that only those rare natures that are made up of pluck, endurance, devotion to duty for duty's sake, and invincible determination may hope to venture upon so tremendous an enterprise as the keeping of a journal and not sustain a shameful defeat.

—Mark Twain, *The Innocents Abroad*



For Loie
(A woman of rare nature)

Acknowledgements



To my Mother, who raised me to be crazy; and Father, who didn't...

To all our Travel Companions: Kinley and Paul; Elizabeth; Friedrun (and Father); Mary and Ed; Dana and Michael; Terrie, Peter and Alyssa; Hilary, Mark and Nathan; Laura and Paul; Thelma and Paul; Debra; Amy and Dave...

To all the friends we have made: Fernanda and Mario; Jimitt, Nigel and Pete G; all the Modern Antiquarians; Marie Françoise and Lucile; Antonio; Toti; Paola and Diego; Amy and Jamie; Himmet...

To everyone mentioned in these Diaries...

Thank you from the depths of our hearts for teaching us that it's not about the stones, it's about the people.



What Rocks?

A LONG TIME AGO, in the days of my misspent youth, I had the privilege of visiting friends in Europe, taking the obligatory *Europe on Five Dollars a Day* backpacking trip. After the visit, I continued traveling and landed, quite without planning, in Amsterdam. While there, I met a group of youngsters like myself: several American women, two Australian guys, a Dutch fellow who was working as a clerk in the hostel at which we were all lodging. This convivial group toured around the city and some of us went out on day trips to local countryside sights. (It's interesting to me remembering that one of those trips was to see dolmens in a field below huge electricity-generating windmills.)

Those were the waning days of the hippy era, and we all felt very liberated as footloose young adults in cosmopolitan Amsterdam. One of the sillier sights we took in was the huge flea market, where I bought a handful of glass crystals, scavenged from an old chandelier. We had a good time for a while playing at looking at sights of the old city through the crystal lenses. Until, that is, the Dutch fellow, who was our self appointed and happily accepted informal tour leader, had enough of that. He took the crystals from my hand and threw them into the canal by which we were walking.

"You don't need those rocks," he said. "Use the rocks in your head." There was a little moment of tension as our group waited to see how I might react to having my souvenirs so cavalierly disposed of. I burst out laughing, and I might—although memory serves me poorly, for reasons anyone who spent time in Amsterdam in 1972 can well imagine—even have shook his hand. His pronouncement was one of the most profound things I had ever heard.

Everyone laughed to have the tension broken and we all appreciated his wisdom. Perhaps one had to have been there?

At any rate, the marvelous ambiguity of his somewhat challenged English has stuck with me to this day. I'm sure he didn't realize, at least at the moment, that having rocks in one's head is a euphemism for stupidity. He probably meant little more than to make a clever play on "Just use your eyes," eyes being transparent, as were my crystals.

But as it turns out, his showing us those dolmens, and his pronouncement, have turned out to be the pluperfectly paradigmatic statement of a realization which has taken thirty years to grow and finally be put into words. I will be forever grateful to that young fellow, whose name I am ashamed to admit I cannot remember, for handing me the key it has taken so long to fit into a lock.

It was Loie, though, who lead me to the lock: the true realization of what having rocks in our heads really means. This project is the story of how she did it.



What Happened: The Boring Documentarian's Version

A FEW THINGS CONVERGED. One was My Essay; one was traveling with Loie; and another was talking about my essay while we traveled.

The oldest version I have of the essay is from 2006, but I have a copy of a post I made to a web forum dated 2003 that shows the ideas Loie was making me hammer into semi-coherent form were well on their way to what you can read in this project.

Originally, the essay was supposed to explicate...well, I'm not sure what. The older versions are embarrassing to read. I'm pretty sure it was just an attempt to rationalize and justify my inability to accommodate to the modern world. But Loie encouraged me; seemed to have faith that the idea struggling so agonizingly slowly to be articulated was worth the time and effort to bring forth.

Loie has always written diaries of our trips. Up until 2011, she wrote them out longhand in notebooks. I used to lug around a lot of 35mm film gear and took pictures. At some point Loie got a small camera and took over the photography, still on film. We used to make picture albums for our trips, with prints of the photos and little bits of Loie's written diaries laboriously typeset in my computer to intersperse with the photos.

Our 2004 trip to Wiltshire and Brittany turned up over 800 picture prints for the album. We got as far as sorting them into date-labeled envelopes, and realized we'd have to make a half-dozen albums. We gave up. For a while albums languished.

In 2005 Loie bought a digital camera. I began to experiment with making digital documents incorporating diary text and digital pictures to print out as albums. Yes, we knew online services could make picture albums, but none of them had templates that I, as a graphic designer, wanted in our house. And text was problematic. I

wanted a real book! Due to the cost of decent quality digital printing, nothing much came of that.

In 2011, for our trip to Turkey, Loie got a notebook computer and wrote the trip diary on it.

In the meantime, I had been working on several projects involving very small-scale digital publishing, and lo-and-behold, with the purchase of an iPad, there was no longer any excuse for *not* converting, formatting, and presenting our picture albums (which pretty much no one ever had time to page through) in a handy-dandy portable format. We could take our albums to parties, and torture our friends no matter where they were.

I thought my essay should—because it was the way the ideas had been refined—be parceled out as additions to her trip diaries. I could snag two birds with one net. And it made a kind of sense because that's just the way it happened.

Loie had convinced me that the essay needed a less curmudgeonly, insulting title than the original, and eventually I came up with *The Rocks in Our Heads* as the new essay title. I had been giving our albums trip titles, just for fun, and as I began to transcribe and format all the trips, I kept that convention.

As you can read in *The Rocks in Our Heads; Intimations III*, “Driving Yo” and *The Rocks in Our Heads; Driving the Stone Age I*, “Highlands & Islands,” we began taking trips we call Driving the Stone Age. We've both been interested in old stuff for a long time, so we took one trip in 1999, to the Scottish Highlands and out islands, looking for what we thought would be a good introduction to the beginnings of Western Civilization in the Neolithic monuments so prevalent there. We decided we weren't seeing the *beginning*, but that it was fun nonetheless to see some of the oldest monuments.



And especially after we went to Tuscany the next year, we got the Europe bug, so continued to go to Italy and France and the UK, sometimes on trips that were mainly Driving the Stone Age, sometimes not.

So when I began munging my essay into Loie's trip diaries, and realized that an overall title of *The Rocks in Our Heads* might be a bit confusing for trips that weren't strictly about visiting the old stones, I came up with the Classification System of *Intimations* (trips before Driving the Stone Age started, but having some prehistoric visits), *Driving the Stone Age* proper, and *Interludes* (trips that were not strictly Driving the Stone Age, but had some influence on my essay, and a site or two thrown in) to distinguish those different types of trips in the titles of the trip diaries.

The chapter title warned you that this was going to be a Documentarian's Explication!

Any questions?



Resources

A few of the Travel Friends we've met have web sites you might enjoy and be able to use.

The Modern Antiquarians: [The Modern Antiquarian](#)

Dana Facaros and Michael Pauls: [Apps and Travel Guides by Dana Facaros and Michael Pauls](#)

Paola Arosio & Diego Meozzi: [Stone Pages](#)

Marie Françoise Turpin (lodging in Paris): [Alcôve and Agape](#)

Toti Calò (megalith advice in Puglia): [Horizon Grafiche](#)

Antonio Barbieri: [Concierge in Rome](#)

Himmet Özden (tourism driver in Turkey): contact through [Argeus Tourism](#)

Carla Antognoni (lodging in Tuscany): [Fattoria Antognoni](#)