

Up!

ISSUE 11 AUGUST 2021

The Sea

Accentuating the Positive



Making the world a better place - one page at a time

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Photo Magic Sea Fox



Photo Audrey Macnaughton

Up Front!

Hello, and welcome to this month's sea-themed edition of Up! We hope you're all enjoying the summer. As we are still coming out of the pandemic, and bearing in mind we'll all be staycating this year, what could be better than an edition filled with all of the best that this island's seas can muster.

This month we've got wonderful stories and exquisite photographs from the waters that surround us. We'll be hearing from a dive master, a beach womble and a wild swimmer as well as special features on the RNLI, the unsung maritime heroines of yesteryear and, if you lend us your shell-like, we'll share a few secrets about nature's aphrodisiac, the oyster.

So what are you waiting for ... altogether now - 'oh I do like to be beside the seaside.'

Bridget & Harry x



This month's front cover shows part of the 'That's Women's Work' exhibition currently on display at North Shields Old Lights Heritage Centre (see page 17).

Picking Up!

MAGIC SEA FOX

Up! meets beach womble, Bek Pedley who transforms old, lost and discarded items into beautiful new creations

You forage for sea treasure and make beautiful items from it. What was the first thing you found that made you think “Ooh, I could make something lovely out of this!”

I think it would have been the washed-up limpet shells with holes in them, which are so plentiful around here. Seeing them next to some lovely bits of driftwood and old rubber fishermen’s buttons made little sparkles go off in my ‘creative brain’ and I just had to make some nautical wind chimes and mobiles with them. I love how random beach finds can be, and mixing vintage pieces with modern ones is so satisfying. For example, clay tobacco pipe stems strung on wire go really well with colourful discarded plastic fishing beads.

Describe an average day in the life of Magic Sea Fox...

The pattern of my day depends on the times of the changing tides - at low tide I head off to my local beach to give it a clean and fill a bag (or two) with



rubbish. It’s also a good way to beachcomb for new treasures, and often I have picked up a piece of plastic, only to find a vintage bottle stopper or similar find beneath it - a nice example of karma in action I suppose!

Otherwise, I like to start the day with a big pot of coffee and some computer work - replying to shop comments, creating new listings and sorting orders (with a spot of blog reading and general internet meandering thrown in for good measure). Then I’ll make some progress on whatever my current projects are, in my workshop. I’m always making several things, for both my shop, my home and gifts.

The garden takes up a fair slice of time too - especially in summer and autumn. We are trying to grow as much of our fruit, herbs and veg as we can, whilst also providing plenty of flowers for the insects and birds - and so I am forever weeding, harvesting and processing. I’m currently learning about drying herbs for tea, flavouring, and also for herbal medicines. The garden wildlife always needs feeding and watering too - we have so many birds, bees, frogs and even some newts were spotted in the pond. I do love my garden, and it also provides a rather beautiful backdrop when photographing my creations and finds.



Picking Up!

MAGIC SEA FOX



How important is sustainability and the lived environment to you?

Sustainability is very important to me. I try not to buy anything new where possible and go by the mantra of Rethink (your choices), Refuse (single use), Reduce (consumption), Reuse (everything), Refurbish (old stuff), Repair (before you replace), Repurpose (be creative & reinvent) and Recycle (as the last option). I have this pinned up in my workshop!

The items I sell in my shop are largely found items (vintage bottles) and upcycled from beach finds such as washed-up beads, driftwood, buttons, sea glass etc. As well as making the beach a nicer, plastic-free place, sifting through the beach detritus when litter picking also keeps me nicely supplied with all manner of treasures! Some of the more practical things found on my womble rounds then get cleaned and repurposed for everyday life; such as cutlery, buckets & spades, flip flops, dog toys, clothes pegs, scissors and ipod headphones.

I must admit to getting a little buzz every time I use such finds! If I do need something, instead of buying it straight away, I give it a period of time to ponder upon - which sometimes results in coming up with a better, upcycled alternative or even finding it on my local community 'free stuff' sites! To be honest, the work that I do is more for pleasure and quality of life than for great profit, therefore finding free stuff is important in more ways than one.

What you make is intrinsically linked to your finds. Do you immediately know what you want to make when you see something on the sand? What's your creative process?

Upon finding a 'treasure', it initially gets photographed in situ for my facebook shop page, then washed and left to dry. At the end of the week, I have a big beach finds sorting session. I try to keep things organised, and have labelled jars full of a myriad of oft-found smaller items such as toy car wheels, sea buttons, beads, old music cassette reels, sea glass of every hue, and vintage hair pins. Any particular piece which is earmarked for a creative project is left out on my workbench for me to glance at as I work on current projects. This gives me some time to think about creative possibilities, and await inspiration - which always comes, eventually! I will then make a plan in my 'workbook', breaking the process down into stages. I always have so many projects on the go that it would otherwise be easy to become a little overwhelmed - hence I do love a good plan! I do so enjoy working in my little 'sea cave' of a workshop, surrounded by all sorts of random finds and nautical supplies.

Lastly, tell us about your favourite find(s) or finished creation(s)?

I have so many favourite finds that I must admit to some difficulty whittling them down. I suppose a good place to start with would be a small

Picking Up!

MAGIC SEA FOX

curiosity cabinet that I have filled with some extra special pieces I cannot part with, including WW2 British Restaurant food tokens, North Shields ceramic tobacco pipe stems, wave-worn dentures, vintage pen nibs (one is actually real gold!), a Victorian milk glass hat pin bead and vintage 1950s hair roller pins.

I also have a penchant for wave-nibbled old circuit boards, coins and wooden pipe bowls. Sometimes, when I post finds on my facebook page, people will write in to thank me for reminding them of a nostalgic memory linked to certain items - such as the Will's Woodbine domino which brought back memories of someone's father, the clip from suspender belts, an original Star Wars Obi-Wan Kenobi toy and a ladybird button which used to adorn many of my readers' childhood dressing gowns - including my own!



Anything with links to the local area, such as the North Shields Co-op Milk tokens or 1940s/50s Borough of Whitley Bay Deckchair Hire ticket disc, are particularly cherished. I like to think that there may be a local history centre in Cullercoats one day (and the area is certainly not short of history!) where I might be allowed to have a beachcombed local history corner to show off some of my more precious vintage finds.

Of my finished creations, I am rather happy with my driftwood angels and driftwood trees. I am always on the lookout for small driftwood pieces in just the right shapes and love putting them together to create a unique, quirky piece.



You can find Magic Sea Fox at:

<https://www.facebook.com/magicseafox>

<https://www.etsy.com/uk/shop/MagicSeaFox>

<https://twitter.com/magicseafox/>

Flare Up!

RNLI

A paean to the UK's best-loved charity

If the backlash against Nigel Farage's recent criticisms of the RNLI tells us anything, it's that politicians of whatever persuasion attack our beloved national institutions at their peril. In the weeks after his comments, the British public increased their donations to the lifeboats by some 3,000%.

Indeed, the gratitude of ordinary people for the heroic efforts of the RNLI is nothing new. The organisation is widely reported to be the UK's best supported charity, enabling it to operate its own boatyard at its headquarters in Poole, Dorset, building all its own vessels in-house. It has stations all over the UK coast, rescuing vessels and people 24/7 all year round. On top of that, its crews are unpaid volunteers, risking their own lives to help anyone who needs them.

As an institution, it's so well embedded in our culture that each station has its own 'family tree', with many generations of volunteers having followed their own fathers, grandfathers and great-grandfathers into service. And as times move on, more and more women are now involved too. Our own local station at Cullercoats now has its first helmswoman. All of which brings us to the central point of this article – the true life story of a quite remarkable sea rescue.

On New Year's Day in 1861, during the early days of the RNLI, a fearsome storm blew up on the north-east coast. A report from the time –



The Women, by John Charlton

'Shipwreck and Fearful Scene on Whitley Sands' - takes up the story...

"(There was) a hurricane of wind and sleet and snow – a gale from the East/South East, bringing with it one of the most fearful seas ever experienced on the Northumberland coast. The tempest was raging with great fury and between 9.00am and 10.00am, the coastguards on the lookout at Spanish Battery, Tynemouth, described a laden vessel (The Lovely Nelly) in distress."

It goes on to describe how the lifeboat was pushed and pulled by the men, women and children of Cullercoats village to the lighthouse at Whitley Bay - a distance of 2 miles over land! Once there it launched, crewed by the same fishermen who'd helped their wives push it all that way. The report continues:

"The crew of the lifeboat (all Cullercoats fishermen) behaved extremely well and showed remarkable nerve and courage under very trying circumstances. Three of the crew of Lovely Nelly were rescued from the sea. Two others were taken from the deck to the boat. But a poor boy still remained on board, clinging to the rigging, and his cries for help were most heartrending."

The lifeboat crew made several attempts to save him but the ship parted in two, fell over and drowned the poor boy in sight of the crew who could render him no assistance."

Flare Up!

RNLI

While all this was going on, the lifeboat – *The Percy* – grounded upon rocks and was in danger of being wrecked itself. Upon seeing this, the same people who had pushed and pulled *The Percy* over 2 miles ran into the stormy sea and physically hauled the vessel to the safety of the beach. All this in the middle of a huge storm, don't forget! They then lifted the survivors of the *Lovely Nelly* ashore on their shoulders.

The contemporary report then concludes: “As the lifeboat came to the beach, her gallant crew were loudly and observably cheered. The Cullercoats men deserve a great credit for their praiseworthy and successful exertions to rescue the men. The ship is a total wreck.”

If this story sounds familiar, you may recall seeing it on TV some years ago as part of the BBC's flagship series, *Coast*. During one episode they re-enacted the hauling of the lifeboat, with female Cullercoats residents taking the place of their remarkable forebears. And if *Lovely Nelly* too rings a bell, she's now commemorated in a local beer by friends of Up!, *Cullercoats Brewery*, who you may have seen featured in an earlier issue.

As for me, I - like most proud citizens of this nation – remain in awe of the skill and bravery of our lifeboat crews. Unpaid, they are still out there today, risking everything for others in the most atrocious conditions. And should you be in any doubt of that, just look up your local RNLI station on facebook and see how many times a year they are called out to help ‘those in peril on the sea’.



Photo Pixabay

Though I'm not in the habit of sharing my own poetry in Up!, I was recently moved to write and record this. Here's to the RNLI!

Nobody Goes Unsaved Today

The ladies and gentlemen of the lifeboat crew
will not check for skin colour
before extending saintly fingers,
risking all so a stranger may live.

They know you cannot catch fear
through the meeting of lips,
the free donation of air
to buy another second.

The coxswain for today
heard the shorebound wails
of “All Lives Matter!”,
and takes you at your word.

The ladies and gentlemen of the lifeboat crew
(volunteers, one and all)
hear your vague complaining
but respectfully beg to differ.

Their message rings clear and true,
buffeted by winds it remains unswayed:
To those in peril on the sea,
nobody goes unsaved today.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tauyJgX7Kol>
<https://rnli.org/>

Word Up!

YOUR POEMS ON THE THEME OF
THE SEA

What We Wished For

When first we step out
 of the family car
 at the ocean

we stretch our legs
 close our eyes
 inhale deep

remember all the best
 things it brings to mind

that familiar smell
 we wish we could
 bring it home with us

never expecting
 the new dog
 will love to swim

that the long ride home in the
 family car will be another memory

the lingering scent of brine
 and car and wet fur
 a wish regrettably fulfilled

Christopher Clauss



Photo Pixabay

Darkest Hour

Groaning for rescue,
the whole world drifts
like a raft of refugees
on such a sea of night
that shore and sunrise
are not relevant concepts.

Although you could correctly
claim it's night
only in one hemisphere,
that would be missing the point.
This darkness seeps
through everything,
including day.

Where's the man
who walks on water
through the darkness?

We need him now.

Aidan Clarke

Next month's theme is Forests

Feel free to interpret the theme as you see fit
and send up to 3 poems (no more than 20
lines each) to: TalkToUp@gmail.com

Up River!

CLARE FODEN

Have costume, will swim. Up! meets a swimmer who can't get enough of the outdoors

How did you first get involved in wild swimming?

To be honest I don't really consider myself a "wild swimmer", just a swimmer! I grew up in semi-rural Cheshire, swimming outdoors at every opportunity, and from as far back as I can remember. It's just what my family did, but I was always the greatest enthusiast, or perhaps the least discerning, going in when others thought it looked a bit too "dirty", "cold", "deep", "shallow", "slimy", or "weedy". My mother blames herself, having swum in a "dirty and mosquito-ridden mere" when she was pregnant with me.

Whenever I saw water, I would be in, whether it be an old sand quarry, a mere, a brook, stream, river, or a pond (so many ponds! Cheshire is "pond capital" of the UK). Aged about 8, I ever-so-naughtily dipped in the beautiful pond in the cloister garden at Chester cathedral; my grandmother would let me do anything if she could then sit quietly with the newspaper and a



cigarette. My paternal grandparents would often take me and my brother to a nearby old and decaying mill, where we'd spend hot summer days swimming in the old mill pond and picnicking on its banks, picking wild flowers, 70s-style, watching kingfishers dive, and exploring the old mill tunnels while my grandparents dozed, seemingly unaware of the fact that my brother could barely swim, that the water was very deep and whirlpooling, and that I'd have to have one arm around him as we swam.

We took our annual family camping holidays in Wales where it was mainly paddling, rock-pooling, sea- and mountain-lake swimming, again in quiet, isolated places with few other people around, just me and my family in nature. My happiest childhood memories all have some association with outdoor swimming or water; thinking about those times I feel the joy, the energy, and I still feel that childhood rush of excitement when I see water and know that I'm about to get in.

Wherever I've lived in later life I have always sought out local swimming spots, I need that regular dipping place. The joy and pleasure that I feel when I immerse myself these days is not any less than I felt as a child, in many ways it is even



Photo - CC BY-SA 3.0 <<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>>, via Wikimedia Commons

Up River!

CLARE FODEN



greater now as it is no longer simply a physical pleasure; I have learned to appreciate how much it gives to me emotionally, mentally; that total immersion into quiet, often in solitude, or with my most loved people, and always in a place of great natural beauty. I always emerge feeling cleansed, calm yet energised, ready to face the world anew.

I had always found my interest in river and lake swimming to be a minority one; the majority expressing horror, fear, sometimes even barely concealed disgust if I mentioned it, and I'd find myself fielding questions about sewage, disease, drowning, only a very rare few have asked to join me. Until now....Covid has opened people's minds to the idea of swimming outdoors - the leisure centres with swimming pools that appeared in the 1970s, and that drove a generation or more of kids indoors to swim, convincing them that bathing water should be soupily warm, smell of bleach, be lit only by fluorescent tubes, were closed for months.

I have watched with delight as my river swimming club, which previously struggled to attract

members, became a buzzing community of enthusiasts, and as the River Cam and its banks have filled with people of all ages and backgrounds enjoying dipping and swimming in the cool, reedy, earth-scented water under our vast east Anglian skies. And alongside this enjoyment comes a renewed interest in nature, in conservation, and preservation for the future. For me that is what wild swimming is also about.

What does wild swimming do for you that 20 lengths in a local, heated, indoor pool doesn't?

Anathema though it may be to many wild swimmers, I do believe indoor pools have their place. I use one when the rivers are in flood, when the weather is too cold and miserable, and when the local unheated outdoor Lido (the wonderful 100-yard Jesus Green Lido in Cambridge) is closed for winter. I prefer pools for fitness swimming, no swans! No punts! And it's easier to measure distance, and easier to swim full stop!

But, for sheer enjoyment and pleasure, nothing beats the full-on sense-flooding experience of wild swimming, it fills up your mind until there's no space for anything else - head up, with a view of riverbank or shore, wildlife, flowers, trees, fields, sky, mountains, the horizon, birdsong, and the bubbling and burbling of the river or the sound of the waves, and the scent of the wild water filling your nostrils, followed by that life-affirming burning and tingling of the skin post-cold water swim. Wild swimming is not really "just swimming", is it!

You swim in both freshwater and seawater. Apart from the obvious - salt! - what's the main difference between them?

I was rather afraid of sea-swimming as a child, the combination of icy-cold and moving, rough water was too much, I imagined sharks (it was the days

Up River!

CLARE FODEN



Photo - Geoff Jones @ Jesus Green Lido Swimming Pool 4sq.com/lseKbx
(posted via FlickSquare)

of “Jaws”), I’d swallow too much salty water and I couldn’t breathe easily.

I’ve always preferred the stillness and calm of slow-moving rivers and lakes where I can swim head-up, a leisurely breast-stroke, taking my time, relaxing, I look around without getting splashed, and the only ripples on the water are the ones made by me. Calm. Even now I find rough sea unnerving, unappealing for swimming, only good for running in and out, a quick dip, and for wave jumping with children.

It was not until I visited Greece as an adult that I found flat, sheltered and calm sea, and I have swum and enjoyed it in the same way as I do rivers. But that’s just me. Others far prefer the sea, are not intimidated or fearful, enjoy the wildness, the distant views to the horizon and their escape from the shore, the emptiness, and they can roll with the waves. And they also get to enjoy that whole beautiful underwater natural otherworld which I do not.

Tell us your favourite location thus far, and do you have anywhere on your ‘bucket list’?

My favourite has to be That Spot on the River Wissey; it’s now reached a near-mythical status in my family because it was such a very perfect day at a very perfect place, and because we have no clear idea where it was that we swam. It was years ago, pre-Google maps and what3words, and we’ve never found it again, only places where the sunlight is not quite as dappled, the water not quite as clear nor velvety nor silky..... our Atlantis.

There are so many places I’d love to swim, that’s the disadvantage of the internet, there are photos of amazing places all over the world! I’d love to visit some of the Scottish island swimspots that I’ve seen, we’re definitely going to visit Finland, and I’ve booked Derbyshire for the end of August.

What advice would you give to anyone thinking about ‘dipping their toes’ into the wild swimming experience?

“Do it”, but with all the obvious caveats. It’s very popular now, but that doesn’t make it safe. The easiest way to get going would be to start in summer, when the water is warmer, and to find a more experienced person or group to advise you where and when, and preferably to accompany you. Go on social media (Facebook is particularly good for swimming) and join your local wild/outdoor swimming groups, find out where and when they go, and join in when you’re ready, doing only what you are comfortable with.

You’ll see lots of discussions about (expensive) gear, coats, mats, bags, tow floats, wet suits, hats, gloves and bootees, you really don’t need any of that for your first few dips and, if you’re like me, you may never want it or need it. Enjoy!

Word Up!

YOUR POEMS ON THE THEME OF THE SEA

Dungeness Fish Hut

Crates twist and flap with flat white and green brown Plaice, folded like ribbons, slick with blood rain. Buckets shimmer pink prickled legs, to shovel onto paper, still wet and warm from the boiler. Whelks and Winkles, rolling marbles, wet and shining, fat footed and ready to pick with a needle; to pop grey into greedy pink mouths with vinegar tang splash. Whilst, Cockles sweat in white; with orange tongues, insipid, briny, they give and grit between the teeth. In the blue air, there is nothing but parched wood and dry shale under a low horizon. Pebble gardens, yellowing stunted brittle scrubs, and rock pools filled with oysters: flinty purple grapes spitting salt water. Underfoot the shale shifts, crunches ancient and hot, with dog fish purses, seaweed, chalky staircase shell remains, lollipop sticks and torn plastic. We drive away, white packages spoiling slowly on the dashboard.

Jennie E Owen

Atlantic, Iowa

What homesick settlers
named this place
—a dot on any map of any era—
after the blue gray ocean
they surely left behind forever?

Was it the swell of the land
so much like waves
rolling towards you but never cresting
never breaking
no matter where you stood?
And above
that endless bowl of sky
that never took on the cast of those green swells?

Did they spend the rest of their lives
Longing for a tang in the air?
A wheeling gull?
A crust of salt on the window after a storm?

April Nelson

Cullercoats

Tonight the bay brims with surging surf,
That leaves just a narrow strip of sand.
An Easterly wind has built a swell,
the moon's phase pulling the water.

Hump-backed waves roll out of the gloom
blue-green shoulders, shawled in lace,
sprawl over a breakwater built before
global warming and melting ice caps.

From South Shield's pier the warning
loom of light sweeps the dark swell.
One boat is hauled out on a slip;
Enigma's face, turned from the sea

I turn my back on the bitter breeze,
overhead hangs a crescent moon.
The bright steel of a fishhook
snagged on the ragged clouds.

Tom Moody

Loved Up!

STEVE LOWE

Up's outdoors man on looking for love on the sea bed ...

In numerous archaeological digs, a regular find is discarded oyster shells. Now finding them in a “posh” setting might be what modern perceptions of this delicacy might expect but the reality is far different.

In fact, oysters have been a staple food for “the working class” in the recent past and for early man this was also the case, providing essential nutrients including zinc (which is important to sexual health). So have we all mislaid the desire for these alleged aphrodisiacs? Has it become an elitist thing? Or are there other factors at play? Well, I would suggest it's the latter and is largely a question of supply not demand.

Looking in particular at the north-east, oysters were a large part of local culture in the 1800s, with ‘oyster saloons’ in Tynemouth, oyster specialist fish markets in South Shields, and Oystershell Hall (a house rendered with oyster shells) situated on Oystershell Road in Newcastle city centre.

However, this cultural link has long since disappeared, along with our once abundant native oyster populations in the region. The region had a strong industrial past, having held an international reputation for coal mining and shipbuilding, both of which have now mostly disappeared, but which left a legacy we are still contending with. This impacts on a range of habitats and species, including estuarine habitats.



Photo Pixabay

Although these estuaries remain industrial, efforts have been made to ‘clean up’ the worst affected areas in the last few decades. Today the area is tremendously biodiverse, boasting a wide range of dramatic and rugged landscapes which contain a wealth of wildlife and geological features.

Although there is some anecdotal evidence from local fishermen that a few isolated native oysters remain locally, there is no sign of oyster reefs, which would normally clean our coastal waters and create an important habitat for other marine animals. Native oysters were once commonly found in UK seas, however populations across Europe have declined by 95% since the 1800s. With this decline, we have also lost the benefits they provided.

However, we now have an exciting opportunity to restore this special habitat, boosting the population of native oysters back to levels where self-sustaining reefs can thrive in north-east England. This is via The Wild Oysters project, which aims to restore Britain's seas to health through the restoration of the native oyster!

A national collaboration, led by the Zoological Society of London, Blue Marine Foundation and British Marine, the project is working with the marine industry and local communities and organisations, to deliver restoration sites in England, Scotland and Wales.

Loved Up!

STEVE LOWE

The main tools for this lie in oyster nurseries, a micro-habitat which hosts 27 mature oysters which will reproduce and release oyster larvae. The oyster nurseries act as a maternity ward, releasing the next generation of oyster larvae into the ocean.

In their larval stage, oysters anchor themselves to hard substrate on the seabed, where they live and grow. This substrate is known as “cultch”, which comes in the form of old shells. When oysters settle on cultch and other oysters, an oyster reef starts to form.

Reefs will help to improve water clarity and quality, provide vital nursery grounds for fish and other wildlife, remove excessive sediment and also help to stabilise sediment.

The great thing about this project as well, is that volunteers can play a vital role in its success. Indeed, there are spaces for people to help with monitoring at one of the two sites in the north-east, at Blyth and Sunderland – a perfect role if you enjoy being outside and near the sea, and are keen to get hands on!

<https://wild-oysters.org/2021/08/02/volunteer-with-us/>

Now I will admit to enjoying an oyster myself, but I prefer the version which is full of ice cream, marshmallow and a coconut chocolate topping. So, these guys will be safe from my plate (even if my love life has to suffer). Oh well!



An experienced wildlife professional, Steve currently works freelance with Northumberland Rivers Trust as well as undertaking work with volunteers on local heritage and archaeology projects. His hope is to leave the world a better place.



You may remember from the height of lockdown a feature on Morrisons 'Seeds of Hope' project. Our little ray of sunshine continues to flourish come rain or shine!

Buoyed Up!

AUDREY MACNAUGHTON

Up! goes diving with a master

How did you first become interested in diving?

Over 25 years ago I went on holiday on my own to Cyprus. I met another lone traveller, a girl similar age to me from Edinburgh and we ended up doing lots of stuff together. She fancied trying out diving and I was up for it, but must admit it wasn't on my list.

I loved it! We did a bit of basic training in the pool and then out on an inflatable boat and hurled in the water. It was brilliant, albeit looking back now, not the safest of introductions.

Not long after that I moved with work to Leeds - the most inland city in the country! - and did my BSAC (British Sub-Aqua Club) qualifications. So my first dives were mainly quarries and rivers .

I had a bit of a gap and then got back into it and discovered how lucky we are in the North East. So many great dive sights up and down the coast including the Farne Islands, where you can play with the seals who are like the labradors of the sea, always up for a scoot around you and a nip at your fins.



Tell us about some of your favourite dive locations ...

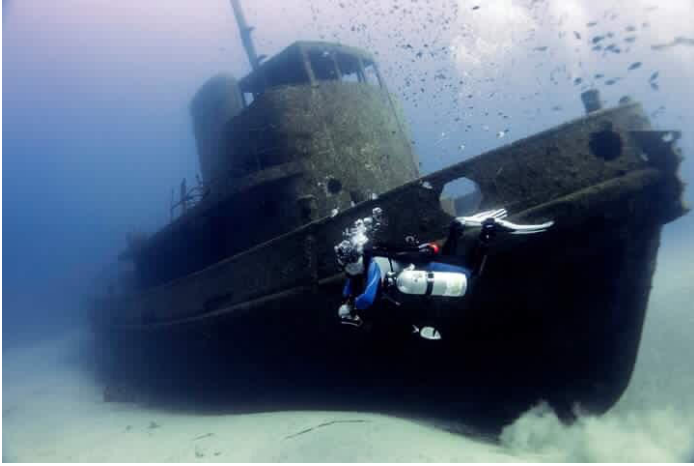
For our 50th birthdays, my partner and I went on our trip of a lifetime to the Galapagos, which was as you can imagine amazing diving and one very much ticked off the bucket list. Although I would like to go back, as we missed the hammerhead sharks. That's the thing about diving - you see lots of amazing things but you can't guarantee being in the right place at the right time.

But in all honesty, I adore Malta. I call it my spiritual home because it's such a relaxed island, the people are lovely, and the diving has the special quality of having lots of great dive sites that you can get to without the time and expense of having to charter a boat. Over the years on family holidays when I've sneaked off to go diving in places like Mexico, Crete and Thailand, I've been away all day for two dives because to get decent depth and to see a good amount of things, you have to travel quite a way off shore.

But in Malta the underwater shelf drops off quickly so you can turn up in a jeep, get in your gear, jump in the water and in 15 minutes you're exploring a wreck forty metres under the water!

Buoyed Up!

AUDREY MACNAUGHTON



You must have come face-to-face with some amazing sea creatures. Which have been your favourites?

One of my first live-aboard holidays was in Sharm in Egypt and I was blown away when I first saw a huge Napoleon Wrasse. Now you have to remember that the water magnifies things but being under the water next to something the size of a pony was a moment I have never forgotten. It was also on that trip that I first saw turtles, so it was a special week for firsts.

We can't forget the sharks though as they are truly amazing creatures (and misunderstood, thanks to Jaws!). I've seen lots of the lovely white tip reef sharks, hammerheads and nurse sharks as well as various species of ray. I used to clean out the shark tank at Tynemouth Aquarium, which was good fun. You had to stay out of the way of the little naughty Jackson Reef shark as he was known to give people a nip – mainly the guys though so I was ok!

You get to know where creatures hang out, so it's nice to check in with your underwater buddies. There's a big container shipwreck in Malta called the El Faroud and I always go round to the far side to check in with the barracudas that hang about there, I say hello every dive.

Another barracuda encounter a number of years ago was less sedate than my little visits to the Faroud. I was on a dive trip in Egypt and coming back to the boat after a twilight dive. I was about twenty metres down and finning back to the boat when I was met by a pretty big school. I stopped to watch them go by, but they had other ideas and started doing their signature move of circling me. They kept getting in closer and as the circle around me got more dense, I did wonder what would happen next. They must have decided I wasn't a grouper so moved on. A privilege to be an object of curiosity to them.

How do you ensure that human contact with aquatic creatures doesn't disrupt their natural habitat? Are there do's and don'ts?

There is so much life under the water and the ecosystem is fragile. The main thing a diver can do is not land on the bottom! So part of the training is to get your buoyancy skills. What that means is that you don't stand on the bottom, you don't lie on anything, you simply suspend yourself in the water using your breath, and it means you are not touching and not damaging the coral and the small sea creatures.

Another rule is 'take only photos' so no grabbing souvenirs. But we do also collect bits of rubbish as we go along – I can come out with quite a bag of plastic and lost fishing lines.



Buoyed Up!

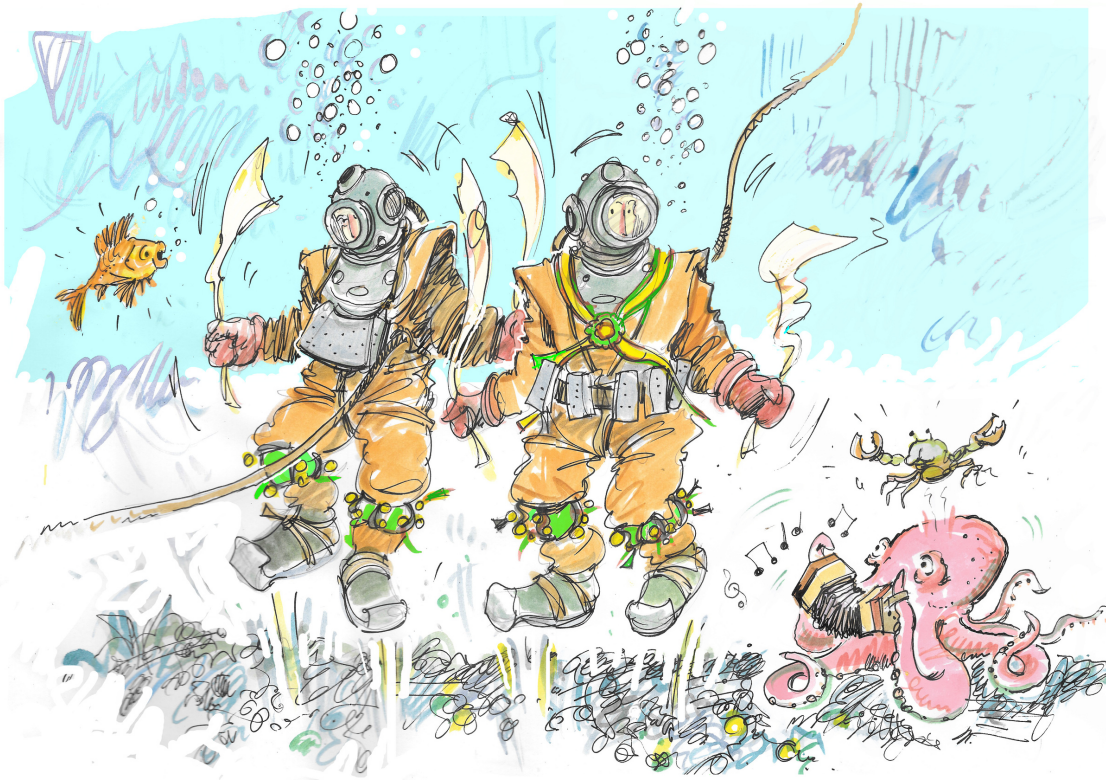
AUDREY MACNAUGHTON

Lastly, what's on your diver's bucket list?

I have to be honest, getting back to Malta to visit my friends both on the surface and under the water! After all this time, seeing the little barracuda family for the first time will be emotional. You can cry under water you know!



Cartoon Corner



Up's resident artist John Pickin says: "I am and always have been a compulsive doodler. During April '20 I set myself the challenge of drawing an ape-a-day. And in January this year - renamed Buguary - the task was an insect cartoon each day. I just love knocking out those 'toons .."

You can contact John at pickinjohn@gmail.com

Here we see a couple of extreme Morris dancers stepping out to a toe-tapping nautical tune. Maybe it's the lure of the sea

Lighting Up!

LOW LIGHTS HERITAGE CENTRE

Ever used the phrase 'women's work'? Read on ...

I'm sure we've all met men of a certain vintage who have used the dismissive term 'women's work'. Perhaps such a worldview could have been somewhat broadened by meeting the 'Herring Girls'. Throughout the early 20th century, this troupe of women spent the summer months traveling and working from northern Scotland, all the way down the east coast as far as Lowestoft and Great Yarmouth. During this time they followed the fishing fleet, stopping off at ports where they worked, gutting and curing the fish. During all this they would stay with local landladies or were looked after by the Fishermen's Mission or local churches. Some of them were from the Scottish Isles and spoke only Gaelic.



Or consider the everyday lives of fishwives. While the word 'fishwife' has been used for hundreds of years as a derogatory term for a woman considered overly loud and coarse, the reality of a fishwife's work would make most of us blanch. When not baiting their husbands' fishing lines, they were to be found at the beach, on their hands and knees in all weathers,



sourcing the bait itself: crabs, limpets, sandworms, mussels – basically anything they could find that a fish might think a tasty treat. And then there was the selling of their wares. They would load the resultant catch onto their backs – usually weighing between 3 and 4 stones but sometimes up to 6 stones – and then hotfoot it to the nearest town to sell it to the public. In the case of the mighty Cullercoats fishwives, this meant walking to Newcastle, fully laden - 8 miles and then back. It's little wonder that their language and volume gave rise to the aforementioned 'swearing like a fishwife'!

And then there's the local north-east tradition of the wooden 'dolly'. For over 200 years now, North Shields fish quay has played host to a wooden life-size female figure – or rather a series of them, the first one appearing in 1814. Human nature being what it is, such figures go up and down in terms of their popularity. It didn't take long for the dolly to start being vandalised and defaced. Whenever there was a seafaring calamity – which happened far more often back then than now – the dolly would be blamed by locals as a figure of bad luck, and she would be kicked around the streets. As time went on, the dollies would be repaired and then replaced. Eventually her fortunes changed, and she became a good luck 'talisman'. Rather than be revered and respected as might be expected, this led to

Lighting Up!

LOW LIGHTS HERITAGE CENTRE



fishermen taking a chipping from her on their voyages. More repairs, more replacement dollies!



All of this and more can be seen at the current exhibition at the Old Low Lights:
<https://oldlowlight.co.uk/event/test-upcoming-range-event/>



The Shipping Forecast - Did you know?

The first Shipping Forecast was in February 1861, 16 months after a ship was wrecked in a massive storm off Anglesey with the loss of 450 lives.

The person who introduced the Shipping Forecast was a Vice-Admiral with a surname you may be familiar with - Robert FitzRoy.

The theme tune to the Shipping Forecast, *Sailing By*, is a popular choice on Desert Island Disks. Pulp's Jarvis Cocker was one who chose it, saying that for many years he had used it 'as an aid to restful sleep'.

The Dogger region is named after what is now a sandbank but was once a strip of land linking Britain and Europe.

On at least 3 occasions in the last decade presenters accidentally read the previous day's forecast. To the best of our knowledge, nobody noticed!

Word Up!

YOUR POEMS ON THE THEME OF THE SEA

Coastal Waters

Echoes loud the tug boat's warning,
Deep in the fog she lies,
Guiding the mighty Ocean Liner,
Up through the Firth of Clyde.

Steaming for home, the east coast Collier,
Hugging the grey coastline,
Out of the Thames and past the Humber,
Back to the coaly Tyne.

Hurry on you Morecambe cocklers,
Out on the sands so wide,
Gathering up the seabed's harvest,
Ahead of the turning tide.

Launched down the slip, the Lizard lifeboat,
Braves the Atlantic waves,
Answers the call of the shipwrecked Schooner,
Praise God for the souls she saves .

So hail to this Island's sons and daughters,
Whose veins they flow with brine,
Working the British coastal waters,
Steeped in the maritime.

Graham Bell

Tale of the Unexpected

Dive passed the glistening breakers,
their restless churning muted
the deeper you go.
Fall slowly through the zones:
twilight, midnight, abyssal,
to the unplumbed fathoms below.

Far under the photic belt
in the crushing pressure,
is little oxygen, scarce food
and no sunlight.

You presume unrelieved darkness
beyond black in these depths.
But there, an unexpected miracle,
the anglerfish boasts a
dangling lantern -
a beacon in a hostile world.

Gerda Pickin

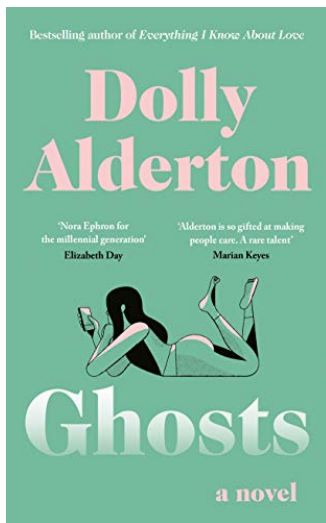


Photo www.flickr.com/photos/justinlindsay/

Read Up!

MEGAN PATTIE

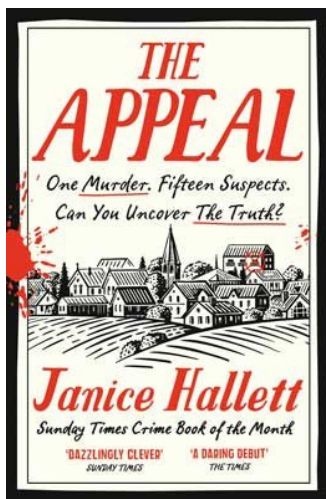
Wherever you're going, whether you're caravanning or just kicking back at home, here are three five-star reads to enjoy on your summer staycation.



Ghosts by Dolly Alderton (Penguin, paperback, £8.99)

Dolly Alderton's first fictional offering tells the story of "the strangest year" of protagonist Nina Dean's life. Having just turned 32, one of the last singletons in her group of friends, Nina meets Max through dating app Linx, and he tells her on date one that he's going to marry her.

The story of Nina and Max's relationship and the escapades of her only remaining single friend, Lola, set a witty and insightful exploration of modern romance against earnest and moving family drama, as Nina's aging father struggles with dementia. The result is a wonderfully compelling novel, full of sharp observations, moments of acute poignancy, and plenty of laughs too.



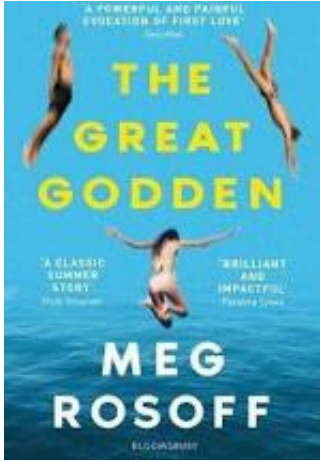
The Appeal by Janice Hallett (Viper, paperback, £8.99)

In this modern epistolary novel, Janice Hallett invites you to play detective alongside two law students who receive an evidence pack from Roderick Tanner QC, a senior partner at a law firm who is not convinced that the right person has been convicted of a murder which occurred in the small town of Lockwood. The evidence is comprised of emails and Whatsapp messages exchanged between the members of The Fairway Players.

As the relationships and dynamics of this amateur dramatics group become clear through their conversations, can you untangle what really happened? I devoured this light, twisty, cosy crime novel in two days. An absolute treat, and great for fans of Richard Osman's *The Thursday Murder Club*.

Read Up!

MEGAN PATTIE



The Great Godden by Meg Rosoff (Bloomsbury, paperback, £7.99)

The latest offering from Carnegie Medal winner Meg Rosoff tells the story of a family holiday, the same one they go on every year, disrupted by the arrival of the Godden brothers. The brothers' presence colours the summer with tension and emotions runs high in this scorching coming-of-age story. Replete with Rosoff's stunningly vital writing, this propulsive tale of first love is the perfect summer read for older teens.

Megan Pattie is a poet and bookseller who enjoys real ale and collects dragons. She lives on the north east coast with her partner, two cats, and a rabbit. You can find her on Twitter @pattiepoetry.



Never trust anyone who has not brought a book with them
Lemony Snicket

*There is more treasure in books than in
all the pirate's loot on Treasure Island*
Walt Disney

A book is kind of like a river; I simply jump in and start swimming
Melody Carlson

*One glance at a book and you hear the voice of another person,
perhaps someone dead for 1,000 years. To read is to voyage through time*
Carl Sagan

Round Up!

AND COMING UP ...

So as August towels itself dry, we do the same.
We really hope you enjoyed this month's briny issue.

It's such a labour of love putting Up! together each month and we're constantly surprised by all the great stuff that's happening in our communities. If the last 18 months have taught us anything it's that life is precious. Our time on the planet is finite and it's so important to grab every day and make the most of it.

Next month we'll be moving inland, from the blue-green sea to the brown-green forest. We'll see you among the trees!



Much love
Bridget & Harry xx



Don't forget, if you have any suggestions for future articles or features, we'd love to hear from you.

Just email us at TalkToUp@gmail.com