

# Walkeology: Wanders, Wonders and Wunderkammers

**Intro:** Welcome to Hampshire HistBites. Join us as we delve into the past and go on a journey to discover some of the county's best and occasionally unknown history. We'll be speaking to experts as well as enthusiasts, asking them to reveal some of our hidden heritage, as well as share with you a few fascinating untold stories.

**Julie:** Walking is an important part of our everyday life, but do we really notice the ground below us. Do you question your surroundings or even your own motivations while walking?

Hello and welcome to this week's episode of Hampshire HistBites. I'm Julie Dypdal and my guest today is Fay Stevens, adjunct assistant professor at the University of Norte Dame in England.

In today's episode we will explore Walking as a Question and invite you to go on walks, to take a closer look around you, thereby taking part in what we call walkeology and the creation of a wunderkammer, a cabinet of curiosities.

So why don't you introduce us to Walking as a Question and what it's all about.

**Fay:** Thank you, Julie. Walking is the question is the name of an international conference that is, run by Yannis Zioga who is based at the university of Macedonia, and Geert Vermeire, a curator, poet, and interdisciplinary artist. And I designed a walking event of myself called Walkeology and the Wunderkammer of Place. And that's an invitation for people to get involved, to take a walk and to collect items on their walk and create a collection of those items, whatever that might be, under the shape and idea of a wunderkammer that cabinet of curiosities.

**Julie:** Yeah, absolutely, because you also had during Winchester Heritage Open Days, 2021, an event of wunderkammer as well. So can you just explain the concept of the wunderkammer and where it's from? Just for someone who might not have heard about it and also about walkeology, just the concepts

**Fay:** So wunderkammers have a really interesting, history. They go way back in time into pre-history where we can see that people collected things, and put them together in a certain way. And that putting things together creates a story. And that story can tell a lot about the person themselves or a lot about a particular event or a particular place.

So when you look up the term wunderkammer, you will see a deep history associated with that. What has transpired with wunderkammer is that they are really known to be collections that are displayed in multi compartmented cabinets, often referred to as vitrines, or sometimes there can be entire rooms, said to inspire wonder, stimulate, and create wonderful conversations that can take place there.

Often wunderkammers say a lot about the person themselves that you're, you're a well-travelled or well-informed or a person with a certain manner of intellect. There is a history of wunderkammers that might be known to you. One of those is, a fantastic, house in London just near Lincoln's Inn

Fields known as the Hans Soane<sup>1</sup> museum. And that's a house that in a sense is a very large wunderkammer.

Also the collection of Elias Ashmole and he is said to be the founder of the Ashmolean museum in Oxford, and that actually the foundation collection for the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford comes from Elias Ashmole's donated wunderkammers. He hung out with a group known as the Transcendents based in London who gathered people together and gathered many objects together to create that stimulating scientific intellectual conversation. There are very many, one might say a museum is a wunderkammer, a library is a wunderkammer. And then there's a history of wunderkammers related to artists and artists who in a sense can move around and collect things together.

One of those relating to archaeology, which would be into the definition of walkeology and how I got to that definition. It's the artist, Mark Dion, who in his work 'Tate Thames Dig' in 1999, created an incredible wunderkammer of objects that were collected on the Thames foreshore, in London and then carefully arranged in a large, very traditional wooden cabinet of curiosities:- a wunderkammer - which is now in the collection at the Tate Modern in London.

We then have artists such as Nikolaus Lang, who created these wonderful collections of a mini wunderkammers, called Culture Heap, which are prehistoric stone implements found in South Australia, that he has placed together in a certain way of organizing things. We've got Joseph Boyce, the artist who collected things and put them into glass cases known as vitrines. And these vitrines create types of lenses. This is a way that you look at the collection in the glass case. And then you have an artist, a British artist, such as Chris Jury, who goes for walks and collects things. And in one particular work called the medicine wheel, he collected one natural object each day of the year, and then created a wheel of 12 segments of paper one for each month, majoring the month from the pulp of particular plants and mushroom spore prints, as well so you have this wonderful circular image of collected items from the walk.

I'm an archaeologist. So that's one of the many eology's, and I'm also somebody who very much enjoys walking. And I see my walking as very much part of the work that I do as an archaeologist. I was fortunate enough at University College, London to work up to be part of a really ground-breaking project at the time in landscape archaeology. Experimenting with what we call phenomenological methods of being in the landscape and what we mean by that is engaging with our senses and our bodies in the landscape and how our bodies and our senses can, can inform how we understand the past, how we engage with landscapes. So that's really the foundation stone of a lot of the work that I do.

So I walk as part of that practice and I've done a number of projects relating to that. Walkeology in a sense is, is very much a product of us being in pandemic and of those moments that we were given during those first two or three waves of lockdown, where we were allowed to go out for a prescribed moment of time, and how walking became a regenerated and renewed interest for a number of people, including myself, I have a daily walk, but these walks became incredibly special to me and my local botanical gardens here in Bath, beautiful heritage site, became a refuge, a real place of sanctuary during those times. So walking to the botanical gardens or walking around the botanical gardens became part of that as well as walks out into the wider landscape around. And I started to just, as we always do, collect a few things, put them in my pocket and bring them home and arrange them in certain ways. So that they became materiality of the walk like an object map and I then started to think about how one might place or arrange those objects. And so I started to get out boxes and old picture frames and bits and pieces and arrange them in certain configurations and arrange them in

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<sup>1</sup> Actually the Sir John Soane Museum, a confusion with Hans Sloane whose collection became the foundation of the British Museum.

certain ways and to think about them as, as an active embodied cartography - maps of the walk, but object maps of the walk as well.

So Walkeology, which is the turn of phrase that I put together for the project seem to encapsulate that, the ology of the archaeologist. Yes. And of that, of that inquiry, of that interest, of that way of being in the world and then the walk itself, so bringing the walk and the eology together and then creating these wonderful Wunderkammers. And for that project, it was, it was, it was about what I was doing, but it was an invitation for people to come and take part and then open up the conversation around the things that people have collected and how they arrange them in, in certain ways. And of course, Julie you were one of those people who took part as well.

**Julie:** I agree because walking, especially during the lockdowns and the pandemic, just being able to be outside breathing the fresh air. And as you say, having a refuge and actually being outside and exploring the outside and, and noticing the little things in your own neighbourhood that you might not have noticed before.

So I, at the time, like last year when I took part in your project, I had lived in Winchester for almost four years, but I had never actually explored the little surroundings around me in Winchester, towards the golf course. And there were so many paths I could take. There was the bridleway, little paths, and I discovered a new part of Winchester and then kind of, as part of that, and part of myself, if that makes sense, which is, it's quite enlightening by the project that you're working on, Walking as Question because I literally started questioning my walks and where I walked. How I was feeling, what I've seen, what I was smelling, what I was hearing and stuff like that. And I never really started to analyse that until, yeah, the summer of 2021, which was really good. And it actually linked back to my heritage studies, which I did not think walking could be seen as heritage, but everything is heritage. So yeah.

**Fay:** Well, there's many, there's many senses of heritage that coalesce together in a, in a particular place or in a particular moment or event.

What was fascinating with the, with the people who got involved including you, and the way I wanted to open up the Walking as a Question was to have a conversation around that was that each person's Wunderkammer did exactly what you just said. It made a comment or a reflection on where that particular person felt or what they were particularly exploring, at that time, and I remember clearly that you describing your walk, and your Wunderkammer was a collection of photographs of places in it, but looking at it in a slightly different lens and observing things that you, as you said, you hadn't noticed before, and that opened up conversation around belonging, and how the place in which you were walking brought up questions and a conversation within yourself, around belonging.

And this is really where the archaeologist and the archaeological lens and heritage come together and work really well. Because if we look at the material culture of our experience and engagement with the world, so in this case, the, the invitation is to go for walk and collect things and put them in a certain way, that is helping us if we take that approach as archaeologists, look at people in the past, we can take that way of being and insert it into the present. So you're creating a, a material map of a place and a place that's humanly defined, but it's unique to you through your walking and through your particular walk. And then there's also these other added elements of how you arrange things together and how you put them together.

And what that putting together actually says there as well so there's a wonderful palimpsest. And what I mean by that is layers of meaning in the walk, in the collected artefacts, for you collected images, the putting them together into your wunderkammer, and then, and then having a conversation with

other people doing the same thing, opens up these wonderful themes and discussions And an invitation to take a closer look at the world around us, connect in a little bit more of a nuanced way and more sensorial way for them to talk as a phenomenologist there. And it reaps wonderful - it creates wonderful conversation.

**Julie:** Yeah, absolutely. I also think you kind of reflect a bit on who you are as a person as well. So it's not just the world around you, but you start reflecting on yourself and you also kind of try to experience that heritage and the world around you. It's not about the past or the future, but about experiencing the present and actually acknowledging that and finding yourself because, I think, during the pandemic and a lot, the last few years, we've kind of, we might have lost ourselves a bit. So I think walkeology has kind of been the invitation to be grounded a bit, and to just question who you are within your heritage and just the places around you that you might not notice in everyday life, but that's just a thought.

**Fay:** That's a great thought actually, because your comments there about the pandemic, brought about a sense of losing ourselves. And yet we're all going out for walks to find ourselves. And, and in many respects, for many people re-finding themselves re-connecting to perhaps a sense of themselves that they might've felt that they had lost or become slightly disconnected to, who even found a new part of yourself. A new opening, and, and a new awakening.

**Julie:** I think it's given us the opportunity to as you say re-find ourselves. And if we have the possibility to get outside and walk or just sit outside, even if we have a patio or there's a bench near us, let's just sit and listen and just take in everything that is happening around us. I think that is just a way to yeah re-find ourselves a bit, if we feel a bit lost.

**Fay:** You know, the wunderkammer can be many things. For you, it was photographs, for me, it was a botanical thing that I picked up on the floor as I was walking around at the botanical gardens in for this particular project.

A wunderkammer could be, as a lead on from the scenario that you have just placed in front of us, which is sitting down, taking, you know, in your, in your garden and looking around you that you can a sense take in that setting state. Take your senses for walk, and attune your senses to this place, and document it by description or, or words or, feeling. There can be a meditative quality to this work, there can be a really lovely sort of scholarly intellectual way of doing things. There can be, quite a playful, sharing openness to the conversation or walking in wunderkammers, but there can also be something that's, is particularly reflective. And you've got deeply reflexive, which means that you are in a conversation with, with the world around you.

So wunderkammers can be many things, but what they are, are an invitation to, to take a closer look and to be aware, combine that with walking and then something really interesting can happen. Combine that also with heritage and something really exciting can happen.

**Julie:** Absolutely. I just really love that. That you can just build on this because it's not necessarily about the items or the places around you, but it's more individual because your wunderkammers reflect you and you, in that moment of time, it might not be you 10 minutes later or the next day, which I find very fascinating. And I mean, in Hampshire, if we're bringing it back to Hampshire, there are so many places here that you can just walk and it doesn't have to be in a quiet, you know, quiet space, like the New Forest. I love walking in the New Forest, or maybe the Clarendon Way. It can also be in a city. You can have a cityscape, like Southampton or Winchester, Portsmouth, just to mention a few of the big ones. But you got smaller places. You got Romsey, got Lymington, you got different places in the New Forest as well. Which I really find amazing.

**Fay:** Ah, there are, well, there are different - that opens up this idea of, of, different types of walking. See one can go into the New Forest and follow one of the many beautiful paths and trails that loop around the forest that take in wonderful scenes, you can also step into - well anywhere, but let's keep it in New Forest for a moment. And you can, you can do a walk that's known as a derive walk, which is a particular style of walking.

Which is an invitation to drift, just drift through, and not necessarily follow the path ahead of you, but maybe follow a sound of a bird or follow a shaft of light through the trees or follow the wind, for example. There are many really interesting ways one can step into a place like the New Forest and, and, and have a, have a sensorial walk, a derive walk, or follow the path and that, idea of walking in and following the path, I certainly could have a whole conversation, a conversation around that.

And in a sense, the heritage there is this, the heritage of the natural world. And I teach a course for a global scholars program at the university of Norte Dame. And the course is called environmental conservation and sustainable thinking, natural places as heritage.

And we talk about stepping into natural places and natural places as heritage. And in fact UNESCO has very clearly defined places that are natural places as heritage there too. So the nature as heritage very, very important as there's a lot of good work that there's a lot of work, we can do around that in terms of heritage. Then you have the Clarendon Way, which is one of these fairly new walks that heritage walks that have appeared. and I find these interesting as well. So you have very ancient heritage walks, pilgrimage walks, like the Camino. and, and then you have people walking along Hadrian's wall, that's now a heritage walk. And then the Clarendon walk, which is from Winchester to Salisbury 26 miles, if I'm correct in citing that, a walk I haven't done yet, but a walk I would like to do as well. So there's a really interesting sense of heritage, a new walk that becomes a heritage walk, linking two very wonderful heritage cities together.

**Julie:** Yeah, because I've been looking at it and it looks absolutely amazing. Cause you start in two different, you can start either in Winchester or Salisbury, and you start with cathedral, and you end with cathedral and on your walk, you walk through water meadows, valleys, charming villages, your woodlands, you got chalk downs. It's so varied and you have such an immersive experience. Just in one walk, you might have a couple of days, you might need a few days. but it's just, it sounds absolutely amazing. Cause you can really discover something new, not just about your surroundings, but also yourself, if you just truly immerse into that walking experience and you might have an amazing wunderkammer at the end of it by collecting something, to remind you of that trip as well.

**Fay:** Well, in that sense, these are two religious sites, so sacred sites with a deep time history. If you're walking between those two sites, whatever your personal belief, faith system needs to be. One could open up an invitation of walking as prayer, was a form of prayer, or the idea that walking is, is a sacred act. In this particular case, you could gather people together and, and embark on the walk or go on your own and embark on the walk with that in mind. And then if you have that in mind, and there's a sense that you want to create a form of realization in that walk to have with you beyond the walk itself.

So now we can start to talk about memory and wunderkammers that they help you remember and open up conversations. Then, then you're starting to collect things that have had a ritual associated with them. So then walking becomes a sacred ritual, potentially in this case, and that could open up some wonderful conversations about place, about between places, or the place between the places and on this, this new walk that, that has many possibilities for really engaging with what it is to walk and why we do it.

**Julie:** Yeah, absolutely. It's just, I do love exploring new things. Then the conversations we have about it afterwards to kind of, not just to reflect on ourselves, but to reflect with others on our experiences and what that means for us as people and as community, but also for the heritage. I really, really loved that. Especially the project that you did in 2021 with all the different wunderkammers. Can you share some of the stories of the wunderkammers that you saw?

**Fay:** I can do, I'll keep them anonymous. There was a walk, a wunderkammer that was about hidden places in the city. And, in one case, the hidden place was where water and how the flow of water in a city can, can often be covered up and yet it's still very present and it's still very much part of the city. So in that case, there was a sense of, of researching the kind of terrain and architecture and fabric of the city, and then taking a walk along a street in which a river was flowing underneath and engaging with this idea of walking as, but also walking as an act of, of, of seeing that flow, but in a different kind of way. And the wunderkammer in that case was a collection of – there was a sense of layering, of maps and photographs and documentation. And then, photographs of, of the walk itself. And there was a wonderful opening up and conversation around what is seen and what is unseen in the walk.

I mean, literally receiving what is unseen, what is known and what is unknown. And those two prompts in their own right, if you have those in mind, as you embark on the walk, often reflect into ourselves. the seen and unseen about myself in this walk. Why, what is the sense of flow that I am looking along there. Really, really wonderful texture and nuance work there.

Another wunderkammer, was around and about loss and grief and a way of remembering. And the wunderkammer in this case was, was also presented as photographs. But I think there were some objects and other things associated with it, but they were shared in the group as a series of photographs, I think there was much more texture, private texture to that particular wunderkammer, but what was very interesting, what that particular participant, noticed in creating and taking the walk and thinking about the project, the walkeology project and the wunderkammer of place, was that what she was looking at and documenting were really quotidian things, very little everyday things, like a place while one waits for a bus and all those sorts of things. So that every day light and the presence of our everyday life in the fabric of the walk, there, itself.

Another participant, walked, with no agenda whatsoever. And so the wunderkammer was just an eclectic melange of bottle caps and sound recordings on the phone and found words and scribbled text and all just put in, in one place in a loving - I think they were quite inspired by me talking about Nikolaus Lang's Culture Heap project and creating a sort of heap of stuff in terms of the wunderkammer itself.

My wunderkammer of, tree bark and kind of botanical things that were collected from the floor, not taken from anything and then went back into the Botanical Gardens once I finished with them. But mine started off with a beautiful old frame I found in and in fact, the first walk that I took as part of the project, I went for a walk to think about the walk. I'm going to do this wunderkammer project for Walking as a Question and have to go for walk and have a think about it.

And a new skip had appeared on this particular walk and there was this really beautiful, old, frame. I just came home, put the frame on the floor and put things in the frame and frame those around. And then I transcribed it into an Edwardian writing box that I have, that was part of another project, that I did in Somerset, on an artist residency, based in an Arboretum. And I, it was collected things from the house of the owners of the Arboretum and from the Arboretum themselves. And I called that project to sort of project of narrating the Arboretum as I was using the Edwardian writing box as a metaphor for that as well. So this Edwardian what, writing boxes, you're sitting here, and I started to put things in there and what's really interesting with the Edwardian writing boxes it's, it's a box, so it's a wunderkammer and it's got lots of little sections in it as well. So I would put seed pods and bits of



bark in each section and constantly move them around. Like a material map of the botanical gardens in, you know, an Edwardian writing box.

**Julie:** Well, absolutely amazing. And it just shows that you don't, it doesn't have to be materialistic. You can have a thought that pops in your head and you write it on a note, and you tear that piece of paper apart and put it in a box or in a picture frame. Or you can hear some sounds and record it on your phone and make the sound wunderkammer, if you wish. It's, it's just down to you to kind of make a little remembrance about your well remembrance of your walk and your experience. And then as you say, if it belongs to nature, it might be good to bring it back to nature if it's from there as well. So you kind of borrow it and then you just hand it back.

**Fay:** But while you've got it, write about it, take photographs of it, do lots of drawings. and so then the, in my case, the, the natural world of the wunderkammer returned to the Botanical Gardens but I have a whole body of drawings and writings that then I extend further and develop in different ways.

**Julie:** Yeah, it kind of invites you to get in touch with your little creative side as well. If you're just kind of want to rearrange things within a picture frame or in a box or on a chair or on the sofa, or on a piece of blanket, just, you can just explore what you think looks nice or feels good for you, like how, does it reflect you basically.

**Fay:** Yes. It's something that everyone can do. It can be a writing box in the frame. It can be a jam jar. It can be your pocket in your coat. I would really love to think that anyone listening to this podcast is just inspired to give it a go. It doesn't have to be, it can be very formal and organized and, and like a cabinet of curiosities, but it can be very light and playful at the same time. And you can literally go for a walk and put things in your pockets and then empty your pocket at the end of every week and put it on a kitchen table and just have a look at what's there. And then just have a conversation or, or, or just think about what is it, what are these objects? Why did I pick them up? And, and what is it saying about, about my walks? That's a beautiful little roaming wunderkammer in many ways. The whole process is just a way of really inviting us all to walk, and to allow really sensitive, nuanced, tactile engagement with the world. And that can be so fruitful in so many ways.

**Julie:** Yeah. Excellent. Okay. So if any one of our listeners would like to share your wunderkammers, please tag us on social media because we love to see them, when we're going to make some ourselves and share, and just give us a little challenge and to just take a step back from our busy everyday life and just take a walk and see what's out there and what reflects us as people and human beings.

**Outro:** We hope you enjoyed listening to today's episode. If you would like to find out a little bit more about what we've been talking about, then please visit the website, [www.winchesterheritageopendays.org](http://www.winchesterheritageopendays.org), or click on Hampshire HistBites, and there you'll find today's show notes as well as some links to more information.