

Up!

DECEMBER 2021

MAGIC

Accentuating the Positive

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



Contents

Up Front! *The Team* 1

Unwrap the latest edition

Wrapping Up! *Father Christmas* 2

Behind the scenes at the North Pole

Word Up! *Poetry Corner* 5, 12

Your poems on the theme of Magic & 16

Up North! *Mike Tickell* 6

For the love of the north

Conjure Up! *Steve Lowe* 10

Nature's script

Cartoon Corner *Steve Lancaster* 11

Let it snow!

Magic Up! *John Carew* 13

What lies beneath

Updating! *North Shields Heritology Project* 17

Learning from the past

Read Up! *Megan Pattie* 21

Here be dragons!

Coming Up! *'Til Next Month* 23

A festive wish



Wooden Dolly

Northumberland Square, North Shields



Up Front!

Ho! Ho! Ho! and welcome to our final edition of the year.

Now, given that we are currently in the midst of yet another Covid variant it would be understandable to say it's been a rotten year. However, here at Up! HQ we are, as you well know, firm believers in finding the positives. There are ups and downs to every existence (and this year seems to have had more than its fair share of downs!) but even during hard times, to quote Oscar Wilde, 'we may be in the gutter, but some of us are looking at the stars'! There really is magic to be found in every aspect of life.

So what do we have for you this month? Well for a start, how about our celebrity cover star! Put your feet up, grab a mince pie and settle down to read a Christmas cracker of an interview with Santa himself. Next let us take you through time and space on a journey that starts in the wilds of Northumberland, taking in a magical, hidden corner of Ireland, passing through forests and legends, before finishing back on The Street of All Nations. Intrigued? Read on!

Bridget & Harry x



Wrapping Up!

FATHER CHRISTMAS

Up! meets the man of the moment

Santa, this must be a very busy time of year for you. How on earth do you keep up the pace year after year? Do you have a special training regime?

That's true, it is a very busy time of year, however what most people don't realise is that preparations for Christmas take almost the entire year! Mrs Claus and I will usually have January off. We often go on holiday somewhere hot, it's Barbados this year. But as soon as February rolls around, it's back to work.

I usually start researching new trends in chimney design around about April. That's also the time I refresh my rooftop traversal training. From July onwards, that's when Mrs Claus has me on my special diet, a dozen mince pies a day and two litres of sweet sherry every week. Then from September we start putting the reindeer through their paces.



Then October through November we will start refreshing and revising the route that I'll be

taking on Christmas Eve. A new addition this year will be the use of the Angel of the North as a navigation point. The end of November and into December is taken up entirely with wrapping of presents, and servicing and loading up the sleigh, all in time for the big day once again.



You must have to travel at some speed on Christmas Eve. We see you've got your goggles this year. What other special equipment do you have? Any go-faster stripes on the old sleigh?

Yes, you are quite right - I do have to

travel at quite a speed. In fact the sleigh can reach speeds of up to 1,800 miles per second. A necessity, when you consider that I have 842 million stops to make and only 31 hours to do it in, allowing for different time zones of course.

In fact I will be using a new sleigh this year that we've called the Mark 4. It's considerably faster than my older sleigh which has necessitated the use of goggles to prevent snow and other debris ending up in my eyes.

As for other special equipment? I like to keep it quite simple - just me, the sleigh, my team of nine reindeer and a hot water bottle if the weather's particularly chilly. Oh, and perhaps a hip flask of something just to keep me going when I start flagging in the wee hours of the morning.

Purely for medicinal purposes, of course! Now, we all know this is your peak period for work. How does Santa unwind, do you have any hobbies to keep you occupied for instance?

It probably won't be a surprise to you to know that most of my hobbies surround what you would call winter pursuits. Skating, skiing, tobogganing, and my favourite - ice fishing. I'm also an avid collector of model trains. And when I'm not overseeing

Wrapping Up!

FATHER CHRISTMAS

operations, I can be found in my shed, overseeing the world's largest model train set ... all aboard! Ho! ho! ho!



There isn't an inch of the earth you haven't visited, do you have a favourite spot?

It's true I've been to every single country on the planet. And every single country is wonderful in its own way. Do I have a favourite spot? It might seem soppy, but to quote Dorothy,

"there's no place like home". After a busy night doing my deliveries there's nothing better than returning to the North Pole and sitting down with Mrs Claus and 500,000 elves for our big Christmas dinner!

How's it going with your backroom team? All well with the elves and reindeer?

The support team at the North Pole have been absolutely fantastic as usual. However the reconnaissance team, otherwise known as the "elf on the shelf division", have been receiving a number of complaints recently. Reports have been coming in that the elves have been misbehaving. There have been instances of Christmas trees being wrapped in toilet paper, elves have been discovered stealing chocolate out of advent calendars and a few mums and dads have reported that some of our elves have been raiding their drinks cabinets.



Obviously this will need to be investigated thoroughly, many of the elves have annual reviews coming up in January and these

instances of tomfoolery will be addressed and if necessary disciplinary measures followed. But other than these few miscreants I'm pleased to say the reindeer and the elves are performing admirably.

How do you manage to do all those parcel drops down chimneys without being discovered in action, or is that giving away too much?

I obviously don't want to say too much, but in recent years our patented CDS (Chimney Delivery System) has been a great help. It's allowed me to get in and out of people's houses with a minimum of fuss and has greatly reduced the chances of detection. And let me tell you the average 5 year old can be quite persistent when it comes to trying to spot me on Christmas Eve night.

Tell us about what happened that time you got stuck up the chimney?

It fills me with dread every time I think about it! If it wasn't for a timely sneeze, I would still be stuck in the chimney right now. It was a particularly harrowing incident and one I had hoped to put behind me, but by the time the next Christmas came around there were millions of school children all over the world singing a song about it! It took many months with the elf psychiatrist before I was able to even consider prising off another chimney pot cowl, I can tell you.

Wrapping Up!

FATHER CHRISTMAS



You must get millions of letters, what's been your favourite request this year?

You're quite right, I do get millions of letters every year with all sorts of requests for all sorts of different presents, but times have changed somewhat over the years. 40 or 50 years ago it was requests for Action Man and Sindy dolls, but now those simple presents seem to have been replaced by requests for the latest mobile phone or games console or iPad. Not that there's anything wrong with that of course, I guess it's just progress.

But one of the strangest requests I've received was from the young man who asked me for a dehumidifier. He was about six years old and when I quizzed him about why he wanted a dehumidifier, he responded by telling me that his parents had bought one for their bedroom nine months ago. He was most irritated that his mother and father had left him out and he didn't have one for his bedroom. When I asked him If he knew what a dehumidifier actually did, he said he hadn't got a clue ... but that wasn't the point now was it!

Finally, just to reassure our younger readers, can you confirm that those who live in homes without a chimney won't be left out?

So, this is something of a follow on from your previous question about the ... ahem ... chimney incident!

I can gain easy access to any property with the use of a magic key. And in fact, for a few years now this has been my favoured method of entry. It's much easier, makes much less mess in the living room and also it means that I can safely get in and out of people's homes without danger of getting lodged in a wall cavity again.



Now from me and Mrs Claus and all of the elves in my employment we wish all of your readers a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

***With special thanks to Santa's agent,
Sean Kenney***

Word Up!

YOUR POEMS ON THE THEME OF MAGIC

When Notes Become a Melody

The forest is more than a collection of trees
The sky is more than a meeting of clouds
Chili is more than a pot of beans
A village is more than a group of homes
A school is more than classes of students
A closet is more than some hanging clothes
A scalp holds more than a head of hair
A novel is more than a count of pages
A house is more than a series of rooms
All this becomes evident when
You understand how notes become a tune
Verses become a poem
And life becomes a choice
Magic all of it

Evie Groch

To write a duff po-em is tragic,
With manya wrong noun or wrong adject-
ive, is sometimes just sad,
Or unbearably bad

But to get it all right is just magic.

Christopher Wancke

So hard to sit and watch
a hard year, a troubled year.
Hard to find and catch
a helpful word when words don't help.

How to show a light
in another's dark place?
A dark time, a troubled time,
with set backs stretching in a line,
refusing to let go.

Speak the words regardless.
Offer hope and help and light,
promise that hard times will pass,
and hide crossed fingers well
behind your back.

Gerda Pickin

The Magician

the future is always at stake
he better plays his cards right
perfect his sleight of hand
devise a plausible distraction
vanish his fear and anxiety
for reality is always tricky
enchantment can be illusory
written on his palms are nothing
but a history of uncertainties
embrace possibilities in impossibilities

Sherwin Altarez Mapanoo

Up North!

MIKE TICKELL

There's music in the air as a famed Northumbrian talks of his love for the region

Here I am, in the lounge of 'The Angel' at Corbridge, late December 2019.

I am enjoying the magic of this stylish hostelry. It is said to have been built with stone from the ruined Dilston Hall nearby. The weather outside is bleak, but the company and great range of beers, including my favourite *Angels' Share* is inviting.

Corbridge is an intriguing small town with its ancient market-square and vicar's fortified tower (now a characterful wine, gin and beer bar). There are many highly individual, varied and interesting shops, all welcoming and hospitable.

I was a teacher here in the old junior school in the early 1960's. It was a vibrant time for me in a world that seemed to be getting better and better, despite fears of 'The Bomb'. My classroom had been The Joseph Viney Museum and there were all sorts of Roman carved and lettered stones set into the internal walls. Many of these were from the nearby Roman garrison town of Corstopitum, a route centre on the main road from York and the main route up into Scotland.

Corbridge's history is profound, dating back to before Mesolithic times, thousands of years before the Romans, coming up through Angles, Saxons, Norman invasions, the pillaging of Scots including William Wallace and Robert the Bruce and the border reiving times of the 15th and 16th centuries.



There is an occasional air of melancholy which may result from memories of James Radcliffe, Earl of Derwentwater who lived at Dilston Hall. He joined the Jacobite rebellion and was beheaded for treason at Tower Hill, London, 1716. He was very popular in the area, his wife was blamed for encouraging his folly. It is said the night his body was brought back to Dilston the sky was red, the aurora borealis being known locally from thereon as Derwentwater's Lights. I told my Corbridge schoolchildren his story. They particularly liked the old anecdote of the local blacksmith telling early Corbridge tourists of the Earl, and selling them a Derwentwater tooth as keepsake, presumably taken from the Dilston crypt. The blacksmith was said to have sold hundreds!



Whilst I am aware of the past and feel the atmosphere of this small town, particularly when standing on the old bridge looking into the Tyne flowing over the stones below, it is the friendliness and vibrancy of Corbridge today that always brightens my spirits.

Up North!

MIKE TICKELL

Dilston is not the only place where women were blamed, nearby Riding Mill village is noted for its past allegations of witchcraft. Michael Green's recent book, *'The Ghosting of Anne Armstrong'* provides the story and references of how this fourteen-year-old girl in 1663 accused many of her neighbours of the dark arts. I used to enjoy a pint in 'The Wellington' hotel there in the 1960's and knew the outline of the story. Today the book gives much more detail and insight of the uncanny happenings in Riding Mill and the challenges of the times.

Conversations

He said, "Rowan protects against witchcraft and warlock "
It did not protect him from black spit and coal dust lungs.

A blackbird with golden beak is picking berries from our tree.
One-by-one he is stripping my protection, feasting to keep out cold.

He knows I am watching his performance amongst flexing stems.
That turned head, quick eye, bounce, and pick.

He is trying to hover like a skylark, he tumbles, missing aim.
He knows I am watching. I laugh at the outrage of his fall.

His movement and flight about the berried branch are delight
And enchanted, I realise I have not laughed for months.

He said, "I will be there all seasons, in branches, leaves and birds,
Rowan is a spell against cold, dark and loneliness"

That was years ago, but now in berries, branch, and blackbird
We are one again in our diversity.

A few months after my visit to Corbridge we had our own challenges with Covid, and were in lockdown. It seemed medieval plague, witchcraft and 1663 was not so distant after all. For some months I didn't appreciate the impact of the isolation. One day in October I watched a blackbird in the rowan tree outside our kitchen. It was eating the rowan berries of this magical tree.

I wrote the following poem to celebrate the blackbird's performance. As I write this I remember blackbirds too are magical birds. I remember as a child my father, who had been a pitman and like many of his kind loved nature and stories, telling me the tale of how the blackbird got its golden beak. So many birds - owls, wrens, crows and swans - have mystical and other-worldly connections.



Up North!

MIKE TICKELL

As Covid lockdowns tightened I was fortunate to live out here at Wark in Northumberland and have access to walks in wild and isolated countryside.

I started to become interested again in the old stories of plants and animals and the natural world. As a child I had found trees mysterious and sometimes saw faces in the trunks where branches had broken or been cut off. I had fished in the Tyne from about the age of eight, later the lonely but much-loved Warksburn and now in retirement back to source, North Tyne.

As you will have realised by now, I like to talk, though most of the time I am quiet, prefer to listen. Bridget and Harry asked me to write about a time I talked with the author David Almond. Shortly after, David asked me if he could write a story about an incident I had told him. He transformed my anecdote of visiting Kielder into a beautiful picture story book with illustrations by Levi Pinfold. It is called simply '*The Dam*'.

The short account I told David concerned me taking my daughter Kathryn, then about 8 or 9 years old, up to Kielder where they were submerging the headwaters of the North Tyne by building a dam. It was nearly finished. Being a Sunday, I surmised it wouldn't be too busy and I would be able to fish the stream, be one, if not the last, to fish it.

We drove up to Kielder and sure enough apart from one big JCB trundling about, all the other machines were laid up, all the normally busy

work areas quiet. The river there was just a few yards wide. Salmon were jumping all over the place. After an hour I realised I was not going to catch one and Kathryn was restless. It was a weird landscape with the abandoned buildings of the local hill farms boarded and with warning signs.

I decided to go into one, it may have been Emmethaugh, which I knew of from old songs and stories. I had never been in it before. Once inside with Kathryn the spirit of the place took over. I could feel its presence and all the happenings of the house: the births, deaths, meals, music and now this impending drowning.

I told Kathryn to get her tin whistle from the car. She could play all the local, old tunes. She had learned them from piccolo player Billy Ballantine and fiddler Willy Taylor amongst others. She could play them in their style with their lift for the dance or sadness for a slow air. When she played in the empty rooms (we visited a number of houses) the air seemed to crackle.

David tells all this and much more in the story. He touches on the wider picture of the dam bringing destruction to a place and yet also bringing new life. His story brings spaces where you can think and work things out for yourself. He used all the names of the musicians whose music Kathryn played that day in the book and his story gives life to them and a small incident that took place that Sunday afternoon.

Once David took the story, he used his skill as a master storyteller to keep the narrative and not digress about salmon and JCBs! In his story David has Kathryn playing the fiddle, which she does as well as the pipes. In my story she plays the whistle, but increasingly I think I may have been wrong.

Up North!

MIKE TICKELL

I love the artwork by Levi Pinfold, it has a magical, haunting quality and feels right to my experience. I never met him, but strangely his painting of me waking Kathryn to go to Kielder whilst not looking particularly like me, does remarkably look very like my father.

The photograph opposite is 'The Dam' with a copy of an old book 'Wanny Blossoms' a book of songs and poems by James Armstrong published 1875.



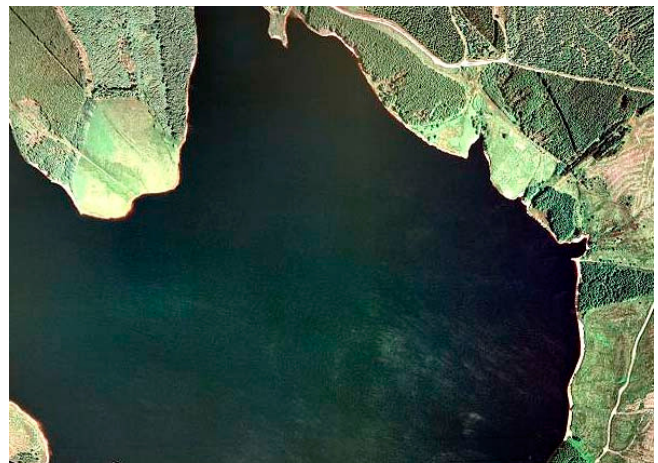
Armstrong's book contains many references to places now under the dam. He lived at Plashetts when he wrote the book which is also now deep under Kielder Water. This treasured book was bequeathed to me by fiddler Willy Taylor.



Two photos of Plashetts village, before the flooding



Remnants of the old railway line, now running straight into the lake



Plashetts, now deep under the largest man-made lake in Europe

All photos from www.disused-stations.co.uk

Conjure Up!

STEVE LOWE

Up!'s outdoors man finds mystery and magic among the trees

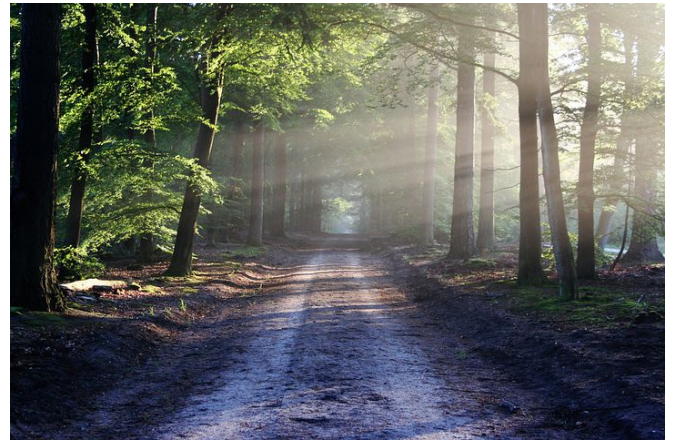
Magic is a mainstay of fairy tales and especially of folklore. It is part of the oral storytelling tradition that can be traced back to our earliest ancestors, full of life lessons, creativity and truth. Magic, or the power to (apparently) influence events by using mysterious or supernatural forces, is often also used to explain things that cannot be easily or rationally understood. Much of nature fits into that bracket, even today, and most of us would agree that being outdoors or in “wild places” is better therapy than a tablet.

We have all grown up with the magic of nature within literature, film, stories and play. It sparks the imagination, inspires wonder as well as offering some familiarity or comfort. As a reader, it's usually nature that creates the narrative to my life.



For example, Myrkviðr or Mirkwood is a “dark” or “black” forest in Norse mythology. It is said to be a dangerous place to be, home to various jötunn (or non-god beings) and a passage between two different worlds – the world of the gods and

the world of fire. It influenced literary works such as J. R. R. Tolkien and his fantasy *The Lord of the Rings*. And these forests provide refuge for great heroes who, after a period of exile, re-emerge into the world to fight for vengeance and justice. Even *The Gruffalo* is set in a forest!



Not surprisingly then, the light and shade within a forest environment has become a stage for writers and storytellers throughout the ages. Dark corners form an ideal villain's hideout, whilst sunlit groves and clearings conjure up the perfect spot for that happy-ever-after ending!

Personally, woodlands have always provided me with an ever-changing environment; packed full of sound, smell, colour, shade and texture. Each seasonal change creates a new, and often special, drama. In the depths of winter, the spooky silhouettes of gnarly tree branches and the silence of snow create a blank canvas and a supernatural mood. In spring, unfurling spikes of ferns, emerging wildflowers and dappled shade bring forth thoughts of hope and rebirth.

I especially enjoy dawn or dusk - also the best times to encounter wildlife. As soon as I leave the woodland edge behind, the world seems to slip away and it becomes easy to concentrate on place, as I find it both meditative and magical. I feel part of my surroundings. I find the same occurs with the sea.

Nature is the best of inventors, impossible for us to match in anything other than our imaginations, so we call it magic - and it is!

Imagine the variety of colour, smell, shape of flowers, the coolness of running water and its capacity to carve great voids in the landscape. The murmuration of thousands of starlings, each

Conjure Up!

STEVE LOWE

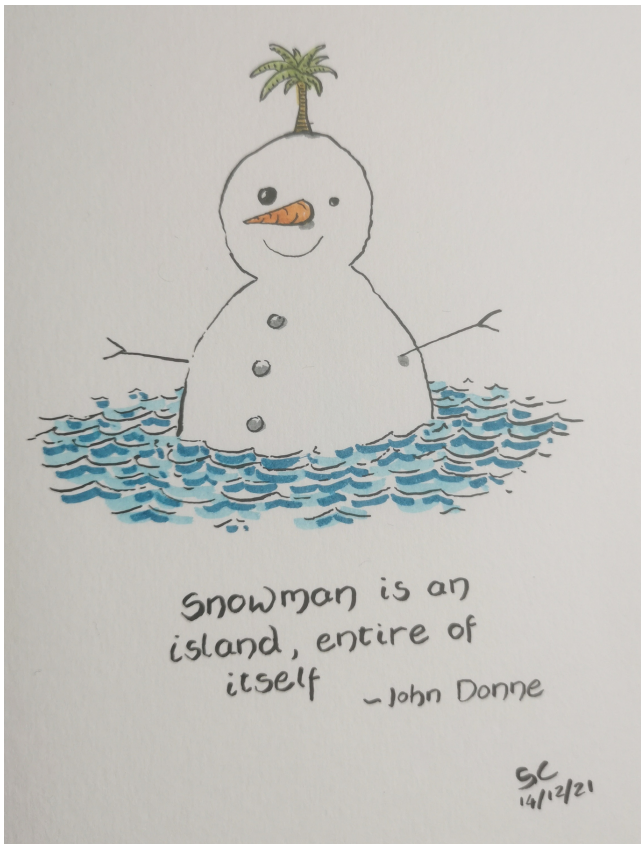
individual bird a tiny dancer in an airborne ballet with no visible choreographer. The vast flowing oceans, full of life or the touch of rain on your skin. The ugly bug that transmogrifies to emerge as a glowing and gentle butterfly or dragonfly.

We live as a part of nature's script, although Mother Earth does not always get the credit. Now more than ever, we should thank nature for its mysterious and magical experiences. Not only that, but with so much available on our own doorsteps, we should cherish and enjoy it as frequently as we can. You will be enchanted, thrilled and delighted!



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.



Cartoon Corner

Ask not for whom the snow falls ...

This month, Up!'s resident 'toon artist has taken a well-earned rest to prepare himself for next year.

In his place, we're delighted to be able to share a 'toon, and a little bit of 'metafrostiecal poetry' from Whitley Bay illustrator, Steve Lancaster.

You can find more of Steve's work at:

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

Word Up!

YOUR POEMS ON THE THEME OF MAGIC

A Warning Too Late

Her small hands pull the spineless
album from the shelf, bits of dried glue
curling the edges of the photos in shades of sepia,
gray, and Kodachrome.

She finds him, her father, focuses on his posture,
at ease, in his overstuffed chair.
He hums a tune that spirals its way into her ear.

His mustache exudes a musty smell;
wafts out of the picture, into her nostrils.
The nap on his corduroy jacket
textures the ridges her fingers brush against.

She runs a thumb over his Pomade-styled hair,
wipes it on her dress.

On the arm of the chair teeters a plate with a sweet roll.
Sugar is powdered and stays on her lips.
Smack and wipe.

Daddy, oh Daddy.

*Charlotte, are you playing with the album again?
If you keep that up, you'll become part of it.
Mark my words.*

Evie Groch

The Best Match I Ever Saw

Ross County v Aberdeen,
Victoria Park,
1999, or thereabouts.

County won 3-0.
Amazing display of football.
You wouldn't think it possible,
but he's quite a player,
is Ross.

To be fair, Aberdeen
had an early red card
(well deserved, I might add),
so for most of the match
he was playing against ten men.

But still, quite remarkable
to win so comprehensively.
Never gets the credit he deserves,
does Ross.

Same goes for Patrick Thistle.

Joe Williams

Always Leave them Laughing

Wide grinned,
bumbling, fumbling,
lumbering genius.
Unfailing, failing magic - just
like that!

Janette Ostle

Magic Up!

JOHN CAREW

Deep in County Limerick is a place awash with mystery, legend, magic ... and archaeology! Lough Gur's resident storyteller is our guide

Lough Gur is an ancient land of stone circles and standing stones, of megalithic tombs, ringforts and crannógs (man-made islands), of castles and churches.



Neolithic man came to Lough Gur over 6,000 years ago and would have worshipped the lake as a god. They settled on Knockadoon (Cnoc an Dúin - Hill of the Fort). Even though there are over twenty fort sites on Knockadoon, the hill itself was an island, making it easy to secure and defend. Today the hill is no longer an island, the lake was drained as a famine relief scheme and the level of the water dropped by 6 or 7 feet. It was then that all the artefacts were found, such as stone axes, bronze spearheads, and of course the Bronze Shield of Lough Gur (known locally as The Sun Shield).

These artefacts would have been thrown into the lake as offerings to the gods; we can only ponder at what these people were asking the gods for when they proffered such treasures. It was the



Neolithic people who built the Grange Stone Circle, the largest stone circle in Ireland or Great Britain, having 113 standing stones, the largest being stone number 1, Rannach Croim Duibh (the dark bent one). A fertility god, portrayed as a bent figure carries the inaugural sheaf of wheat, a sacred and magical gift from the otherworld.

Through the centuries Lough Gur has been shaped by man, from the Neolithic settlers, Bronze Age man, Iron Age man, Christianity, the Viking, Medieval and Post-Medieval, right up to today. The history, folklore, legends and stories of the síoga (fairies) combine to make Lough Gur a magical and mystical place, holding both locals and visitors spellbound.

There are over 2000 archaeological sites within a three-mile radius of Lough Gur. A guided tour takes up to two and a half hours, and at that we only visit four or five sites. I was born and reared in Rusheen, by the shores of the lake. By day, we would be told of the myths and legends of Lough Gur, at night I'd hear the haunting sounds coming from the lake. Be it early in the morning, when the first rays of sunlight dance on the enchanted waters of the lake, or on a frosty evening, when the setting sun colours the water of the lake blood red, or when the wind is howling and the

Magic Up!

JOHN CAREW

rain sweeps down across Knockfennel, Lough Gur rejuvenates my soul, by its tranquility, sacredness and magic.



There are many myths and legends here in Lough Gur. My favourite has to be the story of Gearóid Iarla (Gerald the Earl), the human son of Áine, Queen of the Fairies. Gearóid Iarla lives beneath the dark and broody waters of the lake, banished there by his own mother. What terrible thing did Gearóid do to deserve such a fate? You will need to visit my YouTube link to hear this story!



Of course, I love to tell the story of the Bronze Shield of Lough Gur, found in 1872 by the Hayes brothers (relations of my own). Chai and Nicholas were cutting reed in the red bog by the shores of the lake. They were great athletes and on

breaks from their work, they would practice long jumps. Nicholas was the first to jump; Chai marked the spot where he landed with the sickle and found it difficult to remove. Chai then took his jump; luckily, he landed in much the same spot. Nicholas marked the spot with the sickle, which again was difficult to remove. The brothers, knowing that artefacts had been found in the area, removed the earth and found the Sun Shield.

They took their find to an antique dealer in Limerick and got 13s and 6p, which paid the fare one-way to America for Nicholas. The dealer in Limerick sold the shield on to a dealer in England for £65. If 13s and 6p paid the way to America, imagine what £65 would have done for you back then! A replica of the shield can be seen at the heritage center in Lough Gur, the original is now in the National Museum of Ireland in Dublin.

Fer Fí, King of the Fairies

Knockfennel, on the northern shore of the lake, is a hollow hill. This is the home of the fairies in Lough Gur, ruled by Fer Fí, King of the Fairies.

Fer Fí carries a magic harp, with it he plays three forms of music – the Geantraighe, Goltraighe, and Suantraighe. The Geantraighe is happy music, while the Goltraighe involves lamentation and sadness, and the Suantraighe is sleep-music or death-music.

If a person was sick, tradition has it that they would go up Knockfennel on the night of a full moon. If they heard Fer Fí play the Geantraighe, they knew they were cured, but if they heard the sad music, the Goltraighe, they knew they were not cured and the next day their people would take them to the doctor for treatment. And if, after spending time on Knockfennel under the light of a full moon, they heard the Suantraighe ... well! There was much sorrow in the family, for that music was the sound of death approaching.

Magic Up!

JOHN CAREW



They say the Suantraighe is the sweetest tune of all, and that anyone who hears it falls into a trance with its beauty. But 'tis a sleep no mortal man or woman will ever awake from.

Stories are in man's DNA - they are our oldest form of entertainment, and how we hand down information from generation to generation. Stories connect us to our past, to our ancestors, to our culture. Stories tell us of our present, of our neighbours, friends and family. Stories give us a vision of our future, or at least a perceived future.

I once visited, with a fellow poet, the famine plot at Moyross just outside Limerick City. We stood in silent reflection and recited some poems in memory of the victims of the Irish famine. Suddenly I felt a cold shiver run down my spine, knowing that I was in the presence of the spirits, I said a quiet prayer.

On occasions I have felt the presence of the spirits at different locations in Lough Gur. These sensations can be hard to explain to those who have not experienced them, and they can be frightening for some people. I know most people never experience being amongst the spirits. That of course is to be understood. People's minds are so full of the worries of today, they worry about their children, about hassles in their job, about paying their mortgage and of course there is the modern-day scourge of the mobile phone. People do not have the time to clear their minds, to meditate, and to daydream. The spirits are with the daydreamers.

To end, can I extend an open invitation to one and all, come and visit us here in Lough Gur. You may or may not encounter the spirits, but you will leave with a sense of the history, the tranquillity, the sacredness and the magic of this ancient place.

Can I leave you with a short poem, inspired by those early morning sunrays dancing on the enchanted waters of Lough Gur.

The Shores Of Eternity

*Stand on the shores of eternity
Stand in silence and listen
To the rhythmic, rhyming, chimes of time
Close your eyes and see
The mossed and whitened stones of infinity
Speak with lips of tranquillity
Of a love divine
Inhale the scent of history
As you stand on the shores of eternity.*

To discover more about this magical lake, why not take a virtual tour, or catch up with John on his Facebook page:

***<https://loughgur.com/virtual-tour/>
<https://www.facebook.com/john.carew.773981>***

Word Up!

YOUR POEMS ON THE THEME OF MAGIC

Spell

I put a spell on you,
but it went a bit wrong.
It was meant to make you fall in love with me,
but you ended up covered in boils
and stinking like a sewer.

It was the leg of toad that did it, I'd say.
I took one from the front,
which probably counts as an arm,
now that I think about it.

Still, it worked out OK.
Your boyfriend dumped you.
I always knew he was shallow.

You scratch more than you used to,
and I must admit the smell is a little off-putting,
but you still have your sparkling wit,
and that's what really counts,
isn't it?

Joe Williams

Next month's theme is -
REUSE, REDUCE, RECYCLE

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

Now you see it ...

The poisoned apple offered,
the wolf beneath the fleece,
the guessing game that can't be won
without the secret name.
Elves and witches, thorns and briars,
and all the conjured fears,
by your sleight of hand,
are vanished into thin air.

Gerda Pickin

MAGIC IN THE WOOD

A gauze of cloud masks the evening sun
as I negotiate the precipitous territory
between the pine and fir,
angling for that perfect shot
of elemental harmony.
Trout slip through molecules of static lake,
silent and infinitely surreptitious in their passing,
weaving whispered stories
to sighing needles, while hot
parched reeds sing their sere symphony;
the only discordant notes the mysterious slurring
of the fairy trees.

Perry McDaid

Updating!

NORTH SHIELDS HERITAGE PROJECT

Meet the people bringing the past bang up to date!

Thanks for agreeing to talk to us. Heritology is something we'd never heard of before. Where does it come from?

Well, Heritology is a word we made up when we started the project 3 years ago. Think of it a bit like a simple sum: Heritage + Technology = Heritology!

We wanted to attract younger people to investigate their local heritage, and we thought tech was the way to get them interested – kids love their tech. We felt it was a bit of a win-win situation, kids get to understand more about the place they live using a medium they're familiar with - or even better, discovering tech they've never used before.

There's another benefit as well. We hope to stimulate an interest in Digital Technology and perhaps steer young people in the direction of a future career in an exciting and innovative industry, which is actually doing very well in the North East right now with many digital start-ups working out of the emerging Tech Lab Proto in Gateshead.

It strikes us that bringing the past back to life is a bit of magic in itself. How do you go about doing this?

Where to begin with that one! There's so much Tech out there and it's changing rapidly. Ironically, one of the technologies we used has been around for many years, it's called Photogrammetry, and it's basically building up



a picture of a place or location by taking lots and lots of photographs – the RAF used it during WW2. Of course, it's been brought bang up to date now via digital technology. We've taken several parties of schoolchildren down to Northumberland Square in North Shields and explained all about the history of The Wooden Dolly and its importance to the town. It involved great tales about pirates and superstitions in the fishing industry, as well as the local people involved in the many dollies over the years.



The real fun part was getting the kids up on scaffolding around the current dolly – all health and safety precautions taken of course – and taking literally hundreds of photos of the statue from every angle on their iPads. One of our volunteers, Katy who works out of Proto, the emerging technology lab in Gateshead, then downloaded all of the images into a package called Meshroom.

From this, a full 3D representation of the dolly was produced, and we even had a copy 3D

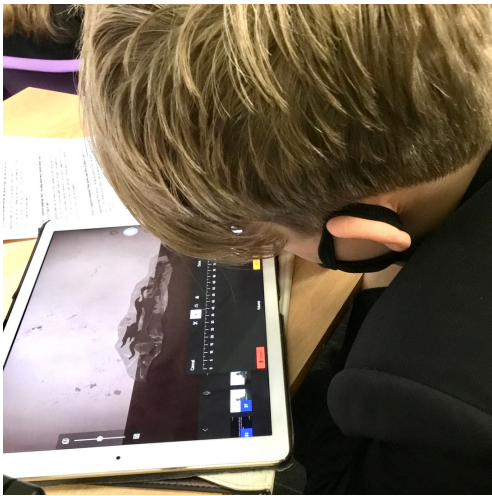
Updating!

NORTH SHIELDS HERITAGE PROJECT

printed to present to the schools at the end of the project. Here's a link to a short film we produced, explaining the process:

https://youtu.be/Am9jyUtO9_8

We also produced a 360-degree film of a walk through the North Shields Heritage Action Zone, and that has been put on our Virtual Reality Headsets so people can walk along Howard Street and Northumberland Square without leaving the house! Other stuff includes green-screen filming as part of a documentary we did recently with Waterville Primary, where the children handled all of the tech and learned about the role North Shields played in the abolition of slavery.



Another "old" technology which has been brought up to date through the use of digital is Stop Motion Animation, and we've recently completed a short animated

film with students at Marden High School telling the story of Mary Ann Macham, an escaped slave who made her way to North Shields from Virginia in the 1830's.

Visit our website at www.heritologists.com to find out more of the things we've done.

We love that you don't just give us blandly factual accounts (we're still traumatised by school history lessons!), but instead focus in on the lives of ordinary people to bring history to life. What led you to take this approach?

This was one of our core principles when we started the project. We wanted to tell the story of "ordinary" or lesser-known people who often did extraordinary things, but are rarely mentioned in mainstream history.

We felt this made our local heritage much more meaningful, and we wanted to tell stories that made people think "I didn't know that about North Shields!"

I've lived in Shields pretty much all my life, but I've learned more about the place and the people in it in the last 5 years than the previous 65! Some of the stories are amazing; Edward Jennings, a road sweeper or "Scavenger" who lived on the fish quay in the 19th century and was awarded the Victoria Cross for Valour during the Indian Mutiny. Victor Noble Rainbird, a brilliant artist from Shields whose story is truly epic and ultimately tragic. The Quaker Community in the town who did so much to drive the abolition of slavery. Lyd Sawyer, an innovative Victorian photographer who helped elevate photography into an art form. I really could go on and on there's so much to tell.



Updating!

NORTH SHIELDS HERITAGE PROJECT

We hear you're keen to reach out to people who perhaps previously thought history wasn't for them. How is portable technology helping with this?

Our hope is that by using tech to present heritage in a different and innovative way, we'll be able to attract a new and wider audience to the subject. Also by exploring the lesser known stories we hope to open eyes to the rich culture that maybe hasn't been revealed before.



Although we started out by wanting to attract younger audiences, we've found that older people are just as fascinated with new technology as anyone else. On those occasions where we've demonstrated Virtual Reality there's been a real 'wow!' factor attached to it. Before Covid hit so hard, one of our ideas was to take VR into Care Homes, so that people who couldn't get out could enjoy a heritage experience in the virtual world in comfort and safety.

We'd love to create a heritage sound trail around North Shields, where visitors and residents alike could learn about key figures, stories and landmarks through Immersive Sound delivered via a smart phone or tablet. We'd use

local actors, musicians and schoolchildren to tell these stories. There's a cost to this of course, and Covid has limited funding opportunities with money, quite rightly, going to those most in need - but we haven't written it off in the long term.



North Shields, like many port towns around the UK, was a real mix of different cultures. What can you tell us about "The Street Of All Nations"?

We believe the term "Street of all Nations" was first coined by the artist Victor Noble Rainbird, and it referred to the Low Road that ran from the current ferry landing through the Fish Quay to Tanners Bank.

As you say it was a real melting pot of races, cultures and religious beliefs, with the flags of many nations hanging from windows along its length. It was said that English wasn't the most commonly spoken language, as seafarers from across the globe worked and lived there. During our research we discovered 22 different nationalities along Clive Street alone. Sadly all of the old buildings which lined the street have long since disappeared.

It was not a pleasant place to live. Clean drinking water was hard to come by, resulting in outbreaks of cholera. One side effect of this was that public houses flourished because it was

Updating!

NORTH SHIELDS HERITOLGY PROJECT

safer to drink beer!

The many butchers who plied their trade there would routinely slaughter livestock in the street and simply sweep any unwanted innards and guts straight into the river, adding to the toxic conditions where disease could spread easily. Sanitation was almost non-existent with one toilet for around every one hundred people, and child mortality was amongst the worst in Britain.

It was a noisy, smelly bustling hive of a place with many different trades such as sailmakers, rope makers, boat builders and foundries all operating close together – in the 1850's the Smith's Dock Co. was the largest ship repair company in the world.

Of course, like most port towns there was crime, most of it petty larceny or drunkenness, but none of it appeared racially or religiously motivated. Everyone was just too busy surviving to be concerned about the nationality or religious tendency of their neighbours, in fact there was a great sense of tolerance. *(now there's a lesson from the past worth learning - Ed.)*

North Shields Heritology Project

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

<http://www.heritologists.com/>
heritologists@gmail.com



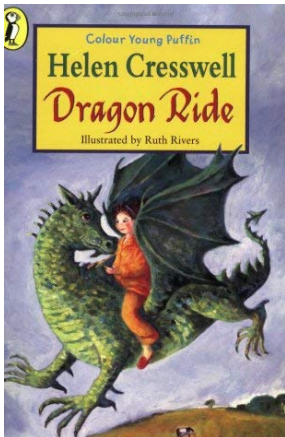
Read Up!

MEGAN PATTIE

Up!'s resident book reviewer introduces you to her favourite dragons

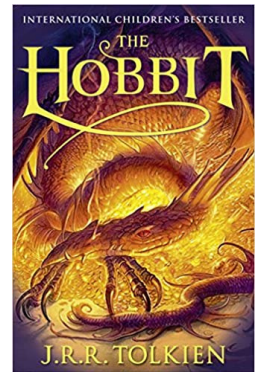


It's hard not to notice the dragons in my house. It's full of them – at least one in every room. I've got them as trinkets and toys, jigsaws and jewellery; they are a long, long love of mine. And of course, there are the books, where it all began. I want to share a little story here of my reading life through dragons, and show you all the things I have seen that a dragon can be.

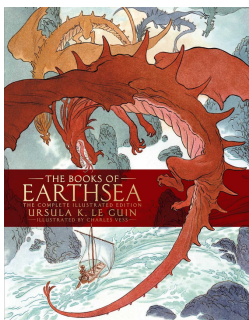


The earliest dragon I remember reading about was in Helen Cresswell's *Dragon Ride*. Even I had to do some digging to clear my own foggy memory on this one. The copy I had, as it turns out, was published in 1999, so I would have been around 6 or 7 when I came across it. It tells the story of a girl who desperately wants a dragon for her birthday (I'm sure we can all relate to that!), and the only person who takes her seriously is the owner of a magic shop. He sells her a picture of a dragon which she puts up on her bedroom wall, and that night, the dragon in the picture comes alive and takes her flying. It's a simple, magical story about dreams coming true, with a dragon right at the centre of it, and it set off a love for dragons in me that two decades later is still going strong.

A few years later (no doubt, by this point, sensing a trend), my dad put *The Hobbit* into my hands. I still cite Tolkien's books as the ones that got me into writing poetry, but of course there is a larger, and arguably more potent element to *The Hobbit* than Tolkien's songs.



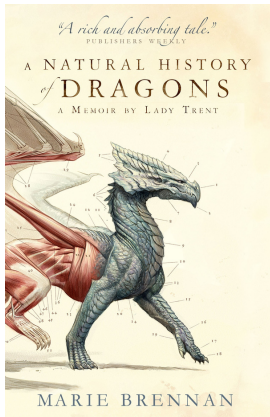
Smaug is colossal, cunning, deadly, and without a doubt monstrous. This is the classic dragon of myth: a challenge to be overcome, and a chance to become a hero.



Ursula Le Guin's *Earthsea* novels are some of the best fantasies I have ever read. Soulful and enchanting, I loved the world and the characters she created. Her dragons are to be quested for; they are ancient, wise, and venerated. That Ged is able to ride one is testament to his own nobility. I really like this breed of dragon. By the time these books were written, dragons were ancient. The stories we tell about them have much to teach us.

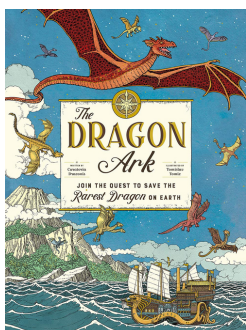
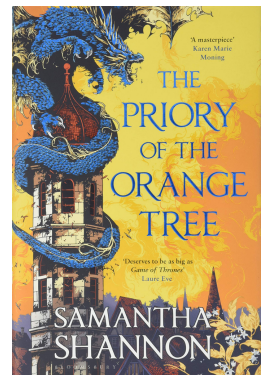
Read Up!

MEGAN PATTIE

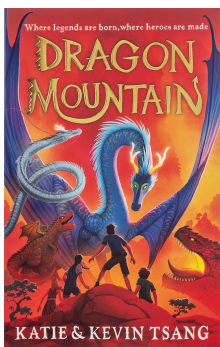


Perhaps this is why dragons in books are sometimes boiled down to their basic status as creatures, to be understood and protected as we would any other. Marie Brennan's *The Memoirs of Lady Trent* features by far my favourite literary heroine. Isabella Trent is smart, witty, adventurous, and sensitive, and she is a dragon zoologist. Across the five books in the series, her quest to study and conserve dragonkind is thrilling and engaging, and through it she experiences many perils and triumphs. Her care for the dragons in her world encourages us to show the same appreciation for our own wonderful wildlife, and is aided by Todd Lockwood's stunning illustrations, represented in the story as Isabella's own scientific sketches.

A more recent book, *The Priory of the Orange Tree* by Samantha Shannon, combines several of these ideas into one 800+ page fantasy epic. There are different kinds of dragons in this world, good and evil, noble and beastly. The Nameless One, an ancient evil who threatens the Queendom of Inys, is an heir of Smaug and other monsters who came before him, but in Seiiki, to the East, young people aspire to be dragon riders, and the few lucky ones who achieve this, such as Tané, are rewarded with powerful, sage companions, with whom they form a special bond. Shannon shows us that however dragons approach us, and vice versa, they are truly awesome.



Since becoming a bookseller in 2018, I have been thrilled to see a resurgence in dragon stories for young people, many of which explore the themes I have discussed here. In the captivating book *The Dragon Ark*, we see the environmental themes of *The Memoirs of Lady Trent* displayed in an immersive reading adventure, which introduces young readers to fascinating dragon species from all over the world. Dragons as wise companions appear in Kevin and Katy Tsang's *Dragon Mountain* and as perhaps not-so-wise companions in Cressida Cowell's *How To Train Your Dragon* books. It's always exciting to introduce young readers to these stories, because in their multifarious forms, dragons give us something to aspire to. They stretch our imaginations and open us up to the magical and magnificent. I look forward to many more dragon tales to come.



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

Coming Up!

Our first edition of 2022 will have **Reuse, Reduce, Recycle** as its theme.

For now though we'd like to say a massive thank you to all this year's contributors and especially to you, our readers ...

From this window on the world
we see the sun and moon co-star
in a technicolour production
awash with special effects.

We hear the rising of the tides,
feel them pull away,
their clockwork constancy
a heartbeat through the seasons.

Looking out from this window
we see all shades of belief,
every colour of dress,
each chasing the same thing:

to love and be loved,
feel a part of something bigger
than our own narrow vistas
allow us to see.

So from this little window to yours,
an all-season message to share.
It's small and it's heart-shaped
and beats with hope for tomorrow.

Wishing each and every one of you a happy and healthy festive period.
Stay Up! and see you in the new year.
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