

A photograph of two seals on a beach. One seal is in the foreground, looking towards the camera, while another is behind it, looking to the left. A wire cage is visible in the background on the left side.

Up!

Accentuating the Positive

ISSUE 2 NOVEMBER 2020

Come inside and meet

The Poetry Pharmacy

The Seal Hospital

Phoenix Folk

and much, much more ...

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

Photo by Mark Husmann

Contents

Up Front! The Team	1
Welcome back!	
Up Sticks! Deborah Alma	2
The Poetry Pharmacy	
Making Up! Ellie Tarratt	4
Pretender To The Throne	
Write Up! Poetry Corner	6 & 11
Your poems on the theme of Learning	
Bobbing Up! Mark Husmann	7
Tynemouth Seal Hospital	
Cleaning Up! Steve Lowe	9
Closed Book on Open Cast	
Tune Up! Phoenix Folk	12
Playing together and staying together	
Hooking Up! Jo Bates	15
Passing It On - one skill at a time	
Close Up! Photography Corner	17
Your photos on a theme	
Read Up! Virtual Noir at the Bar	18
Prize winning? No mystery!	
Trading Up! Barter Books	20
Next stop, Alnwick	
Draw Up! Competition Time	21
Win your own portrait	
Coming Up! Next Issue	22
Send us your poems and photos	





Photograph by Bridget Gallagher

Up Front!

Welcome to the second issue of Up!

First things first, a big thanks to all you lovely readers out there who perused our inaugural issue and were thoughtful enough to send us so much great feedback, as well as sending in your poems and photographs.

We welcome your comments, indeed, this month's cover feature is a direct result of a reader's request to learn more about the brilliant work of the Seal Hospital here on the North Tyneside coast.

We think and hope that this second issue has something for everyone. As promised in Issue 1, we've begun to cast our net further afield (see the articles on The Poetry Pharmacy and Pretender To The Throne). We also have some great features on wildlife, reading, music, sustainability and more - including a brand new competition, open to everyone.

And as always, our focus is on the positive - something which we believe is sorely needed in these uncertain times. Happy reading!

Bridget & Harry

Bridget Gallagher is currently studying for an MA in Creative Writing with the Open University. She has been running her well-loved craft skills business HoneyBridge House for several years and enjoys playing concertina and singing.

Harry Gallagher is an experienced writer and dramatist with several poetry books to his name. He leads the north east stanza of the Poetry Society.

Up Sticks!

THE POETRY PHARMACY

Up! talks to the Emergency Poet Deborah Alma, as featured on the BBC, about her life as founder and owner of the world-renowned Poetry Pharmacy ...

Tell us a bit about the Poetry Pharmacy. When did you first have the idea of offering poetry for Wellness?

The idea came out of a habit of giving friends poems to make them feel better, and then from years of working with people with dementia in care homes using poetry, and working with other vulnerable groups; women who were victims of domestic abuse, people with sight-loss and primary school children.

I saw how poetry could change a mood, offer hope or consolation, or transport someone to another place, or show a way out of the dark stuff, because someone had been there before and come through it.

You started out working from an old ambulance. At what point did you decide to expand into a fully equipped pharmacy?

It was a combination of being exhausted by all of the driving and setting up my 'stall' in all sorts of weather, crossing moors in fog, or swinging round roundabouts in Birmingham with no power steering - and then I peered through the dusty windows of our present premises here in Bishop's Castle!

I had been driving about for around 8 years and was ready for the next creative adventure too!



Talk us through what happens in a typical consultation...

When 'patients' first come in, I give them good attention and ask a series of gentle questions. It's all about that individual; what books they loved as a child, where they would go to be peaceful, how they relax; about that still, quiet space in themselves.

And then they are open and receptive to the last question: is there an emotional condition that you're aware of that requires poetic attention? I have over 300 poems ready printed and after listening carefully I pull one out of my doctor's bag, although these days I have an elderly oak filing cabinet.

I write their name at the top, tell them how and when they should take it: with a glass of wine, with a cup of tea in a garden, on a park bench listening to birdsong, and point out a few lines from the poem I have chosen and why I think it might be relevant to them. I don't read it all out to them, but ask them to find time to read it carefully when they are alone and comfortable.

Up Sticks!

THE POETRY PHARMACY

From the start I was overwhelmed by people's responses, not just to the idea itself and to the theatre, but to the 'therapy' session. There is a magical combination of things when someone comes in: they put their feet up, sounds outside are hushed; it is a non-threatening intimate space (I like that too as a metaphor for the poem itself).

We've been fortunate enough to see first-hand what a fabulous place you've created. Renovating such a beautiful Victorian shop must have had its challenges...?

It is so lovely that you were able to visit! There were huge challenges. Not the least of which was that we had no savings and all of our money was sunk into the too expensive mortgage! The poetry, and wider community were extraordinarily supportive and generous; good friends helped with cleaning, painting and sorting.

A kickstarter campaign paid for the rewiring, heating and plumbing, plaster repairs, a loo and a tiny kitchen for the cafe. Add £12,000 from the Arts Council and we had tables and chairs, a photocopier, free consultations for visitors for months and subsidised workshops, and more. Our local community has been so supportive too; they had hated seeing the shop-front dark and boarded up for the last 13 years.

It's still very much a work in progress with any money made from shop sales going back into building up stock or adding a sink to the workshop space etc



Lastly, what's it like living 'above the shop'?

The commute is good! But as you'd expect, setting up a new venture has meant that I'm working 7 days a week. I do love it though. We were generously donated the extensive poetry library of the poet David Scott by his wife Miggy. And I'm sitting here, surrounded by one of the best poetry libraries I've ever seen and looking out at the High Street from one window and the Shropshire Hills from the other. I couldn't feel more fortunate.



So there we are - what are you waiting for? If you're ever in Shropshire, do visit the Poetry Pharmacy in Bishop's Castle for a touch of Deborah's magic.

They serve great coffee too!

Or visit <https://uk.bookshop.org/shop/poetrypharmacy> and treat yourself to a literary cure.

Making Up!

PRETENDER TO THE THRONE

Up! stays in the medieval town of Bishop's Castle to meet artistic force, Ellie Tarratt

I think it's fair to say that Pretender to the Throne makes unique and lovely things. Tell us a little about them.

What started as a childhood obsession with all things medieval has now become a range of historically inspired handmade ceramics, prints and textiles.

It was initially medieval tiles and manuscript illuminations that inspired me, but now the references run from Viking to Victorian times. I have three particular techniques that appear - linocut for printing and embossing into clay, sgraffito which is carving a design into white slip covered terracotta clay, and hand painting porcelain in Delft inspired blue and white. Everything is made by hand so it tends to change - hopefully to keep things fresh (but also to stop me going totally mad).

With Christmas looming, in the last few weeks I have been painting porcelain plague doctors, Elizabeth I, the Green Knight and Krampus tree decorations.



How did you come up with the name, Pretender To The Throne?

The whole concept of it came about when I was very homesick living in Australia and I filled sketchbooks with ideas. I had made the linocut of the logo long before I had any stock! Pretender to the Throne as a name came about as I generally make historically inspired items rather than museum replica ones, so, traditional techniques and imagery but not actual copies. And great disappointment from people who ask when I tell them I'm not descended from Bonnie Prince Charlie!

Up! suspects this will be impossible to answer, but if you had a 'typical' working day, what would it entail?

Tea and Panic - certainly at this time of year with the Christmas orders! So a general day is split between being downstairs in the basement where all the cutting out and trimming and firing of clay happens, and upstairs in a corner of the kitchen where I do the painting and glazing.

You end up often being dictated to by the drying times of the clay. Carving the sgraffito in particular is best done when the plaques are leather hard - so it can be quite antisocial. If the sun shines it's drop everything and take finished things out to photograph! Weekends are often packing the car and going off to a market.

Making Up!

PRETENDER TO THE THRONE

As well as having products ready to buy, you also deliver commissions. Tell us about some of the more unusual requests you've had...

I love the challenge when someone asks me "Can you make a ...?" One of the most unusual commissions was a family portrait as a series of shrunken heads - not sure if all the family were quite as impressed with the results. But I had great fun with toupees and false eyelashes.

And two giant sheep with babies' heads for an Australian rock band for their touring show caused a bit of havoc with the neighbours when I built them in the backyard!

This year's strange one was a full-size dressed body for a Georgian grave robbing demonstration - the new owner couldn't get a parking space nearby so we carried it through town all shrouded up and bundled her into the boot of his car - no one batted an eyelid!



Running a business like yours must be the dream of so many people. Was it what you always wanted to do when you were younger?

Sorry, not a very exciting answer to this one I'm afraid - I've always wanted to be an artist or in a job where I made things for as long as I can remember (I also wanted to live above a shop if I couldn't have a castle, and here I am living and working out of an old tailor's shop with a real-life castle at the end of the road).

However it's only really been the last four or five years when Pretender has actually become a real full-time entity rather than a pile of sketches and notes, but it was those dreams that kept me going through some fairly tough jobs. It's been a massive learning curve getting Pretender up and running and still is ... but then not quite knowing what you are going to be asked to make next is all part of the fun.



To see more of Ellie's work check out:

<https://www.etsy.com/your/shops/PretendertotheThrone/tools/listings?ref=seller-platform-mcnav>

Write Up!

POEMS ON THE THEME OF LEARNING

Learning at the PRU*

Learning to come to school again
After being thrown out of the one with your friends
After being told you're a failure, again and again
Learning not all teachers are there for the scores
The SATs, the boxes the ticks, the laws
That some want to care, to make you shine
No matter you don't sit or stay in line
The ones that look at the Why you are
The one on detention, not getting the stars
You still have a chance to make it through
If someone, anyone, can see the you
That will be the person you're meant to be
Come to us now and let us see.
Let's tease out the tangles of trust betrayed
Unroll a carpet, a road that's made
Of things not school, but life to come
And into the future we'll help you run.

Lara Barnes

* Pupil Referral Unit

...and nothing but...

The first time
I could have kissed,
but didn't, was
in part your fault.

You knew how to dance,
I didn't, though the tune
did seem like music, more
than a Dad band should.

The shift Mum made
swirled its soft satin
flames of orange-gold,
skimming my hips

tighter with every move
a smooth, fine denier leg
could make, sparking me
as I leaned in for the turn.

I don't remember anything
you said as we walked home.
I continued awkward - but
night air and stars were there.

Outside my back door, we
stood still. You asked me
do you usually get kissed?
I said no. So we didn't.

What I didn't say was: this
was my first dance, the first
time anyone had walked
all the way home, or asked.

I didn't have a chance.
I didn't have the sense
to tell the whole truth - or
one small, rewarding, lie.

Linda Goulden

Bobbing Up!

TYNEMOUTH SEAL HOSPITAL

Up! talks to Mark Husmann about his work as a Marine Mammal Medic

Hi Mark, tell us a bit about your work with the seals at our coast.

It all began with Robbie – a grey seal “whitecoat” (baby) on Tynemouth Pier. He’d been separated from his mother in a storm, he was dehydrated, underweight and shivering. I rang British Divers Marine Life Rescue and they sent Sam Levy, a newly qualified Marine Mammal Medic (MMM). She assessed his condition and took him to the Sealife Centre in Scarborough. Tynemouth Seal Hospital wasn’t in operation then. I was so impressed with Sam, I thought “I want to be able to do that!” I signed up for the next course and qualified.

We have recently had our 90th seal admitted to the hospital. We have a very good record - more than half of our rescue pups survive and are released back into the wild once they are healthy and have gained their ideal weight. I have no doubt that without help all those seals would have perished.



So it's the height of Summer and you've got a busy day ahead at the Seal Hospital. What are you doing?

The first shift of medics check the seals for behaviour, body condition, injury developments, infections etc and look out for any parasites in the seal pens.

Every pup gets a carefully calculated amount of food and once they've survived the first day, we gradually introduce pulped fish into their diet. We mix this with rehydration fluid, medication, vitamins, iron and other minerals - our famous Fish Soup! Once they start to gain weight, we give them whole fish (herring or mackerel). They usually don't know how to eat properly, so a lot of time is spent teaching them how to eat a fish head-first. Some get it straight away, others need weeks to learn. The two seals we currently have in our care eat 18% of their body weight every day!

We usually introduce them to water carefully and slowly: we start by feeding them their fish in a tub. This way, they learn to close their nostrils underwater, and to "catch" their prey. At first, we let them swim for short periods, then when fit enough they can swim continuously. Only when they are at that stage do we think they are out of the woods.

Bobbing Up!

TYNEMOUTH SEAL HOSPITAL

Seals are obviously cute but what are some of the dangers inherent with close human contact?

Risks to the seals are much higher than to us: if they get disturbed, they will sometimes panic and jump back into the sea. This itself can pose dangers. If they break a flipper bone, for example, they will most likely die. St Mary's Island Wildlife Conservation Society recommend a distance of at least 60 metres.

The risks to us? Seals bite! They have extremely strong jaws, designed to crack shells and crush bones. Seals are not aggressive but if you get bitten, even by a pup, you are in trouble. As well as immediate injury, you are at risk of getting infected with the many pathogens from the seal's teeth and gums. A seal bite will need immediate treatment, and you must go to a hospital straight away and get it looked at. The same goes for dogs if they get bitten. Seals' coats also contain a large variety of nasties: bacteria, parasites, and viruses, all of which are transmissible to humans.



***If you see a seal in the wild which you think needs help call
British Divers Marine Life Rescue (BDMLR) on 01825 765546***

As someone who gets to work with these amazing creatures close up, tell us something interesting about them we may not know...

They have relatively good vision. Although their main sensory organ for catching prey is their whiskers, they can see equally well above and under water. They can even distinguish between individual people – and remember them!

They have unique voices. To the untrained ear, any seal pup's howling, growling, or hissing probably sounds very similar. When you spend a lot of time with them, you learn to recognise their voices.

This may sound surprising when you visualise large groups of seals hauling out together on a beach, but in fact they barely tolerate each other and seals do not have family bonds.

Pups are weaned after only a few weeks and need to be able to fend for themselves, sometimes including having to escape attacks from adult bulls, who might regard them as a good meal.

Seals sometimes spend up to 25 minutes asleep underwater.

Seals, particularly young pups, are playful. They are very curious animals, which means they can easily get entangled in ropes and fishing gear. It is important to keep our oceans clean and free of plastics, which they might swallow. Fishing gear should be discarded responsibly. We frequently need to save seals from horrific injuries resulting from entanglements.

Seals are fascinating to watch. Go grab a pair of binoculars and head to St Mary's Island. From the viewing platforms, you get the best views!

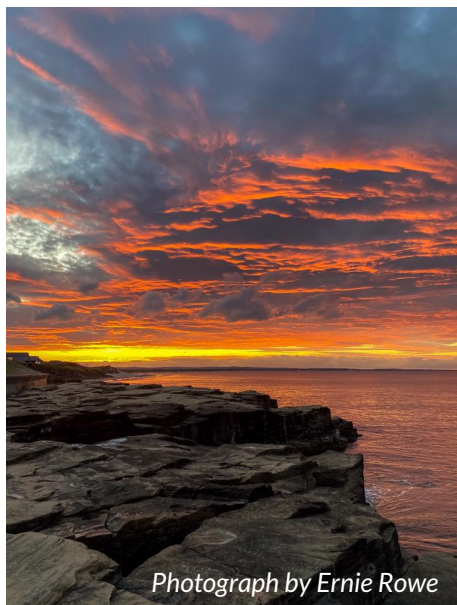
Cleaning Up!

STEVE LOWE

Up!'s outdoors man on a small win for the environment.

Controversial plans for an opencast coal mine at Druridge Bay on the Northumberland coast have been rejected by the government for the second time. In fact, three Communities Secretaries have now considered the proposals for a site near Druridge Bay, before making what Friends of the Earth said was “the right decision, with the world staring at catastrophic climate change”. The great news was welcomed by local campaigners.

The mining company had stated “the North East would lose jobs and investment” and highlighted their disappointment that, four years after an independent Planning Inspector recommended that the scheme should proceed, the Secretary of State had chosen to go against this advice.



Thankfully, the Secretary of State has access to different expertise - that may be why the UK government is “committed to reducing the country’s carbon emissions”, and why we need to reduce, not increase, our dependence on coal. The UK government’s own official data reveals renewables formed 47% of the UK’s electricity generation in the first three months of 2020, a promising indicator.

I personally fought this proposal, so welcomed the news (which I heard whilst undertaking voluntary work in a local community garden project!) Since then I have pondered on this a little more - it’s very easy to demonise one company without considering the impact that we all have on the planet.

The nearby café for example (which is wonderful and does a roaring trade - at a social distance) sees roadside verges crammed with visitors, many of whom have driven to get there. Later that evening, whilst collecting bags of litter from the sensitive ecosystems, it struck me that perhaps this was the same sort of environmental issue but just on a different scale?

Cleaning Up!

STEVE LOWE



Thankfully, my glass is half full and the balance comes from the multitude of people of all ages and backgrounds who I know go that extra mile to “do their bit”. It’s sometimes easy to overlook this, especially with a pandemic to cope with, but we can all play a part in some shape or form. There are so many ways of doing it - from eating less or no meat, shopping locally, growing your own, volunteering or going plastic free.

But harking back to the start of this piece, perhaps the most valuable thing we can do is to play our part by registering to vote, using that vote and exercising our democratic right to contact your own elected representatives and be an Advocate for Nature.



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.



... and here comes Greta, to make the world better!

I want you to act as if the house is on fire, because it is.

Giving up can never ever be an option.

The moment we decide to fulfil something, we can do anything.

Greta Thunberg

Write Up!

POEMS ON THE THEME OF LEARNING

It seemed such a small box to hold a forest

Students ripped the cardboard
I Stanley-knifed the tape,
unravelling a hundred saplings as thin as pencils.
My Spell of

“One each, don’t choose the tree
let the tree choose you”

did its magic with these woodland wands,
later spiralled in plastic rabbit
guards against the chomping
of the school ground’s maintenance team.

Trees wiggled into cracks made by waggled spades,
spades which scuffed shoes and fell from a wheelbarrow
spied by distracted eyes
through classroom windows.

Some trees were lost to off-target footballs,
clumsy feet, roots that didn’t take.

The wonky ones grew bold and strong
their younger siblings squatting in their shade.

On the day the students left
a forest appeared by the motorway fence
interrupting my lesson on Macbeth.

No need to assess their heights
their ability to grow.

Steve Harrison

Battery Doctor Tips

19 running apps
are consuming power

Optimise Now

Diagnosing...

Fix to extend?

Husband app
is under-performing
Restore to factory settings (2007)

Processing is running slow

Son programme
would run more efficiently
with installation of:

Discipline 3.1
DISTRACT 7000
Creative attire - Party version

We suggest you uninstall
several virtual friends
who are draining your battery

Sarah L. Dixon

Tune up!

PHOENIX FOLK

Up! talks to Maurice, Marina and Adam, the people behind a music collective hitting all the right notes.

Tell us a bit about how Phoenix Folk got started...

We got started in 2009 following the demise of the Folkworks Caedmon Folk Programme, which had run classes in various forms since the early 1990s, including at The Sage Gateshead.

A few of us recognised that there was still a need for such an offering. The aim was to run sessions of limited size to ensure quality, using experienced tutors who would be paid at Musicians Union rates. We then ran night classes and weekend schools at the Ouseburn Farm from 2009 until 2017.

There's a lot of research out there about how playing and sharing music together can positively impact people. Is this your experience?

People almost gravitate towards music and inevitably want to share theirs. We've all, I guess at some time, been desperate to play a record of a new favourite artist to friends, to share it with them. I (Maurice) remember in my teens when I first discovered Shirley and Dolly Collins, my friends couldn't be in my house for more than 5 minutes before I had "Love Death and the Lady" on the Dansette!

Similarly, when people play an instrument or sing, they want to share it, either with an audience or with fellow musicians together.



They want to share the joy, comfort and emotion the music brings. Many people who learned an instrument when young, then stopped, come back to playing. They seek out like-minded people to help them re-learn and, more importantly, re-connect with those thoughts and emotions.

More recently, we have seen the positive impact music can have on people through the online sessions we have been running since the start of lockdown. Seeing people on a screen and knowing we are all playing the same tune at the same time is incredibly uplifting, especially at a time when it's been so difficult for people to share music in person. Using music in this way has also had other benefits - new friendships, a sense of community and simply having a 'place to be' three nights a week...for us, as well as our participants!



Tune up!

PHOENIX FOLK

The Covid-19 pandemic has been a challenge for many music collectives, but Phoenix Folk seems to be thriving. What's your secret?

The pandemic arrived just as we were entering an exciting new phase of development – we had recently launched a variety of projects, including the Miggins Fiddle Ceilidh Band. Things were going well and it was disappointing to put all these projects on hold just as they were getting off the ground.

We spent the first week of lockdown experimenting with technology, trying out crazy ideas that would enable us to play music together online without sound quality issues.

A friend suggested we try Zoom, but we needed to find a way to lead these together whilst being 8 miles apart! Finding a solution was a game changer - we've been running online tunes sessions (plus a singaround) 3 nights a week since the start of April.

Whilst other folk clubs have gone online, we've been able to also offer something for people who are missing playing folk music in a group setting. We now have people joining us on a regular basis from all over the UK as well as North America, Canada and Europe!

We've also spent the last 6 months doing a whole host of 'backroom' work, including creating a new virtual ensemble video project. It's fair to say we've been busy!



It can be overawing to join an established group. If someone wanted to get involved, is there a minimum level of expertise required?

Folk tunes are very accessible and we encourage anyone to have a go...if you're having fun then it's worth doing, even if you're not yet playing all of the notes!

One of the benefits of our online tunes sessions is that, whilst everyone hears Marina and Maurice, they don't hear each other. This can be a relaxing way to learn new tunes, as there's no need to worry about other people hearing your mistakes!

Once a week we run a 'steady pace' session where we go a bit slower, which can be helpful for people getting to grips with the tunes. We provide a free tune book, with the sheet music and chords for all the tunes in the session (though some people prefer to figure things out by ear instead of reading music) and we've also made playalong videos for those who want extra practice, or who don't like playing online.

What's next for Phoenix Folk? Any exciting projects in the pipeline?

Following on from the success of our online sessions, songwriter and director Adam Holden <https://phoenixfolk.co.uk/artists/adam-holden> has just launched online teaching and resources for songwriters and song lovers.

Tune up!

PHOENIX FOLK

Adam explains: "I am excited at the opportunity to connect with people who want to develop their songwriting knowledge and skills. The first six-week course is already underway, but I'll be running it again in the new year. The website has some resources to help you reflect on what might suit songwriters with different levels of interest and experience. So please do have a look and get in touch."

<https://phoenixfolk.co.uk/participation/songwriting>

We've also just released the first of our monthly Virtual Ensemble video projects, which has surpassed all of our expectations, with musicians from Canada through to the Netherlands taking part. We're looking forward to doing it all again next month, and we're also about to host our first online gig.



Phoenix Folk is managed by directors Maurice Condie, Marina Dodgson and Adam Holden.

***Online sessions are open to everyone,
with no need to book.
They take place on Monday and Thursday evenings
8pm-9.30pm.
The weekly singaround takes place
on Tuesdays 7.30pm-9.30pm.
For full details see www.phoenixfolk.co.uk or
www.facebook.com/phoenixfolk***



He who sings scares away his woes
Cervantes

Music acts like a magic key, to which the most tightly closed heart opens
Maria von Trapp

Music produces a kind of pleasure which human nature cannot do without
Confucius

The best music is essentially there to provide you something to face the world with
Bruce Springsteen

Hooking Up!

PASS IT ON SKILLS

Up! talks to Jo Bates about bringing people together through the sharing of skills

How did you get started with Pass It On Skills?

I've run a freecycle group called Pass It On Coastal for around 6 years. A group member mentioned she wanted to teach her daughter how to start crochet and was asking for related items. I mentioned that I would like to learn and there were several other members, one of whom suggested "Why don't we meet up?" So I created the Pass It On Skills group.

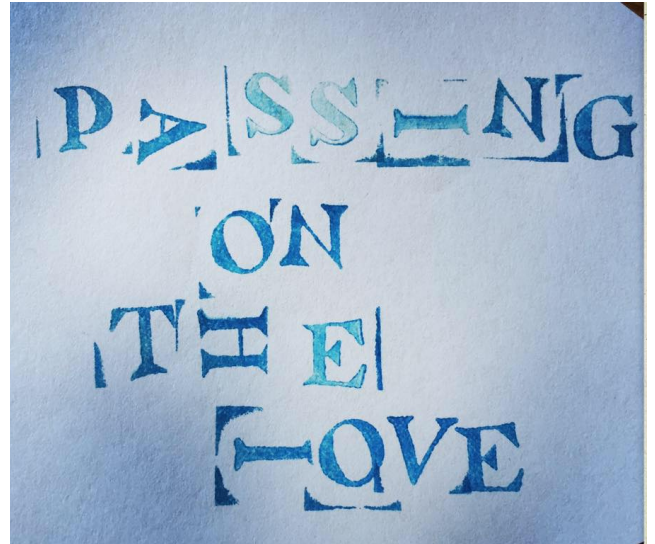


The crochet group was the first and longest running group we have. It was quickly followed by a massive variety of groups, some of which ran and met regularly, others were a one off.

It seems clear you have a strong belief in the value of community which runs right through Pass It On Skills. Would that be fair to say?

Yes. I have a strong sense of community responsibility. What effects one person ripples out and affects others - on a local, national and international level.

That sense probably stems back from my childhood, being brought up marching for CND, collecting for the miners' strike etc. Also going to the great Woodcraft, with their emphasis on cooperative ventures.



How does it work on a practical level? How do people get involved?

On a practical level, I have used Facebook as a freely available platform for people to be able to link up. I know this isn't an option for everyone and I have tried to support other ways, but unfortunately I just don't have the time or money to fund this.

So anyway, first you join the group and you can then post about a skill or knowledge you would like to learn, and another group member might be able to help support that learning. Or you might have a skill you would like to offer. Then we set up an event and a date etc. Groups generally meet in a public space like a café or a library.

No money is ever exchanged, because this is meant to be a group anyone can join - I like to think we all have something to offer and something to learn from one another.

Hooking Up!

PASS IT ON SKILLS

What are the most common requests for skills, and some of the more 'niche' ones?

The most common are probably the craft based ones - like sewing and crochet. But languages are popular too.

In terms of niche? Well we've had car maintenance and a henna workshop.



The weekly themed cake club, popular with adults and children alike.

During these challenging times, groups like this are more needed than ever. How have you been able to continue providing support when it's difficult for people to physically meet?

It has been much quieter but we've tried to run groups via zoom - the film club is one example - and people have used the page to connect. It's a very welcoming space that allows members to talk.

I've also set up a wellbeing group, in part to help members to talk about the impact of the current situation. We also have an exercise group which is run by separate members, undertaking any form of exercise and converting it into kilometres, so that's worked well. We are currently logging our kilometres to 'travel' the Silk Road.

Like the sound of sharing and learning new skills?

Why not set up your own Pass It On Skills group where you live?



Share your knowledge. It is a way to achieve immortality

Dalai Lama

In the long history of humankind (and animal kind, too) those who learned to collaborate and improvise most effectively have prevailed

Charles Darwin

Education is not the filling of a pot but the lighting of a fire

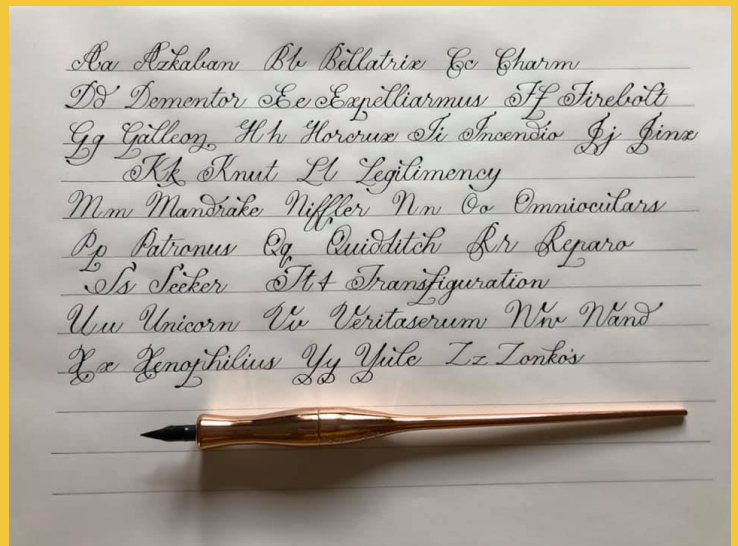
W B Yeats

Close Up!

PHOTOS ON A THEME - LEARNING

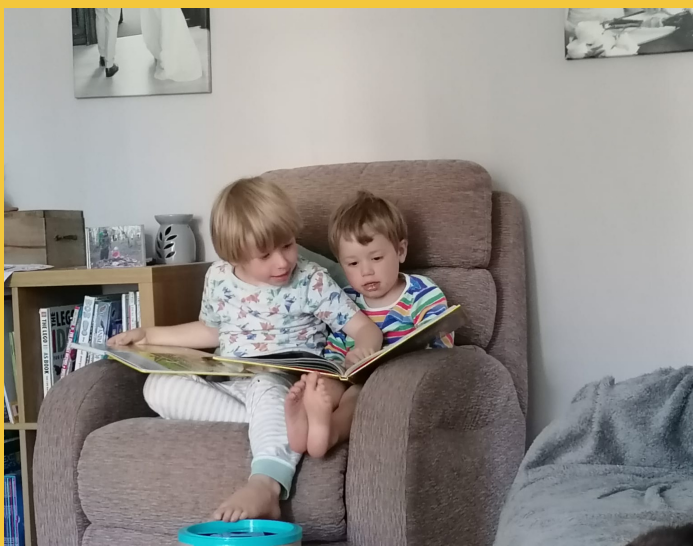


Photograph by Jo Bates



Photograph by Creative Calligraphy

Send us your 'Festive Season' photos for next month's edition.



Photograph by Sophie Lively



Photograph by Brendan McEvoy

Read Up!

VIRTUAL NOIR AT THE BAR

A North-East based literary event has been shortlisted for Event of the Year in the UK's FutureBook Awards.

Virtual Noir at the Bar (VNatB), hosted by writer Simon Bewick and Up! regular Vic Watson, is one of six online events up for the new award category after being nominated by writers and publishers.

The FutureBook Awards are part of the annual FutureBook Conference, which is usually a one-day event in London, but this year it's happening online across five days from November 16 to 20. The 2020 awards are across five 'Best of Lockdown' categories - Book, Campaign, Event, Retail and Start-up - and Vic and Simon are delighted to have been shortlisted.

The announcement comes off the back of a triumphant Halloween special featuring Ian Rankin and local author Matt Wesolowski, and the pair are wasting no time in planning their Christmas special, which will be broadcast via Zoom on December 16.

During its 22 week run, VNatB had more than 4,500 audience members, hosted over 230 writers at varying stages of their careers, from unpublished to the biggest names in crime fiction including Ann Cleeves, SJ Watson and Linwood Barclay.

Previously, Vic hosted Noir at the Bar in Newcastle and Harrogate but had to get creative when lockdown hit in March.

She says: " We'd been looking forward to the next Noir at the Bar, but when the UK went into lockdown in March 2020 everything disappeared in the blink of an eye. My heart went out to those whose books had just been or were due to be released, particularly debut authors."

Vic immediately set about trying to recreate the atmosphere of her live events via Zoom, allowing readers to connect with each other as well as with the writers appearing. Vic met Simon Bewick, a writer and marketing consultant, and the pair set about making VNatB as professional as possible - despite having no budget!



Read Up!

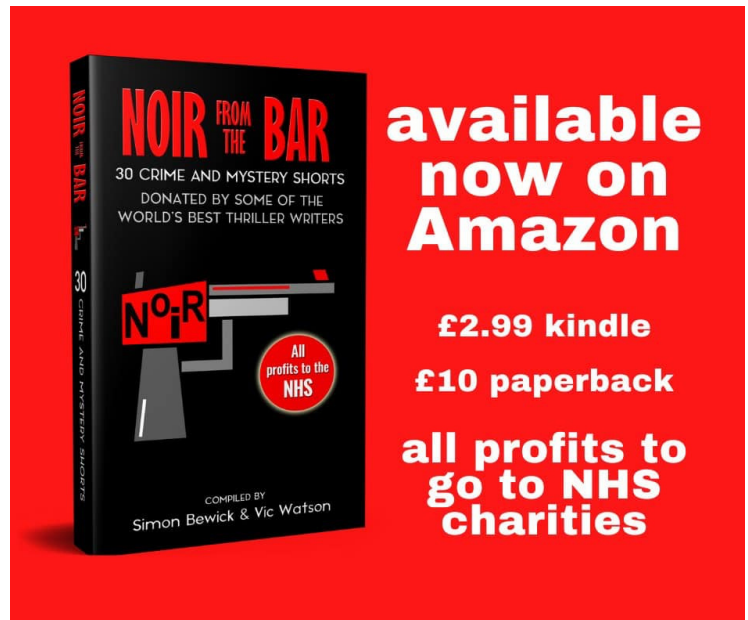
VIRTUAL NOIR AT THE BAR

Vic continues the story, "The ethos behind Noir at the Bar, which was started by Peter Rosovsky in Philadelphia in 2008, is that it's free to attend and is not-for-profit, so we relied on donations from our audience to pay for the platforms we used and the generosity of the authors who appeared for free."

It wasn't just authors however: musicians - both local and international stars - gave permission for the pair to use their music as part of the weekly show.

Simon adds, "Our aim was to make the event as easy as possible: for the audience, many of whom were attending online events for the first time, and for authors - a lot of whom were nervous about presenting virtually. The fact we've had attendees tell us it became the highlight of their week, and many authors from big publishers saying it was the most professional and fun event they've been a part of, proves that with some creativity you don't need huge amounts of money to put on a good show."

In addition to all the shows, Simon also published a charity anthology - Noir from the Bar - featuring short stories from thirty authors, with all profits going to NHS charities. The book, published in just six weeks, debuted in Amazon's Top Twenty chart and continues to raise money.



Vic added: "We have had so many messages throughout our run and since the FutureBook shortlist was announced, from people who have enjoyed the events, saying that VNatB was the highlight of their lockdown or that we stopped them feeling quite so isolated. We have built a community. We are so grateful to the people who nominated us and we are absolutely delighted to be on the shortlist."

A live audience at the FutureBook conference will vote for the winner. VNatB is up against the Cheltenham Festival, The Stay-At-Home! Literary Festival, #DrawWithRob, Borderless Book Club and Imagine Nation.

The winners will be announced live on Friday November 20 at 4pm.

Good luck Vic and Steve!

***To find out more about the FutureBook Awards visit
www.thebookseller.com/futurebook-conference/shortlists,
or for more information about Virtual Noir at the Bar, follow @VNatB1 on Twitter.***

Trading Up!

BARTER BOOKS

Up! discovers what happens when the world of old trains and old books meet.

Barter (verb):
exchange (goods or services) for other goods or services without using money

Perhaps we ought to thank Dr Beeching after all. The breaker-up-in-chief of Britain's railway network in the 1960s has certainly come in for his fair share of criticism in the years since, but Up! knows of one jewel that the wonderful world of well-thumbed books wouldn't have, were it not for his infamous axe.

If you're ever in the locale of Alnwick in Northumberland, step inside the long closed station and you're immediately transported to a world where over 350,000 previously-loved books are lined up on shelving that now fills the 32,000 sq. feet where trains once steamed through - and it needn't cost you a penny. Take a bagful or two of your own books, they'll give you a fair price and you can pick from their stock in return. If that all sounds old fashioned, well it is.



photograph by @bibliophile.belle



photograph by @brightonbookshelf

The building is jam-packed full of history. This is the place that accidentally launched the Keep Calm And Carry On craze a few years ago, after the owner stumbled across the original wartime poster, folded up inside a book.

In short, this labour of love – the brainchild of husband and wife team Stuart and Mary Manly – is an absolute must for anyone who loves books and/or social history.

As you soak up the ambience, you may think you can still feel the motion of trains – that's because you probably can. Look up and you'll see an enormous working train set suspended from the ceiling, the trains continually circling above happy readers lost in their pages.

And no visit is complete without a visit to their wonderful café, which itself is situated in a room previously not even known about by the owners and only unlocked in recent years! The food is delicious, the atmosphere warm and welcoming – just like the main shop.

Go to old Alnwick Station, marvel at the building's grandeur and fall in love with books all over again!

Draw Up!

COMPETITION TIME

Ever fancied having your portrait drawn by a professional artist? Or maybe you'd like to see your pet immortalised on canvas?

Well, now's your chance!



Artist Roz Gadd has kindly offered to produce one of her wonderful portraits for the lucky winner of this month's competition. All you need to do is unscramble the anagrams below to reveal the names of 3 famous artists:

WRY LOLS

MR REEVE

CLOCK JON POLKAS

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



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.ukFB: @RozGaddArtInstagram : rozgaddTwitter: @GaddRozEmail: info@rozgadd.co.uk

Coming Up!

NEXT MONTH

And there it is, another issue done and dusted.

We'd like to thank all our brilliant contributors for once again sharing their stories and photographs with us.



Source unknown

Despite all 2020's difficulties, we continue to be hopeful and optimistic for next year and beyond.

Remember, there is joy to be had in the simplest of things!

For our next issue we'd love to see your poems and photographs on the theme of 'the festive season' - and we'll publish our favourites.

As always feel free to interpret the theme however you wish!

Please send your contributions to: TalkToUp@gmail.com