

Up!

Accentuating the Positive

ISSUE 4 JANUARY 2021

Come aboard and meet:

Shanty Jim Mageean
Cullercoats Brewery
The Blyth Tall Ship
Some very busy beavers

and much, much more ...

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

Photo by Des O'Meara



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Photograph by Steve Lowe

Up Front!

Happy 2021 and welcome to our latest edition!

We write this to the backdrop of a clear, blue sky on a beautiful Winter's morning and hope the weather is equally lovely wherever you are.

As we set sail on another year, this month we seem to have hit on the zeitgeist. Everywhere you look on the net right now, sea shanties are trending; young hipsters, gathered in quartets, yo-ho-ho-and-a-bottle-of-rumming in close harmony!

Never ones to miss out on a trend, this month we go to the horse's mouth - 'Shanty Jim' Mageean himself is here to educate us on the tradition. Plus we'll take you on board the Blyth Tall Ship, The Williams II, and there's a whole host of other goodies too.

Well what are you waiting for, you landlubbers? Hoist the mainsail...

Bridget & Harry x

Sing Up!

JIM MAGEEAN

Yo ho ho! Up! talks to expert 'Shanty Jim' (who is right now shaping up to be a Tik-Tok legend) about the old/new craze sweeping the internet!

Why sea shanties, Jim? What was it that first interested you about this particular type of song?

I've always had an affinity with the sea and I've also always loved singing – I started when I was two, singing with my Gran. I was eight years old when I first married the two things together, when I had to sing the shanty 'Billy Boy' as a pirate in a school play. I learned 'Donkey Riding' at that time too and was hooked.

Later, in my teens, I met and heard some of the great shanty singers – Lou Killen, Bert Lloyd, Ewan MacColl and the greatest of them all, Stan Hugill who I met when I was sixteen in 1964. He was the last surviving authentic shantyman and scholar. I began writing to him via a folk magazine 'Spin' in which he wrote a monthly article on shanties and we struck up a correspondence and friendship which lasted until he died in 1992. He became my greatest mentor and inspiration. I owe him so much.

Can you tell us a bit about the tradition itself? I mean, some of these songs are hundreds of years old!

Shanty singing can be traced back to the Ancient Greeks around 300 BC (first mentioned in the *Oxyrhynchus Papyri*) but probably predates that with the Phoenicians and the Egyptians both being maritime cultures. As long as sailors have pulled on oars or ropes to set sails they have needed chants to help in this work. The tradition



continued in Europe through the Middle Ages before 'going quiet' in the 17th and 18th centuries. Then a massive resurgence occurred in the 19th century due to the decrease in sea warfare and piracy and the start of the 'Great Days of Sail'.

Looking at your 'CV', this music has taken you all over the world. Did you ever anticipate this when young Jim started out singing?

No, I never did this for any other reason than the love of the songs. I've always sung other songs as well (particularly 'Geordie' songs) but in the early 1970's people started to label me 'Shanty Jim' and I suppose I tried to live up to the name by learning as many shanties as possible and singing them everywhere I could.

From 1973 I started to get bookings at Folk Festivals (Sidmouth, Whitby, Bromyard etc) to run shanty sessions and workshops and the International scene in Europe and North America opened up to me. I first toured America and Europe in 1980.

Sing Up!

JIM MAGEEAN

Your current book/CD packages are called 'Heave Away' and 'Haul Away'. Can you educate us on the difference between the two?

There are lots of different types of sea shanties but they all fall into two categories - 'HAULING shanties' for PULLING on ropes, oars etc and 'HEAVING shanties' for PUSHING on capstan bars, pump handles etc. The former group are simple line/refrain songs with short, staccato rhythms and particular refrain line words like pull, haul, blow, roll, hilo, ranzo etc. which the sailors recognised as 'pulling' words.

The latter group are musically much more sophisticated with a verse/chorus structure and usually a strong story line. The sailors would join in with a big chorus of several lines rather than the single-line hauling refrains.



Up! has many friends who are 'folkies', and they're unerringly lovely people. However, given the generally older demographic, are we right in fearing for the future of the scene?

I have no fear for the future of folk music itself as I see lots of young singers and musicians coming through, particularly at folk festivals - some of which hold competitions for them. I've attended the 'Young Folksinger of the Year' competition at Bromyard Folk Festival for over 20 years now and have seen amazing talent on display. Several of them have gone on to fame on the folk scene, either solo or in groups.

However, I do fear for the future of folk clubs, which have a somewhat 'OAP' demographic. Young people prefer festivals, concerts and singing sessions (I see plenty of them in my shanty sessions around Britain, Europe and America who want to carry on the tradition) and I know local music sessions see lots of talented youngsters.

I was a part-time tutor on the Folk Music Degree at Newcastle University for 3 years and encountered a great interest in shanties and folk songs among the students there.

I'm also encouraged by the gradual 'crossover' of folk music into mainstream music which I see particularly among the younger folk singers, musicians and folk groups.

So now you know!

'Heave Away' has been a constant on Up!'s sound system this past month and we can thoroughly recommend it.

If you'd like to get your hands on one of Jim's shanty CDs, you can contact him via Facebook, or by email at shanty_jim@hotmail.com

Dam Up!

STEVE LOWE

Up!'s outdoor man, Steve Lowe, on the case for bringing back an old friend

Beavers are native to the UK but were hunted to extinction in the 16th century, mainly for their fur, meat and 'castoreum', an anal secretion (how lovely!) used in perfumes, food and medicine. It contains salicylic acid – used as aspirin – derived from willow (*Salix*) bark.

Whilst working at the magnificent Garden Festival held in Gateshead in 1990, I used to sneak off and watch the pair of beavers hosted by the Scout Association. Such gentle and retiring little mammals, I was lucky if I got even a tiny glimpse. I even remember the question everybody asked – “What do you call a young beaver?”

Garden Festivals first started in Germany as a way of undertaking regeneration, usually at the heart of the plans thereafter. Gateshead differed in that the exhibits were largely temporary - a way of bringing abandoned land into use (mostly for housing). I wonder what the area might be like now had this not been the case? What would those beavers have made of this little patch of the north east?

Little did I know that this almost forgotten but treasured memory would turn out to be one of life's revolving doors!

Beavers are now in national newspaper headlines because of climate change and the recurring cases of flooding, seemingly every time it rains. Why is this? This relates to something that I have been advocating for many years - beavers are natural water engineers and transform places where they



are found. Building small dams to give themselves access to deep pools of water, they cut down small trees for food and for “building supplies”.

No self-respecting beaver would be without their very own private swimming pool, which they share with their family - usually up to five, including kits (that is what you call young beavers by the way!). Unlike its larger American cousin, the European Beaver builds smaller structures and tends to have more of these, each of which acts to retain water, meaning it is not rushing off into watercourses. The dams are leaky enough to allow some water through and most of the material forms a big larder.

My concern with flooding, as dreadful and devastating as it is to those of us who have experienced it, is that we have made the effects of it worse. Dredging rivers, clearing debris and other interventions is quite the wrong thing to do as it fails to look holistically at the entire river – the Catchment Based Approach (CaBa).

Even ignoring climatic change, why do we build houses in areas prone to flooding? Why do we put down plastic grass? Why have we drained all our small ponds? Why are our roads and utilitarian surfaces hard? Why does it surprise us that using massive machines on farmland causes compaction of the soil?

DamUp!

STEVE LOWE

All these factors, and others, serve to make water move more quickly into rivers, shifting the problem elsewhere and often taking valuable soils with it to make matters worse. Better to store this and have a gradual release throughout the year. In fact, we suffered extreme low flows in 2020 but when rain comes it skitters into artificial drains, gradually adding up to a deluge that eventually hits a bottleneck on its way to the sea and spills over.

One thing that is now recognised as a beneficial factor amongst “water managers” is the use of beavers as a key part of addressing the issue.

Beavers were reintroduced into Bavaria (home of the garden festivals remember) when vast areas of upland forestry was blighted by tree disease. This led to severe flooding downstream. Within years, the benefits of the reintroduction were obvious, with vastly reduced flooding recorded as well as huge benefits to biodiversity on the back of the landscaping work of these rodents.

Just over a decade ago, following research with German colleagues, Northumberland Wildlife Trust tried to bring beavers to Kielder. It was fiercely resisted at the time, yet since then beaver reintroductions have started across other parts of the UK. One of these was the Scottish Beaver Trial at Knapdale, which I visited recently with my son. It was absolutely stunning to watch the serenity of these beautiful animals from the shore of their chosen location. The benefit to the local economy from tourists like us was welcome too!



Nor were these placid vegetarians going to play havoc with livestock, as with other headline reintroductions. If anyone had any lingering doubts, they need only look at the Cumbria Beaver Group, where beavers have recently been put into a farmed landscape.

Speaking to my friend, Heather Devey, who works for the partnership she said “a pair of beavers were put onto a small part of Lowther Estate last year and it’s amazing to see the speed of transformation. The farmed landscape is changing, and large amounts of water are being held back in a series of pools, with the farmer’s co-operation. It’s almost as if they can predict weather, as they have consistently built more or higher as a prelude to heavy rain! We are hoping they may produce kits this spring as they have settled really well together.”

Partnership and information are key in ensuring the animals are welcomed by other land users, including farmers. A recent online session was attended by 2,000 people, with a further 10,000 viewing since then.

I was thrilled with the recent discovery of a medieval “beaver gnawed” stick in a peat layer in Kielder. It shouts to me: “Bring home the beavers!”

Brew Up!

CULLERCOATS BREWERY

Up! talks to Anna Scantlebury, about brewing up a storm at the seaside

It's been a funny old year hasn't it! How's it been for you at Cullercoats Brewery?

Twists and turns, but we're hanging in there! For the business it's been a time to re-think, change the way we do some things and just roll with the punches. Being a small operation, just the two of us, has meant we've been able to react swiftly to each and every change and try to make the most of the situation. We immediately – within 24 hours of the first lockdown – set up an online shop on our website.

We'd never sold direct to the public before and only 5% of our production went into bottles, so it was a massive change of direction. We don't supply supermarkets, as we can't afford to with the prices they require, and all our bottles are produced by hand. A year ago we were only selling bottles to Fenwick, Newcastle, and about a dozen independent bottle shops and bars/restaurants. But in the last 12 months we've hand bottled and sold 25,000 bottles and hundreds of minikegs too!

We're lucky to have had our 14 year old son, Ben, here to help out and for a few weeks our 25 year old daughter, Liv, was here too. We've enjoyed a slightly slower pace and seeing more of our 3 children than usual, and we'd just acquired a Labrador puppy, Isla, at the start of the pandemic so there have been some positives for us during the strangest of times.



Looking back, tell us a bit about how you got started.

Bill had taken up 'full mash' home brewing in 1994, as a hobby to get away from his solicitor's desk, and to escape the baby's nappies too! We wrote a business plan in 1995 and asked the bank to lend us money but they pretty much laughed and said 'not a chance'. We had no savings, no equity in our house, two babies, two dogs, and an impossible dream. But after several job losses, a third child and reaching our early forties we thought, now or never.

We took the plunge in 2011 and put all our savings into it. I left my job as a children's music leader, and we set up Cullercoats Brewery using the same business plan, pretty much, as we'd written back in 1995. Right down to the beer names and the link with the RNLI, which we had negotiated with the charity all those years ago. It was a steep learning curve, much harder than we'd anticipated, and we almost ran out of money in the first 6 months, but it gradually took off and we've not looked back.

The names you give your beers (Polly Donkin, Jack the Devil etc) all reflect local culture and social history. Was this always part of the plan?

Yes, absolutely. We'd lived in Whitley Bay as students at Newcastle Poly 1989-91 and always drank (Bass at £1 a pint!) at the Queen's Head in Cullercoats. We fell in love with the place, the

Brew Up!

CULLERCOATS BREWERY

history, the sea. We decided then that we'd move back as soon as we could. We bought our house in Cullercoats in 1995, and have been living in it ever since, 5 minutes walk from the Queen's Head! We found out much of the local history from a booklet our son was given at primary school, printed by Tyne and Wear Passenger Transport Executive - it prompted us to read more, and discover details of the RNLI local history. We always had these ideas for beer names and talked about the brewery as our pipe dream, usually over a pint in the pub, or a bottle of home brew at home.



So, you decide to introduce a new beer to your range. Talk us through the process from initial idea to finished product.

Hmm, it varies to be honest. Sometimes it's prompted by customers asking for something, sometimes it's because we've read about a

particular style, or remember a brew we did years ago at home. Bill plays around with the recipe, looking at all the ones he's done over the years, reading in his many brewing books and online too. He talks to our maltsters, Fawcett's in Yorkshire, about the various speciality malts they have and the flavours he's looking for, and similarly to our hop merchants, Faram's in Worcester. The hops are especially important,



we only brew with British hops and there are new ones being developed all the time. We sometimes get to brew with a new strain that is being trialled, so is only grown by perhaps one farmer. The new British hops that have become commercial crops in the last 10 years have

transformed craft brewing in the UK, and we're huge fans of hops like Admiral, Jester, Olicana and Endeavour, while still loving the original breeds such as Fuggle and Golding. Once Bill is happy with his recipe we go straight to production, we don't have the luxury of a pilot plant to do a small batch first, but it's never been a problem. With experience you get a feel for what works and we're not doing outlandish styles of beer using wacky ingredients like chilli or juniper, so we're confident in what we're doing.

It's really exciting tasting the brew at the various stages, and smelling it as it's boiling away on brew day. Future brews may be tweaked a little but essentially you can predict the taste, colour, aroma from carefully creating your recipe. We talk FOREVER about beer names and labels, ask family and friends what they think, (they think we are very boring, we suspect) that's the hardest bit really. Our design team John Bullar and Charlotte Powell in Tynemouth have been brilliant at helping us sort out badges and labels. We're always wondering about change but are quite cautious by nature, so anything we do change is usually quite gradual!

Brew Up!

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A certain percentage of your profits go to the RNLI. Can you tell us why you've chosen this particular charity?

Bill surfed a bit over the years, and with dog walking daily on the beaches we were always hugely aware of the massive importance of the RNLI to Cullercoats and the coast, it's just sewn into the fabric of the area. We always wanted to be able to 'put something back' and making it part of our business plan seemed the best idea to us. We've nearly reached the £50,000 mark in our donation - we'd expected it to be in 2020, but we'll get there sooner or later! What we've really enjoyed is the contact we've had from relatives of people like Jack the Devil, and people who knew Polly Donkin - just brilliant.

Are there any exciting new projects on the horizon you'd like to share with us?

Our project for 2021 is to stay afloat! Joking apart, we want to continue to 'embed' ourselves in the local community and thrive as a local business, while supporting other local businesses and UK companies. We'll look at new beers once the pubs are back open, but until then we're focused on trying to get more local delivery orders, UK courier orders, and be able to brew enough beer to keep our yeast culture going.

If we had to stop brewing, if sales were not strong enough, we'd have to lose our yeast, and start again from the yeast bank - we don't want to do that, so we're doing all we can to keep going forward.

www.cullercoatsbrewery.co.uk

(where you can find out about the real Polly Donkin, Jack the Devil etc)

07837 637 615 (ANNA - ORDERS/ADMIN)

07895 692 881 (BILL - BREWERY)



A quart of ale is a dish for a king

William Shakespeare

Everybody needs to believe in something.

I believe I'll have another beer

WC Fields

Beer is proof that God loves us and wants us to be happy

Benjamin Franklin

Up Sticks!

HELEN SUMMERS

Engineering a new life *en France*

Lots of people dream of upping sticks and starting a new life abroad. What led you to make the move yourself?

We'd spoken about spending some time living abroad for a long time – an adventure! Ideally, we would have done this once the boys were fully independent and we'd paid off our mortgage. However, our health and the Brexit vote outcome affected our timing, the latter making us wonder what would be possible for “normal” people after the UK's departure from the EU.

My husband Nick had developed severe sleep apnoea which meant he wasn't permitted to drive for a while, until it improves. Unfortunately, after years of sleep issues and treatment, it's still not yet fully resolved.

In my case, my problems were related to the menopause – of my multiple symptoms, the worst were the frequent migraines, anxiety and depression, lack of sleep and (weirdly) high blood pressure. The gift that keeps on giving!



With such issues, and permanently exhausted, we were existing, not living. A complete lifestyle change was needed. An early move seemed a good choice – our sons were at university and our parents still well – if we settled within easy reach of an airport, our family life need not be hopelessly compromised, and at least we'd be around to enjoy it.

What was the biggest challenge?

There have been many, but we've approached them all with the view that they can be resolved. Some people spend years finding their house. We decided our budget and developed a spreadsheet with weighted scoring for the characteristics we wanted (sad engineering types that we are!). We looked at over 100 houses online and scored them, then arranged a week's holiday to view 16. The house we ended up with didn't give a particularly high score, but it felt like home.

Having found our French property sooner than expected, the next challenge was to sell our UK house. Even though we had a sale agreement that allowed us 6 months to complete, we ended up running down to the wire, completing with only 36 hours before we lost our deposit! Then on the day we moved in, one of our lorries slipped off the drive and we had to unload it at an angle, before throwing ourselves on the mercy of the *mairie* (mayor) to get the lorry rescued!

Up Sticks!

HELEN SUMMERS

Bureaucracy is an issue, especially as you have to be “on the system” to do anything on-line. Before then, you must turn up in person with copies and originals of all the relevant documentation. To get our *Cartes de Sejour* (residency permits), we had to prove we could support ourselves, including providing 12 months’ financial records.

It has helped us both to have French lessons and to make friends here – English and Dutch as well as French.

Did you feel it was important to integrate into the local community?

Oh yes – we didn’t want to live in “England with better weather”. We looked at one house in a town that had a 40% British population, and even had a cricket team! Even the waiter in the café asked to speak English with us when I ordered in French.

We’re on the edge of a village in quite a rural area, an hour North of Toulouse, so not too remote. It’s not especially pretty or historic but that means not many of the houses are holiday homes. It is an active community and we try to go to all the events organised, although like many villages in the area, it is noticeably quieter in the winter. Nick has displayed his wood-turning work at the local Agricultural Show and received an award at the dinner!

The village also has a butcher, charcuterie, general grocer, two bakers and a small Spar shop. It also has Doctors’ and Nurses’ offices and a pharmacy. There is a bar and a very passable restaurant. We also have a large local lake with a beach and café, which has lifeguards in the summer for swimming.



We’ve also enjoyed helping with the grape harvest at a local organic vineyard. This has resulted in friends and a source of very nice wine and beer!

Tell us what a typical day looks like for you...

Well, we’ve got several different tasks on the go! Like everyone, we have to spend time on maintenance of the garden which had been sorely neglected, the standard household, garden and pool chores.

Our current priority renovation task is the first stage of the *gite*, so at the moment we’re preparing to paint the main room, and one bedroom and bathroom before installing the new windows. We also might be preparing for B&B guests or to host language students – so the glamorous tasks of shopping, cooking and cleaning the guest rooms are required.

If I’m due to teach English, I’ll spend time preparing something stimulating and relevant for the student. I might be delivering the lessons at home or at a local language school (where we also learn French). Nick is a member of an artisan collective in a beautiful village called Lauzerte, so we may have to take our turn to staff the shop or Nick may “have to” disappear to his wood-turning workshop and make something to boost his stock.

Up Sticks!

HELEN SUMMERS

Looking back, is there anything you'd do differently?

I think perhaps I'd have begun French lessons earlier than we did, and not relied on my schoolgirl French. Even though I'd kept in touch with my penfriend from school, it had been too sporadic truly to maintain and improve my grasp of the language. I did cope, but this would have made dealing with the bureaucracy much easier!



*If you fancy a holiday in rural France,
you can contact Helen via email:
helensummers17@gmail.com
See the property on Google Maps:
44°12'02.8"N 1°22'03.4"E
(44.200784, 1.367620)
Girbaud, 82220, Molières, FRANCE*



**So, you think you're a Francophile?
Why not test your knowledge with these questions ...**

Answers at the bottom of page 15

1. What was unusual about King Louis XIX?
2. In February 2016, what retail 'first' put France at the forefront of the sustainability movement?
3. Louise Calment is a world record holder for what?
4. The croissant - a famous French snack, oui? Non! In which country did it actually originate?
5. A Parisian railway station is Europe's busiest. What's it called?

Write Up!

POEMS ON THE THEME OF NEW BEGINNINGS

Starting Afresh

Squelching footsteps plunge through an ice-cold beck,
wellies wade within the mulch-slime of plants,
disturbing winter's rank, reeking mud-banks,
bursting waters flow as a dam is wrecked.
High on stilts, last year's aged fern fronds wilt
while new growth appears from late autumn's seeds,
but still the frost on frozen ground succeeds
until this woodland garden is rebuilt.
A crocus carpet bursts forth, bright yellow
on anemone and aging snowdrop.
Froggy egg-sacks wait for some warmth to plop
into the ripples in Spring, more mellow.
Joyous rustlings, out from hibernation,
new season, new life, nature's re-creation.

Adele Duffield

February morning

Shadows reach long across the lawn
but in the sun the frost softens to dew.

The snowdrops in the lee of the yew
hang their heads, as the first yellow crocus

offers its inner space of saffron threads
to the buzz of an early bumble bee.

Sarah J Bryson

Almost New Year

The morning moon,
veiled by a tissue of cloud
and the delicate lacework of
an oak's spreading fingers,
creates a muted beacon.
A robin, early on his rounds,
intones a short message.
Translate it into any language;
its rising note a sign of
things to come.

Gerda Pickin

Storm Song

Rain strikes the window pane gusted by gales.
Is this the end of the world come late?
Sky turns to grey. Now again, we have winter,
where lately there were glimpses of summer.
Clouds seem unceasing, storm never ending,
rain unyielding, downpour descending.
Icy winds chill to the marrow of bones,
the warm yellow sunshine of yesterday gone.
Quick as a flash the storm is played out;
sun raises her head; shines beyond doubt.
Blue fragment in the distance, almost upon us,
barely enough for a pair of sailor's trousers.
Thunder and lightning renews everything.
We too are ready, once again, to begin.

Jenny Smith

Up Anchor!

THE WILLIAMS II TALL SHIP

Ahoy, me hearties! 200 years ago, Antarctica was discovered by a ship, *The Williams*, from Blyth, Northumberland. To celebrate this, in 2019, The Williams Expedition project bought and refitted a similar vessel to the original - The Williams II.

Cap'n Des O'Meara takes us on board this life changing 'Gangway To The Sea', bringing hope and aspiration through skills training and individual engagement,...

Up! is willing to bet that not many readers are aware that Antarctica was discovered 200 years ago by a Geordie! Fill us in on some details if you would....

Antarctica was discovered by a Blyth sea captain called William Smith around 1820. He was one of three brothers trading in Blyth who built Collier brigs around the coasts of South America.

In bad weather William came across a land fall, which was unexpected - he had travelled further South than any other sailor. He returned to Punta Arenas on the tip of Chile, North of Cape Horn, where there was a British Royal Navy base. He reported to the senior officer that he had discovered land. The Navy didn't believe him but eventually sent him back with a midshipman on board to verify the discovery and claim it for King George. The Navy called it South Shetland Island - I don't know why South Shetland! Their hope was to establish a naval base there, but it was too inhospitable. From that point on, many explorers sailed to chart the full extent of the Antarctic.



We see you've already completed a 'Round Britain' voyage. How did it go, any exciting war stories you could share?

I sailed from Weymouth to Milford Haven in South Wales. Sadly, we were delayed leaving Weymouth by four days due to a gearbox problem; very sadly we were moored right outside the Yacht club, which insisted on entertaining us with beverages!!

We had to be in Milford Haven for 14th April to exchange crews. This meant a non-stop sail. The voyage was as could be expected on the south coast in April: Atlantic frontal systems brewing up foul weather one day and sunshine the next. It always seemed to be on my night watches, 12 midnight (00.00hrs) to 0400hrs or 0400hrs to 0800hrs that the weather blew its hardest, force 6/7 South-Westerlies. Its blummin' freezing up in the pointy end of the ship, exposed not only to the weather but big green waves crashing over the bow - and guess where my watch station was! At least the strong winds pushed us along at around 7/8 knots.

Anyhow, we made Milford Haven in the dark on the 13th. It's a very busy port, full of massive gas container ships and petrochemical vessels - not the prettiest place I have sailed to. On entering the fairway, we were constantly told by the Harbour Master's Office to steer to port or to starboard in order to keep out of the way of these huge vessels. When we eventually arrived

Up Anchor!

THE WILLIAMS II TALL SHIP

at the massive lock gates that allowed vessels into the inner harbour, we had to stooge around in a narrow piece of water to allow a large vessel out of the lock. It was a bit hairy, especially as the wind was getting up. The Williams has really high masts which act like sails in wind - which kept trying to run us aground.

Inside the lock, we had to hang onto some chains while the lock filled up so we could enter the inner harbour at the same level of water. Hanging onto the chains was interesting! We were too heavy to hold on with boat hooks - the Williams weighs about 100 tons. The chains are fixed to massive wooden balks, supposedly attached to the lock wall. We secured the ship with rope around the chains; as the lock filled up, the intruding water pushed us away from the wall and the balks of timber came away from the wall, which gave us all a fright. We had visions of piling up against the opposite wall sideways on in the lock and rapidly rising about 10/15 metres. The balks were hinged at the top of the wall and they were meant to swing out to allow for the surging intrush of water.

We finally tied up in the inner harbour - and broke out a bottle or two!

How important is it that you're able to offer places to inexperienced people on your voyages who otherwise might miss out?

The experience of sailing, whether in small yachts or large Tall Ships, gives folk the feeling of being free; free from the land and once free, theoretically you can go anywhere in the world.



Sailing a vessel like the Williams is like stepping back in time, to the days of long sea voyages - and pirates! She's a strongly built, ketch-rigged Baltic trader, around 100ft from stem to stern; as the name implies, a trading vessel not dissimilar to the collier brig William Smith sailed. They are powerful, sea kindly boats, found all over the world much like collier brigs years ago. James Cook's ship Endeavour was a collier brig. You'll be pulling on ropes, relying on the wind, working in teams (watches). Experiencing the sights, sounds and smells of these ships gives anyone sailing on them a direct connection to the past - maybe to their own heritage.

I feel it's very important that the Blyth Tall Ship offers the opportunity to anyone who has the inclination to experience all this. Sailing for over 60 years, including as a mate in the Ocean Youth Club, I've had the privilege of sailing with very many young people from all walks of life. The most impressive observation I can make is how within a week of being at sea on a vessel that you have to work in order for it to get anywhere, self-confidence is raised, the camaraderie grows, and I guess most of all the individual's pride in learning new skills - taking charge of sailing the boat, cooking for the crew and growing into a new person.

Up Anchor!

THE WILLIAMS II TALL SHIP

On the Williams this scenario is no different, it applies to adults equally. They too will grow in stature and confidence. It is wholeheartedly the ethos of the Blyth Tall Ship project to offer these experiences to people who have never sailed before in their lives.

This is such an exciting, bold undertaking. It can't have been all plain sailing?

A definite low was when our planned expedition to the Antarctic had to be cancelled for a great many reasons, Brexit being one of the major funding issues.

This caused much disappointment, as she was all ready to go. Undaunted we decided to go to the Arctic Circle last year - where William Smith coincidentally cut his seaman's jib. Again, everything had been planned down to the last detail....then Covid came along and scuppered all our hopes!



BUT....2021 will see new plans for the vessel, from private charters, day and weekly sailing around home waters and possibly taking part in one of the Tall Ships races.

The Williams is a magnificent ship and we would welcome anyone to have a look round her.

If any readers would like to find out more about this brilliant project, there's a wealth of information available here:

<https://www.blyhtallship.co.uk/>



Answers to quiz on page 11 ...

- 1. He was the shortest reigning monarch in history, abdicating within 20 minutes in favour of his nephew, the Duke of Bordeaux.*
- 2. It became illegal for supermarkets to throw away or destroy unsold food.*
- 3. She was the oldest person who ever lived, born 21 February 1875, died 4 August 1997 - making her 122 when she died!*
- 4. Austria, dating back to the 13th century.*
- 5. Gare Du Nord, hosting 214 million passengers every year.*

Up Stream!

HARRY POTTER AND THE WEIRS OF CAPABILITY

Up!'s outdoors man, Steve Lowe, on location at Alnwick Castle

Lancelot “Capability” Brown crafted some of the most beautiful landscapes across the UK. Born in Kirkharle, Northumberland in 1716, he quickly gained popularity as a landscaper of gardens, parkland, woods and farms. He is widely credited with (re)shaping England’s landscape.

Gaining the nickname ‘Capability’ due to an eye for seeing the potential within a given landscape and what it was “capable of becoming”, his landscapes are characterised by comfort and elegance, remaining both practical yet visually stunning.

Many were designed to confuse the eye, creating illusions of distinct areas or divided lakes that are actually a single body. Not a magician then – more an illusionist!

Between 1750 to 1786, he was commissioned by the 1st Duke of Northumberland to redesign the grounds of Alnwick Castle. And as any student of Hogwarts will know, the castle and its landscape feature centrally in the films with the eponymous hero of the J K Rowling novels.

Joining forces with engineer James Brindley, he totally redesigned the River Aln, creating raised causeways as viewing platforms across the valley, making it a key feature of the landscape.

Work was undertaken to clear it of boulders and clear and level the riverbanks. Cascades were created to slow the river’s flow, through a series of



Photograph by Steve Lowe

weirs, making the watercourse into a “perfect compromise between river and lake”.

Whilst undeniably bold, this work was not without environmental consequences.

Large man-made structures in rivers act as a significant barrier to the movement of fish, particularly migratory fish such as salmon, eels and lampreys. A growing understanding of the huge effects of barriers on migratory fish has led to their removal (or easement) as a preferred management option. Unlike many other fisheries management activities, it has unambiguous benefits.

On this short stretch of the Aln, five weirs act to limit upstream migration to spawning areas in the upland tributary streams. Surrounded by moorland and bog, these were known as the Debateable Lands, due to the frequent incursions from both sides of the border (both lawful and unlawful).

Indeed, another famous Harry immortalised in literature (by Shakespeare no less), was Sir Henry (Harry) Percy, nicknamed Hotspur. An English knight who fought the Scots in several campaigns, his nickname was a tribute to his speed in advance and readiness to attack.

Up Stream!

HARRY POTTER AND THE WEIRS OF CAPABILITY

In 2019, Alnwick Castle, Hulne Park and its historic Priory provided a stunning backdrop for work to amend the weirs, opening upstream sections to migratory fish. With such a wealth of heritage to preserve, the project needed careful planning and implementation via Northumberland Rivers Trust (NRT), a small local charity with a mission to improve all of Northumberland's beautiful rivers.

Securing funding from the Water Environment Grant, NRT worked in partnership with Northumberland Estates, to install modern fish passes on the five barriers. This was not at all straightforward!

For one thing, no one wanted to impact upon Capability Brown's magical legacy, so a careful archaeological record was undertaken, which found long lost elements of his influence. This included a "message in a bottle" cemented into a lost underground culvert, where a previous mill may have stood.

Local legend has it that, two centuries ago, the innkeeper of the nearby Ye Old Cross Inn dropped dead while interfering with the bottles in the window. His widow declared that anyone who did likewise would suffer the same fate. As a result, the "Dirty Bottles" were sealed between two windows and have since lain untouched; the pub was referred to as 'Thi Dorty Bottles' ever since. Needless to say, we did not touch this particular bottle, which is still exactly where it was put!



Decades old records of native, white-clawed crayfish meant every stage included a check for this protected species and as each bit of the structure was de-watered, it quickly became apparent they were still present in good numbers. All rescued crayfish were relocated to a nearby suitable site, accompanied by numerous eels and a few brown trout.

Stopping the flow of water proved to be harder than expected. Heaven only knows how Brown's workmen managed this Canute-like task without the machinery and pumps brought to bear by local contractors W L Straughan and Sons.

Add to this a series of sudden and seemingly boundless flood events from tempestuous storms and then the acute impact of Covid-19 on everyone's life. There were times when the work seemed cursed – perhaps somebody did open that bottle after all?!

However, work is now almost complete on the full set of structures. This will unlock many miles of river to the annual run of fish. Added to this, volunteers have been planting locally native trees on riversides, and farms have been engaged to modify potentially damaging activities.

Up Stream!

HARRY POTTER AND THE WEIRS OF CAPABILITY

Work on the project has been captured by local community radio station, Lionheart, and as a great podcast:

<https://podcasts.apple.com/gb/podcast/the-nature-garden-gardening-wildlife-nature-notes/id1510045263>

It was also fabulous to hear from an expat in the USA who had heard about the work via social media, making contact to gather information to preserve a little bit of US history, their first hydro-powered dam!

Efforts to enhance the AIn on catchment scale will continue once the project ends in March. Magic!



NRT always welcomes support for its work:
<https://www.facebook.com/northriverstrust/>

Water Environment Grant (WEG) scheme is a competitive scheme providing funding for improvements to the water environment in rural England as part of the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) - administered by Natural England & Environment Agency. Match funding was provided by Northumberland Estates.



Steve is at his happiest outdoors, especially in his adopted county of Northumberland. An experienced wildlife professional, he has fingers in “pies of many different flavours”! He is currently working as a freelancer 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.



If it weren't for the rocks in its bed, the stream would have no song
Carl Perkins

Rivers know this: there is no hurry. We shall get there some day
A. A. Milne

Write Up!

POEMS ON THE THEME OF NEW BEGINNINGS

Hungry

She is poised overhead
in a clearing sky.
The world below
holds promise
after famine's wait.

Gerda Pickin

The Gannet

I stood on the beach and watched the gannet
Climb into the cornflower sky, circling high then
Perform a guillotine drop that cleaved the water
Perfectly
He lifted again to repeat the faultless dive once more
Twice more, over and over.
I stood, rooted and landlocked, watching him
Rise and fall
Rise and fall
Not for food, but because
He could.

Gerda Pickin

Sanctuary

My home is from the outside quite like any other
It's the little things
My grandfather lives on the windowsill
An image frozen in time
I tell him about my day sometimes
In the other room I hear my mum bustling about.
In my room a library of books waiting to be unlocked and explored
It's good to be home.

Ross Punton

Meet Up!

RACHEL CRACKETT

Up! meets a real national institution



Rachel, you're currently President of the Tynemouth branch of the WI. Can you tell us a little bit about how you first got involved with the organisation?

I saw a poster in my local pub. I had seen it for weeks and weeks and it was as if it was telling me

something, so I eventually went along to a meeting. I was nervous at first, not really knowing what to expect. To be honest it took a few meetings for me to feel comfortable as people were in groups, but the subject matter was interesting so I stuck with it.

To get to know more people I volunteered to be part of the summer fair organisation team, which was hard work but a success. Our WI was quite "young" at the time both in members and how long it had been running, the current president had just left and they were in a period of transition. They were asking for suggestions of how to move forward, so usual me (can't keep quiet!) made a few suggestions and then I was co-opted onto committee! After 4 years on committee I was proposed to be president and got voted. I've been in post now for two years.

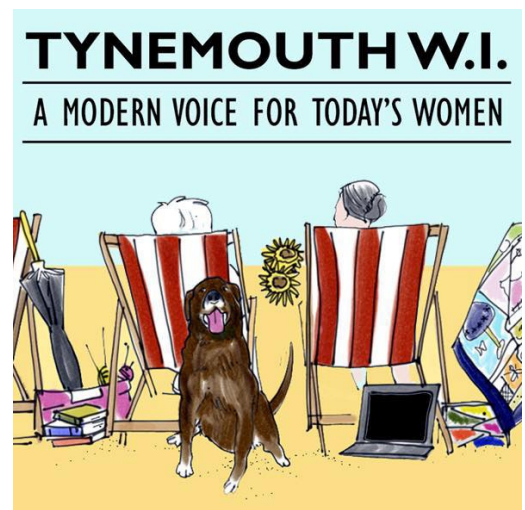
If Up! came along to a typical meeting, what could we expect?

The short answer is a warm welcome! We pride ourselves on assigning people to be the welcoming party, so nobody is ever alone at a meeting. At the

moment things are obviously a little different as our meetings are conducted on Zoom, but we still make sure that everyone is included. We normally meet on the first Monday of the month. As a visitor there is a charge of £3 which includes refreshments and a ticket for the raffle.

We have a speaker at every meeting and the subjects include a mixture of local history, nature, wildlife, well being, health, crafts, cooking or an activity. We try to have a varied programme to appeal to our wide age group. The speaker usually talks for 45 minutes, followed by WI business, both nationally and locally. There are lots of activities and classes available to our members. We have subgroups, so there is always lots of "news" to share!

As a visitor, you can come to three meetings - so there's plenty of time to decide before committing to membership. You have to be a member to take part in many of the activities and join the subgroups. The format on Zoom is very similar to normal meetings, although at the moment there's no charge for visitors! One positive from the current situation is we can have speakers from all over the country so it has really opened up who we can have. It is more difficult to do crafts or activities but we are still managing to provide a great and varied programme.



Meet Up!

RACHEL CRACKETT

No doubt some folk still picture 'Jam and Jerusalem' when they think of the WI. What would you say to them?

I would say come to a meeting and see for yourself! The WI has moved on with the times. We are quite lucky in that we have a wide range of ages as do many WI's. As already mentioned, we have a wide range of speakers at the meetings some of which I think would be a surprise to people. Examples include: burlesque dancing, learning to play ukulele, singing, film, jewellery making as well as more traditional subjects like gardening, history, cooking and crafts. We also have a social subgroup so we get together outside the meetings for meals, drinks, coffee mornings and trips to interesting places. There's a craft group, a book group and a walking group too.

It's been a very challenging year for many of us. Do you think this experience reinforces the need for organisations such as the WI?

Absolutely! Many of our members have said that us carrying on and meeting on Zoom has been a lifeline for them. We have also connected individually with them all. Many live alone and have been shielding, so this communication has been invaluable to them. In normal times we pride ourselves on our community spirit and being a support network for our members. This has obviously been more challenging to achieve this year and has taken extra effort but the feedback from the group has been very positive.



We know that nationally the WI is involved in all sorts of projects, campaigning for such things as equal pay and climate change. Is there anything coming up on the horizon, either nationally or locally, you'd like to tell us about?

The WI always has an annual resolution which is suggested and voted for by the members; "Keep Britain Tidy" was a WI resolution. We have yet to choose this year's - subjects include stopping women dying prematurely of coronary heart disease, protecting nature spaces to create wildlife-friendly communities, a call to increase subtle signs of ovarian cancer and stop the destruction of the peat bogs to tackle climate change.

The WI itself is a charity so legally can't give money directly to other charities. However we are able to support the local community in many other ways. One of the most enjoyable is running the cake stall for The RNLI at their fundraising day. Our craft group members, along with many others, knitted poppies which have been displayed in our area. We have also donated twiddle muffs to the local Dementia ward. Other campaigns include preventing loneliness and clearing rubbish from the beach! The WI is very diverse, so while we can't please all of the people all of the time, we try our best!!



Find your local branch of the Women's Institute:

www.thewi.org.uk

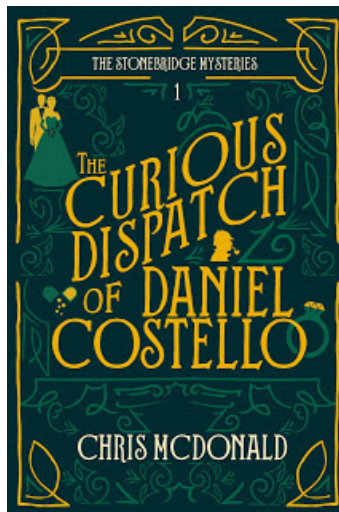
Read Up!

NEW BOOKS FOR THE NEW YEAR

Up!'s Vic Watson with her pick of the best new books and work from debut authors

RUSS THOMAS: A body is found bricked into the walls of a house. From the state of the hands, it's clear the victim was buried alive. Soon, they're linked to an old missing person's case and DS Adam Tyler is called. As the sole representative of South Yorkshire's Cold Case Review Unit, Tyler recognises his role for what it is – a means of keeping him out of the way following an 'incident'. When this case falls in his lap, he grabs the opportunity to resuscitate his stagnating career. Then Tyler discovers he has a connection to the case that compromises him. He makes the snap decision not to tell his superiors, certain that he alone can solve the crime. Meanwhile, someone in the city knows exactly what happened to the body. Someone who is watching Adam closely. Someone with an unhealthy affinity with fire. . .

Firewatching, the first in the DS Adam Tyler series, gives us a fresh new take on the police procedural. Thomas's writing is taut and compulsive, hitting the right balance of plot and visceral descriptions. The plot is strengthened by the cast of characters, in particular Lily who can't remember the secret she's keeping on account of the dementia that's ravaging her mind. Thomas doesn't shy away from uncomfortable subjects including racism and homophobia but he writes these issues with a light touch that feels completely natural. I've already had a sneak peek at the sequel, *Nighthawking*, which is out later this year and I can confirm that Thomas's writing is going from strength to strength.



CHRIS McDONALD: Published by Red Dog Press, Chris McDonald burst onto the scene with *A Wash of Black*, the first in the DI Erika Piper books, in February 2020. A prolific writer, McDonald has since had the sequel

Whispers in the Dark published and is due to publish the first in a cosy crime series - *The Curious Dispatch of Daniel Costello* - later this month.

In his debut, the body of a famous actress is found mutilated on an ice rink in Manchester, recreating a scene from a blockbuster film she starred in years ago. DI Erika Piper, having only recently returned to work after suffering a near-fatal attack herself, finds she must once again prove her worth as the hunt for the media-dubbed 'Blood Ice Killer' intensifies. But when another body is found and, this time, the killer issues a personal threat, Erika must put aside her demons to crack the case, or suffer the deadly consequences. With fantastic B-movie references and an intriguing protagonist, *A Wash of Black* sets up the series nicely but *Whispers in the Dark* knocked me for six.

Small time drug dealer, Marcus Stone and DCI Clive Burston had never met until one night in August. By the end of that night, both are dead in a small bedroom in the heart of gang territory. DI Erika Piper is called to the scene but is at a loss to explain what's happened. How did these two even meet, let alone end up dead in what appears to be a strange murder-suicide? As Erika leads the investigation, another two bodies are found, killed in a

Read Up!

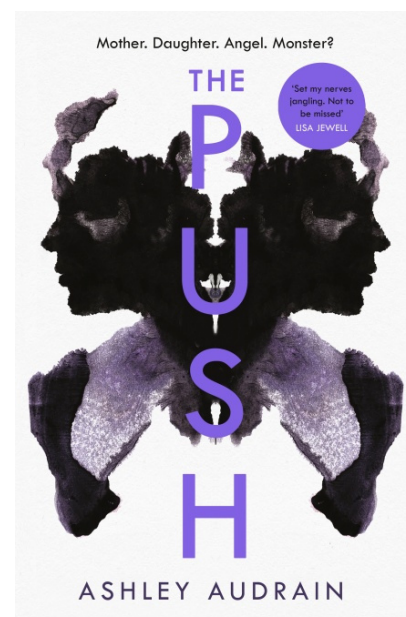
NEW BOOKS FOR THE NEW YEAR

similar fashion. One murder, one suicide. But who is controlling this macabre puppet show? As Erika delves deeper into the lives of the dead, the pieces begin to fit together and a number of nefarious characters crawl out of the woodwork – one of whom is almost certainly pulling the strings. A catastrophic event and a personal miracle threaten to derail the investigation. Erika must find the strength to continue, before the whispers catch up with her too...

D.L. MARSHALL: In 1942, in growing desperation at the progress of the war and fearing invasion by the Nazis, the UK government approved biological weapons tests on British soil. Their aim: to perfect an anthrax weapon destined for Germany. They succeeded. Though the attack was never launched, the testing ground, Gruinard Island, was left lethally contaminated. It became known as Anthrax Island. Now government scientists have returned to the island. They become stranded by an equipment failure and so John Tyler is flown in to fix the problem. He quickly discovers there's more than research going on. When one of the scientists is found impossibly murdered inside a sealed room, Tyler realises he's trapped with a killer...

Perfect for fans of Terry Hayes, Alistair MacLean and James Swallow, D.L. Marshall writes atmosphere like no-one else while keeping an incredible pace and managing to deliver some great one-liners. I love the unique setting and the fact that this stunning piece of fiction is grounded in fact. If Lee Child and Agatha Christie were to co-write a book, *Anthrax Island* would be it.

ASHLEY AUDRAIN: *The Push* is Audrain's debut novel and I've got to say it's absolutely stunning. When her baby, Violet, is born Blythe knows she should be delighted but she's haunted by the spectres of her mother and grandmother - the women in her family, she says, aren't meant to be mothers. Blythe feels that something is very wrong with Violet but her husband Fox says she's imagining it, that she's nothing like her mother and that their daughter is perfect. As the mum of a young child, I initially thought I could identify with some of the concerns that Blythe had - am I being the right kind of mother? Should my baby be doing that? Am I doing a good job? Is this normal? What Ashley Audrain does is weave familiar feelings about motherhood around a stunning narrative - what happens when a woman becomes a mother to a child that isn't what she expected? This novel, perfect for fans of *We Need to Talk About Kevin*, explores subjects that are still taboo and, although some issues may have been taken to the extreme, I found myself nodding in recognition. With beautiful prose and a complex protagonist, *The Push* left ice in my veins long after I'd turned the final page.



Read Up!

NEW BOOKS FOR THE NEW YEAR

NELL PATTISON: Nell's debut novel *The Silent House* was published on 1st March last year. The novel focuses on Paige Northwood, an interpreter for the deaf, who is asked to assist the police with their investigation into the murder of a young girl. The victim's family - the Hunters - are deaf and therefore don't hear a thing when someone breaks into their house and murders their daughter in the middle of the night. They may be in shock but Paige senses that the Hunters are hiding something. One by one, people from Paige's community start to fall under suspicion and Paige finds herself caught in the middle.

The Silent House is a great read thanks to its intriguing mystery: who would murder an innocent young girl as she slept in her bed? In addition to that, though, is the community in which the book is set. Having a BSL interpreter as the protagonist is an original idea and ensures that the reader is privy to information that Paige may or may not choose to share with the investigators. I really like the fact that *The Silent House* gives insight into a community that many readers may not be familiar with, incorporating the difficulties faced by members of the deaf community into a cracking narrative. Pattison shows real skill, weaving the story around the characters and their needs.

The follow-up, *Silent Night*, was published just before Christmas and the next in the series, *The Silent Suspect*, is due for release at the end of April.



Victoria Watson is a writer, reader and host of Noir at the Bar in Newcastle, connecting readers and writers from all over the world. She runs creative writing groups through her business, Elementary V Watson. She is also a copy editor and proofreader.
www.elementaryvwatson.com



If you don't like to read, you haven't found the right book

J K Rowling

Outside of a dog, a book is a man's best friend.

Inside of a dog, it's too dark to read

Groucho Marx

Close Up!

PHOTOS ON A THEME -
NEW BEGINNINGS



Photograph by Barry Fitzpatrick



Photograph by Reuben Lively (age 4)

The photo theme for next month
is 'Love' (in any of its many guises)



Photograph by Barry Fitzpatrick

Draw Up!

COMPETITION TIME

Artist Roz Gadd is all set to produce another of her wonderful portraits for the lucky winner of this month's competition. To be in with a chance, all you need to do is unscramble the anagrams below to reveal the names of 3 famous ships:



MY WOLF ERA
CHIVY STORM
MICKS BAR

Send your answers to us at: TalkToUp@gmail.com before 1st February when we will draw the lucky winner.



Many congratulations to the winner of last month's competition, Barry Fitzpatrick, who won himself a portrait by correctly unscrambling these Christmas carol anagrams:

HEEL BEFELL TOO WITT MONTH - O Little Town of Bethlehem
BE A DEER MILK THIN TWIN - In the Bleak Midwinter
A LOCKED SING SONG, WE - Good King Wenceslas



We thought you might like to see the fabulous portrait that Roz sketched for November's winner, Cathy Frank.

Cathy asked Roz to produce a portrait of her granddaughter, and was delighted with the result - we can see why!

From being a small child, the transformational ability of art has been magical to Roz. Her first loves were animals, tea, martial arts & drawing. Being an artist allows her to combine these passions. She says "A great portrait can show glimpses of your personality, your soul, as well as your outside.

Every living thing is magical, beautiful & unique."

Roz Gadd lives happily in Durham, surrounded by poets and fur babies!

www.rozgadd.co.uk FB: @RozGaddArtInstagram : rozgaddTwitter: @GaddRozEmail: info@rozgadd.co.uk

Coming Up!

NEXT MONTH

And there it is, another issue done and dusted. Thanks as always to our brilliant contributors who make the magazine what it is, and to our growing band of readers. Together we can make a difference.

Just remember, during these challenging times when so many of us feel isolated from our loved ones due to the ongoing pandemic, that nothing lasts forever. The rollout of vaccinations has already begun due to the heroic efforts of our beloved NHS staff. We will get through this together.

Much love
Bridget and Harry xx



As our next issue falls close to Valentine's Day, we'd welcome your poems and photographs on the theme of 'Love' (in any of its many guises). We'll publish as many of our favourites as we can.

Please send your contributions to: TalkToUp@gmail.com