



The Silent Weaver: The Extraordinary Life and Work of Angus MacPhee

Roger Hutchinson

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In September 1939, groups of horsemen in battledress cantered down a broad, grassy plain on the western edge of Europe. The young men of the Western Isles were going to war again. They included a tall, shy 24-year-old called Angus MacPhee (1916-97). Angus returned from war alive but in chronic mental pain and was referred to the asylum in Inverness, where he spent the next 50 years of his life there. During his time at Craig Dunain Hospital, he retreated into his own silent world, and did not speak again until shortly before his death. But 'the quiet big man' as he was known spent his time creating a huge number of objects out of woven grass, sheep's wool and beach leaves - mostly clothes, caps and hats - which he then let decay or deliberately burned. Only when an art therapist discovered him and his miraculous creations were some of them preserved for posterity. And only then did Angus MacPhee come home to South Uist, where he died a year later. The Silent Weaver is a rich, moving and enthralling exploration of mental health, the creative process, human frailty and ancient traditions.

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