

Up!

NOVEMBER 2021

FOOD

Accentuating the Positive

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



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Photo Barry Fitzpatrick



Photo - The People's Kitchen

Up Front!

Greetings Sir, Madam.

Welcome to our humble restaurant.

A table by the window, yes?

Can we interest you in our menu today?

We have a wonderful array of main courses on offer, with a choice of Newcastle's *People's Kitchen*, *Fun Little Foodies*, *Allotment Man* or a trip back in time to *The Decade That Taste Forgot!*

Why not go tapas and sample them all?

All that, plus our famed desserts of features from our regular outdoors correspondent and book reviewer.

May we suggest you finish with a nice coffee while you devour the best of this month's poems?

Bon appetit!

Bridget & Harry x



Front cover photograph courtesy of Fun Little Foodies

Dish Up!

THE PEOPLE'S KITCHEN

Ever wondered what it takes to feed those most in need? Meet Jackie Boardman who explains what goes on behind the scenes

Jackie, you joined the Peoples Kitchen as Chair of the Board after a long and successful career in financial services. What was it about the organisation that made you think, "Yes that's the one for me!"?

I love food - cooking it, reading about it, and eating it. Cooking in a kitchen is something that I wanted to do for a while. I'd spent a lot of time working in Manchester, where the number of people sleeping rough is extremely high. I had the opportunity to chat to the same people each day on my way to the office and I learnt a lot about their lives and struggles. So, when I was looking to volunteer, the People's Kitchen felt like a good fit as it's a longstanding charity with a great reputation.

The people who use the service are homeless or vulnerable people from the area who the charity calls Friends. Once I started it quite quickly became obvious it was a good fit for me. It's a place where people are not judged, and it's run completely by volunteers 365 days a year. I'm so proud of the team so it was, and very much remains, "the one for me!"



We join Jackie Boardman on a typical working day. What should we expect?

I arrive at The People's Kitchen on Bath Lane around 10am and review the menu for the day. I then allocate the jobs to the volunteers. We cook a three-course meal for 300 people every day, all from scratch, so there's a lot of peeling and chopping to be done. Last week we cooked leek and potato soup using leeks from our allotment, sweet and sour chicken and rice, katsu curry vegetable noodles and apple and rhubarb crumble with whipped cream for dessert. We plan every meal to ensure it is nutritious and packed with vegetables.

The doorbell rings constantly with kind donations and deliveries. We also have our Friends popping in needing help. This could range from a person rough sleeping coming in to warm up and have a cuppa and a chat, someone needing a food parcel, someone needing help with housing or a referral for support.

We bake the desserts during the day and then start cooking the main meals and fresh soup to be ready for opening. At 6.30pm we open the doors and serve the 3-course meal to sit in or a takeaway for people who prefer to go home. In this time, I could be helping someone collect a clothes parcel, dealing with a Friend struggling with their mental health, or simply just sitting having a chat to someone who may not have spoken to anyone all day. My day finishes around 9.15pm when we lock up for the evening.



Dish Up!

THE PEOPLE'S KITCHEN



Your remit is much wider than simply feeding the Friends who come through your doors. Tell us about what else you're able to offer?

The Peoples Kitchen is much more than food. Our Friends' lives are extremely hard. Many of them don't have access to nutritious food, the meal they have with us could be the only meal they have in a day. As well as this though they often have no support system around them and can have addictions or suffer with their mental health.

The People's Kitchen is a safe haven and a constant for our Friends whose lives can be very chaotic. A lot of our Friends need to choose between food or paying bills. We supply essential clothes, food parcels and have a library where our Friends can take books, colouring, art or puzzle books.

We make life on the streets a little easier by sharing hot meals and packages of clothing, toiletries, food, mobile phones and sleeping bags. We work with services to enable people to move off the streets and

then we provide food, furniture, electrical items and bedding to our Friends when they move into their first home. We also offer friendship calls during the day to help with loneliness and professional services to improve mental wellbeing.

Most of all we offer Friendship.

We're fast approaching the cold winter months. What extra challenges does this present?

The winter months can be especially challenging for our Friends. With the recent changes to Universal Credit, we are finding people are running out of electricity and gas frequently and just not being able to top their supply up. They can use our service to have a hot shower, watch some TV, use the WIFI and get warm, take a flask to have a hot drink at home.

Our Friends who are sleeping outside in the winter tell us rain is one of the worst things as their clothes and belongings get soaked and they just cannot dry them out. So, we replace clothes and sleeping bags. We also work with Newcastle Council and housing agencies to help our Friends connect and enable them to be placed into accommodation.



Dish Up!

THE PEOPLE'S KITCHEN



If anyone was interested in offering help, what kind of skills are you after at the moment?

We have seen an increase in the number of Friends using the Kitchen and we have also had some of our longer standing volunteers retire. As a result, we have volunteer vacancies for our teams on a Friday evening, administration, clothing, IT, HR and recruitment, welfare and communications. If you cannot do a regular shift, then you can get involved with fundraising or collections of food/toiletries.

If you'd like to find out more, or would like to help then check out:

<https://peopleskitchen.co.uk>

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

Cartoon Corner



Another scoop for Up! magazine.

Experts working on the Lewis Carroll archive have just discovered some previously unknown sketches for *Alice in Wonderland*. The drawings, published here for the first time, show the well-known Bread-and-Butterfly and what seems to be an airborne stottie cake with a pease pudding filling and ham wings.

An attached note in Carroll's handwriting says '*Love the Bread-and-Butterfly but what on earth is that hideous flying bun? It looks dreadfully northern*'.

Sadly, the Stottie Cake Bug never made it to the final version of the book.

You can contact Up!'s resident 'toon artist at pickinjohn@gmail.com

Word Up!

YOUR POEMS ON THE THEME OF FOOD

Cold Cuppa, 1974

Did I ever tell you, Meg,
how a student midwife woke me up
to say my tea had gone cold?

It'll be the best tea you've ever tasted,
someone promised,
the first one after giving birth.

I can see mine now,
in a white cup on a white saucer.

I learned, then, that cold tea tastes disgusting.
I learned a lot, in the hour after your birth.

I learned I had the capacity to deliver
a 9lb.13 oz. baby through my pelvis.
That midwives put tissue paper on weighing scales.
That the rustle of your limbs
was more melodic than Elton John's piano.

That you were worth everything,
even missing the best cup of tea
I'd never tasted.

Sheila Jacob

We All Need to be Fed

We all need to be fed
A full belly frees the mind
Cut the cake! Put on the kettle!
Pass the salt and pour the wine

A full belly frees the mind
A warm hearth and new-made bread
Pass the salt and pour the wine
Prepared with love, each meal a feast

A warm hearth and new-made bread
Laughter flows across the table
Prepared with love, each meal a feast
A time to share, a chance to meet

Laughter flows across the table
Cut the cake! Put on the kettle!
A time to share, a chance to meet
We all need to be fed

Gerda Pickin

Forbidden Fruit

The first time I ate a strawberry
I turned into one. A small child,
red-rashed and blush-stained.

Such allergies we soon outgrow,
plunge into each summer bowl
with fresh white double cream.

Yet remember still that life's sweetest
taste can harm, and what you desire
should always be picked with care.

Helen Shay

Cook Up!

FUN LITTLE FOODIES

Meet Kirsten Scott, Director, on a mission to make food fun!

Can you start by telling us a little bit about Fun Little Foodies and what you do?

At Fun Little Foodies, our main goal is to get kids involved and interested in food and cooking. We focus on having fun, getting stuck in, tasting new food and flavours and exploring where our food comes from. Our recipes show the importance and simplicity of using fresh and healthy ingredients wherever possible. A balanced diet is always emphasised and therefore some recipes do also cater for the sweet lovers amongst our children!

Children are encouraged to be as independent as possible and practice their listening and following instructions skills. We run classes for preschool children (accompanied by their parents/carers), afterschool classes for school aged children and we also run school workshops and birthday parties! Our parents often tell us that they love the classes just as much as their children!



We love the fact you've got 'fun' in your title! Is having fun a big part of what you offer?

Definitely! We believe that children learn and engage best when they are having fun. We have some children who have been coming for over 4 years, so although it is an educational



Directors Katie and Kirsten (right)

class (we are both ex teachers!) it definitely has the fun element at its core and that's the main reason why the children want to keep on coming!

It's not just about learning to cook - we incorporate

lots of multi sensory activities into the class, such as smelling, touching and of course tasting the ingredients. Some children love having sticky fingers, while others love washing their hands!

We use songs to introduce and conclude the classes and encourage the children to sing, clap or jump along! Even helping to tidy up and clean the tables is a fun and popular part of the class, as the children balance their equipment onto our trolley and move round the room putting aprons away and wiping their tables!

Can you talk us through a typical Fun Little Foodies session?

We start with a song which leads on to looking in our basket of 'clues' to see what equipment we have to use for the session. The children find their own equipment on their table - calling out the colours, sizes or waving pastry brushes in the air! We discuss what we will use each piece of equipment for and also look at and discuss the ingredients.

The children then make their recipe following simple instructions, with lots of fun elements included. They may need to crack an egg, whisk a hundred bubbles, chop like a little saw, carefully pour, roll with butterfly fingers... and lots more! When the recipe is ready to go in the oven, the children tidy and clean their cooking station. They

Cook Up!

FUN LITTLE FOODIES

then usually do a craft activity or sometimes we play a game – like Fruit bingo! Once the food is cooked, we read a story while it cools down. Then it is time for the children to taste and evaluate their recipe!



We ask them to show us whether it is a thumbs up or thumbs down! Tasting food is a really important part of the process – some children are reluctant to try new things at first but most start to after a few classes and

are always pleased to tell us what they think! We finish with a song which recaps the skills we used that session.

Last month's issue of Up! focused on wellbeing. How do you think what we eat contributes to our wellness?

The cooking process itself we think is a mindful activity which in turn promotes wellbeing. When you are cooking, you can concentrate your senses on the here and now and switch off from external stresses which is important. Cooking is a very sensory process which can be very relaxing for adults and children alike. When we eat what we have produced ourselves, it gives us a sense of pride and contentment which makes us feel good about ourselves. Of course, eating a healthy, balanced diet is so important for physical as well

as mental well being too. When we cook from scratch, we know exactly what we have put in our food and can adapt recipes to suit our own tastes and needs. We provide our Little Foodies with a recipe booklet each term, so they can cook again at home and share what they have learnt with their older siblings and the rest of their family.

So, Kirsten, a personal question to end with. Christmas is almost upon us. Which famous chef would you choose to cook your Christmas lunch and what would you like them to prepare?

For Christmas I'm a stickler for tradition! Our Christmas lunch is always roast turkey and all the trimmings, and it must include my Mum's homemade cranberry sauce! So I would choose someone like the Hairy Bikers to cook for us, as I think they would deliver on the traditional element and it would be packed full of flavour!

As Si and Dave are both from the North, they know how important family is at Christmas, and having 14 guests around the table is a great excuse to have lots of extra side dishes! I'm thinking honey glazed carrots, shredded sprouts & bacon, red cabbage & apple, but what I really would love them to make is a great gravy as I always cheat and have never made my own! Controversially we have Yorkshire puddings with our Christmas lunch – although I never did as a child (possibly because my Mum is from Lancashire?!), but my children would be very disappointed if there weren't any! They also would ask for pigs in blankets – lots of them!

I would then ask them to make a delicious Christmas pudding – it's just not a proper Christmas lunch without turning down the lights and setting fire to the pudding! I can't wait!

You can find out more about Fun Little Foodies here:

**<https://www.facebook.com/funlittlefoodies>
www.funlittlefoodies.co.uk**

Feed Up!

STEVE LOWE

Fresh food for thought from Up!'s outdoors man

Food – the stuff we grow, produce and consume (as well as discard) is the hidden cause of wildlife loss - but perhaps also forms our strongest and most immediate link to nature.

One of my favourite pastoral reads is *Lark Rise to Candleford*, a beautiful book that gives a view of late 19th century England and its countryside. This is considered one of the pivotal points in rural history: the time when the quiet, close-knit and peaceful rural culture, regulated by seasons, began its transformation into the more homogenised society of today's world.



Agricultural mechanisation, better communications and urban expansion meant a loss of rural work as the city offered better wages (although conditions were often poor). Further and continual innovation followed in the drive to produce the food that feeds the nation, underlined by the rationing forced on us by global conflict.

In fact, the agricultural revolution in England was thought to have occurred from the 16th century



onwards, as an essentially organic system was gradually replaced by a farming system that depended on energy-intensive inputs. Three major changes drove this: selective breeding of livestock; removal of common property rights to land; new systems of cropping, involving turnips and clover.

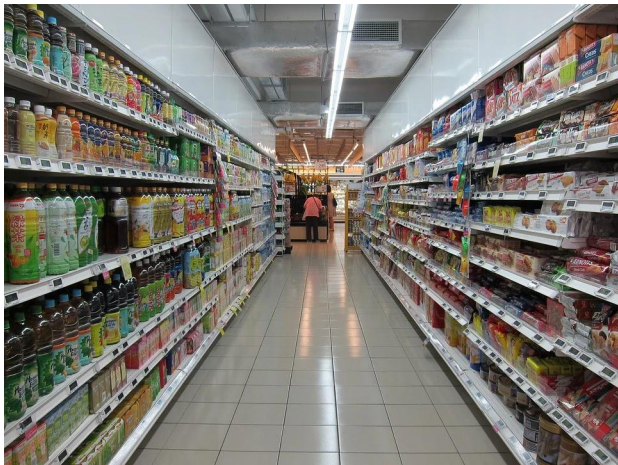
All this was thought to have been due to a group of heroic individuals, who, according to one account, were “a band of men whose names are, or ought to be, household words with English farmers: Jethro Tull, Lord Townshend, Arthur Young, Bakewell, Coke of Holkham and the Collings.” They are thought to have single-handedly, over a few short years, transformed English agriculture from a peasant subsistence economy to a thriving capitalist agricultural system, capable of feeding the teeming millions in the new industrial cities.

Farms manage 70% of the UK landscape, including most of our National Parks and other scenic areas. As such they play another essential role, as self-named “Guardians of the Countryside”. Have a wander down the aisles of any local supermarket and a bewildering selection of items from across the globe are within reach. But how many of us really think about the environmental cost of this? Air miles, growing methods, seasonality?

One of the most popular items at the recent COP26 talks in Glasgow was “Nature: the unsung

Feed Up!

STEVE LOWE



hero of the food system” which focused on agroecology – an approach inspired by natural ecosystems and the interactions between plants, animals, humans and the environment – and how it can help tackle climate change and boost biodiversity.

To illustrate this theme, we have some excellent examples of this operating already on these shores.

One is a farmer-led movement for sustainable farming with nature and the environment - the Nature Friendly Farming Network (NFFN). They advocate a nature-based approach and underline that the work being done by each farmer not only yields positive results for water and flood protection, but it also delivers benefits for biodiversity, pollinators, air quality and helps tackle climate change. And, above all else, it keeps the farm productive.

Another is the LEAF Marque (Linking Environment and Farm), which operates by developing and promoting Integrated Farm Management (IFM), whereby farmers employ a range of techniques/

technology to help reduce their impact, from the way they manage soil, preventing erosion and retaining nutrients, or efficient farm energy use. COP26 recognised that it will be essential to reconnect people with food in order to alter our food systems, ensuring we maintain healthy people and a healthy planet. This means changes in the way we all shop and consume.

Local food (produced within a short distance of where it is consumed), often accompanies a social structure and supply chain that is different from the large-scale supermarket system.

One excellent example is the Co-Op, owned by its users (members) and which owns and operates its own farms. They have published their own ambition towards sustainable food – *Future of Food* – well worth a look.

We can all do something! For example, I shop local, am committed to eating less meat (and less regularly), as well as ensuring nothing goes to waste (bubble and squeak for tea - but soup is another favourite).

We all need to make and advocate change to make sure we can walk through fields buzzing with the sound of insects and skylarks.



An experienced wildlife professional, Steve currently works freelance with Northumberland Rivers Trust as well as undertaking work with volunteers on local heritage and archaeology projects.

His hope is to leave the world a better place.

Word Up!

YOUR POEMS ON THE THEME OF FOOD

Picnic

Mum poured tea from the red flask,
I got to sit on the chair

Dad's car
was our wind-breaker.

I licked my greasy fingers,
hors d'oeuvre chicken legs.

The power of stones
and steeples lost now.

Close to the church but closer
to Scotch Eggs and Mini Rolls.

Nina Lewis

Sitting at the Table

Waiting, palm to palm
Fingers entwined
Our order placed
People all around us
Eating, making pleasant
Conversation, dreaming
Of chocolate mousse.

Ann Privateer

Taste Of Home

Clawed by blackberry branches,
skinned by crab-apple bark,
we were chased to the basin
armed with facecloth and soap
and told not to neglect the toothbrushes.

Though our child's logic declared
we'd surely waited enough
while playing outside for the intervening hours,
we knew it pointless ... and perilous ...
to present such an argument.

The fused aroma of the fruits
thrust itself into our senses,
mouth-watering and stomach-churning –
in a good way, that is –
the belly bubbling to be sated.

The caramel crust of breadcrumbs
Sent its richness calling from the open range –
a balm of a perfume pierced
by the sharpness of the fruits beneath
with the scent of cinnamon as escort.

We torrented into the kitchen,
quickly calmed to politeness by her eye,
and took our places at the table,
wriggling into the grown-up chairs.

Bowls of crumble
deluged by fresh bright yellow custard,
steaming until panted cool in open mouths,
spoon by spoon.

Perry McDaid

Living It Up!

HARRY GALLAGHER

Crack open that big keg of Watney's Party Seven, we're going to a 70's 'do'!

Ever heard the line about the 70's being The Decade That Taste Forgot? Well as someone who grew up in that feted (*not fetid!* - Ed.) decade, I have a suspicious feeling that the originator of that much-used phrase may not have been talking in a purely sartorial sense.

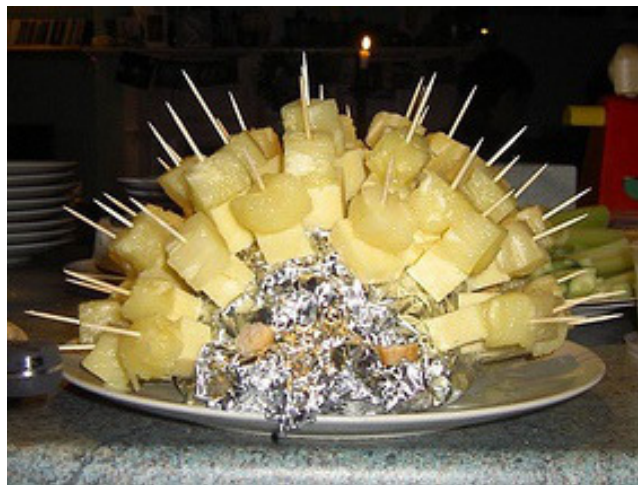
Yes, we're in the era of Demis Roussos, Oxford bags (tell your Dad to look them up) and all the excesses of Glam Rock, but what about the decade's accompanying culinary sins? Anyone want to give a shout out to Spangles or the myriad other causation factors behind *On The Buses*-level dentistry? Thought not.

Fear not, your roving Up! reporter is here to serve up a grave reminder of what we all ate in the good old, bad old days. Sitting comfortably behind a nice table in your local Berni Inn, awaiting delivery of your chicken-in-a-basket? Then we'll begin...



Here we are, in that crucial juncture when my Dad came home from work, expecting his favourite Panacalty dish, only to find it ousted by an egg and bacon pie, styling itself as Quiche Lorraine.

The height of sophistication, according to my Mum. To which my Dad retorted, "Aye, the same ingredients and twice the price!"



What are you starting with, by the way? Prawn cocktail in a wine glass, you say? But if it's in a wine glass, where will you pour your sparkling Lambrusco? Or perhaps you'd prefer a snowball instead. You remember them, surely? Our pantry always had a special corner for that sticky old bottle of advocaat, brought out every Christmas as the chief ingredient in my Aunty Pat's favourite alcoholic concoction.

As a tasty alternative, we've stocked up on crabsticks I bought off a man in a stripey outfit, selling seafood in the pub last night. He'd been in and out of sweaty, smoky pubs, rubbing up against the deeply inebriated since opening time but I'm sure they'll taste fine. The spilled beer and sprinkled fag ash, mixed in with a thin drizzle of saliva from the aforementioned drunken punters will only add to the authenticity. No? Please yourself.

There's some nice looking vol-au-vents here ... actually, do these taste properly cooked to you? Or how about some lovely squares of cheese and pineapple, skewered on cocktail sticks, while you're waiting - we could even add wee snips of hotdog for you. Best not ask what's actually in the hotdog though.

Living It Up!

HARRY GALLAGHER

Talking of contents, did anyone ever figure out what made up the delicious collection of foodstuffs inside a Findus Crispy Pancake? And how did they hold so much heat?! I'm betting that under some impending 50-year release of hitherto secret documents, we find out that there were experiments from space technology involved. What's that, Neil? Your Orbit Re-entry Heat Absorbing Pads appear to be breadcrumbed? Best open the windows, it's going to get awfully hot in there.



Or perhaps he could cool down with a slice of Arctic Roll? Or a Viennetta? Now we're talking! And while we're on the sweeties-end of the scale, what can you say about the top-end dessert of sophistication, the Black Forest Gateau? An ever-present at every wedding 'do' held in the upstairs function room of some now-long-closed pub, did anyone else used to leave the cherry/fruit bits on the side of the paper plate, or was that just me? Never mind, there's always the Peach Melba, which is erm ... peaches and ice cream, covered in monkey blood ... no, don't ask.

Oh, and while you're up, will you turn that K-Tel LP over, only best skip that Donna Summer one where she's moaning and groaning - your Grandad'll have one of his funny turns again. Actually on second thoughts, that's enough from me, I'm due at my friend Abigail's, she's throwing a party. Or was it a soiree? Now where's my smart/casual attire...?



After all the trouble you go to, you get about as much actual 'food' out of an artichoke as you would from licking 30 or 40 postage stamps.

Miss Piggy

Word Up!

YOUR POEMS ON THE THEME OF FOOD

Choc-Addict

Gleaming somehow, the bewitching ingot
call to me through the protective cover –
no spice, no vice, no lover
can by wile beguile me so.

Fumbling with my change, conscience heed I not,
nor guilt; secure in that demon's grip,
quickly paper sleeve I slip
from the drug so many know.

No tinted foil can shield what I have bought
for, slowly – almost in a trance – I peel
back the lustrous airtight seal,
swallowing as enzymes flow.

Declining, sighing, to resist as ought,
I lose myself in the hypnotic brown
and, as the last chunk goes down,
sadly sense my waistline grow.

Perry McDaid

Next month's theme is - MAGIC

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

Recipe

mix ingredients together:
one slate-grey sky
snow laden clouds
falling flakes
wind-driven drifts

recipe for
stay-at-home

set temperature
at seventy-four degrees
stoke flames in fireplace
cook 'till warmed through

serve stay-at-home
wrapped in thick sweater
side dish suggestions
good book and hot chocolate

or...
marinate until spring

Marsha Warren Mittman

And for dessert, a lovely piece of prose ...

My favourite meal is one made by father. It is not about the food he makes, rather the time he pours into creating something to sustain me after a long shift at work. He is not a vocal man nor physically expressive. However, when he begins to rinse potatoes or heat up mince, I can see the need of a parent who wants to care for their child, despite the fact they're in their late twenties. The very best meals are those that are made with love.

Donna Costello

Digging Up!

BARRY FITZPATRICK

Down on the allotment with a keen, green man

What initially attracted you to getting your own allotment?

Even as a youngster I had an interest in gardening which really led me down this path. When I moved to the North East, my next door neighbour asked if I wanted to see his allotment, which then led to me helping him out. He got free labour and I got free vegetables as well as a lifetime of advice!

What really attracted me initially to wanting to have an allotment was the opportunity to spend more time outside and to create my own space which would provide fresh fruit and vegetables for family and friends, as well as the aspect of greater biodiversity.

Over time my plot size has increased, allowing me to combine both horticulture and agriculture. I now have a small pond and next year's plan is to extend this area and create a wild flower garden to attract



more wildlife.

The allotment is also a community in its own right. It was a salvation for many over the last couple of seasons, as it was seen as a safe place to go to during the pandemic. For some it was a place where you could still meet friends and chat about what was happening and how



to support one another. Social distancing outdoors was never an issue on the site and for older plot holders who lived on their own it was a saving grace.

In some ways

this sums up what still attracts me to my allotment. I will always want to change something - sometimes because you need to, eg. to deal with new pests or planting earlier due to climate change, but sometimes ... just because I can.

How's this year's harvest been?

Like the curate's egg, the good parts were very good. The weather as always plays its part - this year it was reasonably well behaved. It was a great year for most fruit and vegetables, especially strawberries and potatoes. The allotment standards of peas, various beans, sweetcorn, beetroot, cucumbers and cabbages all cropped in abundance over the summer.

The greenhouses again fared well. This year's experiment was to plant out the tomato seedlings over several weeks to try and extend the season. This was a great success and one that will be repeated next year, as I had the first picking of tomatoes in July and the last in October - more than enough to supply all my neighbours (and myself of course). My only disappointments were my chillies which suddenly withered, and I have absolutely no idea why.

Digging Up!

BARRY FITZPATRICK



My freezer is full of redcurrants, raspberries, various tomato sauces and sweetcorn, to name a few of this year's crops.

I now count flowers as part of my harvest and this (my first) year gave me daffodils, tulips, carnations, asters and dahlias, which adorned the house over the summer.

Having tried our hand at growing fruit and veg at home, Up! knows just how much work is involved in caring for plants from seeds through to harvest. How do you keep on top of everything on the allotment?

It's really just a matter of being organised. Before the year ends I dig the whole allotment over from top to bottom and plant out the winter beans, onions and garlic. It's also a good time to dig in the green manure (*phacelia*), preparing the soil for next year's planting. The cold winter weather does the rest.

The fruit bushes and trees are pruned or replaced as required. This year saw the addition of two plum trees, a fig, an apple and a cherry tree. So I am already looking forward to next year and sampling the goods!

My last job is to clear out and clean the greenhouses which are left empty over the winter period, bar the November sowing of sweet peas. This means that when spring arrives you can concentrate on preparing the seed trays for the year ahead.

In early spring, as the ground is already prepared, I find that most of the early part of the year is spent in the greenhouse planting seedlings on to pots or out to the cold frames. My allotment does look a bit regimented, but it makes weeding easier over the growth period.

Allotments have a long and noble history among the people of the north-east in particular, providing the opportunity to feed ourselves when times are hard. A little dickie bird tells us that your harvest also helps those in need. Tell us more ...

You are quite right. Allotments have been around since the middle-ages and were introduced to help the poor with the provision of food. Then during the first World War, greater emphasis was put on local food production. This saw the introduction of the Government's 'Cultivation of Lands' Order, with allotments set up on seized land. This really saw the arrival of allotments as we know them today. As far as I am aware the site on Newcastle's town moor is an early example of this.



Digging Up!

BARRY FITZPATRICK

When the pandemic arrived on our doorstep it was obvious that foodbanks would be put under more pressure than ever. With most plot holders growing more than they need, I asked if they would be willing to donate their excess produce to the foodbank. Needless to say, the answer was 'Yes', with most then growing extra specifically for the project. As new members couldn't be introduced at that time, I was offered the use of another four or five plots which were then cultivated and for the season became known as the plots for the foodbank.



The produce was collected every Sunday and distributed on Monday morning at the foodbank. We also managed to hand some food into a cafe in Whitley Bay which made up meals for the homeless and the elderly.

What are your top tips for anyone thinking of getting their own allotment?

First get your name down ASAP as there is a five-year waiting list at our site! Also, if you know someone who has an allotment, ask if you can help out, as it may not be what you are looking for. A lot of new members drop out in their first year, as it was harder than they expected.

If you have a garden at home, start experimenting there to see how much fun it can be. Remember you don't need a big garden to do this. A back yard will do as lots of veg can be grown in pots.

*So there you are - what are you waiting for?
Given the UK has consumed more food than we
can grow for several hundred years now,
something tells us that growing your own could
be about to come back into fashion!*



If I cannot do great things, I can do small things in a great way

Dr Martin Luther King

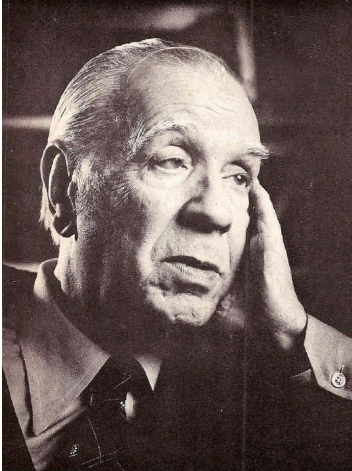
To plant a garden is to believe in tomorrow

Audrey Hepburn

Read Up!

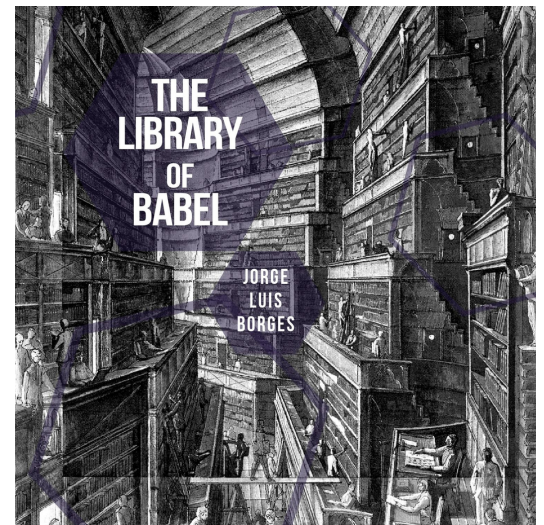
MEGAN PATTIE

Up!'s resident book reviewer brings you an author to really get your teeth into



If reading gives us food for thought, a short story by Jorge Luis Borges, though deceptively small in size, is a smorgasbord, or a man vs food event. For in stories such as *'The Library of Babel'*, *'Funes The Memorious'*, and *'The Aleph'*, Borges introduces us, and forces us to contemplate, the possibility of the infinite, or of everything at once. This makes his stories absolutely mind-bending, as he stretches his chosen form and our minds so that they can hold these huge concepts.

'The Library of Babel' is an exemplary story in which Borges masterfully takes asking 'what if?' to great lengths. In this case, 'What if the universe was a library?' (How wonderful! And yet, reading Borges' story, perhaps not.) The Library, possibly infinite, possibly not, holds every book that can be written using a combination of twenty-three letters, spaces, commas, and full stops. Taking this concept as far as he can, Borges explores what such a library would be like, and what the experiences of those living in it – The Librarians – would be. He discusses the mathematics, politics, theology, and philosophy of such a world, and all within nine pages! Considering The Library's apparently endless hexagonal rooms, and its shelves upon shelves of myriad combinations of symbols, is dizzying.

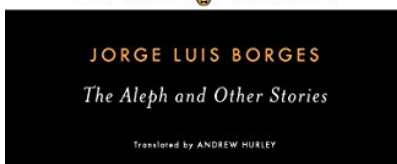
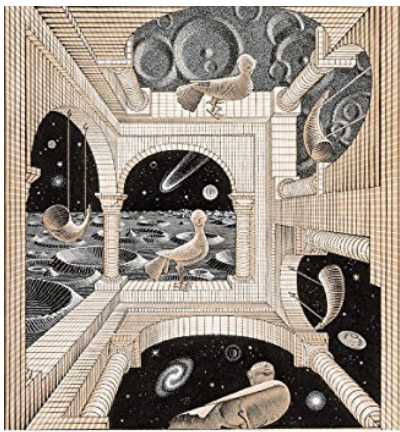


In *'Funes The Memorious'*, Borges approaches the possibility of everything in a different way, through the character of 'Funes', who is able to remember everything he has ever seen in perfect detail. Here, Borges is concerned with how one would live and communicate one's experiences while seeing the world in such a specific and all-encompassing way. Funes benefits from his gift as he is able to learn things with remarkable speed, but he experiences difficulties when he finds that number-systems and language itself is insufficient for him to truly represent his life. For instance, considering the word 'dog': 'it bothered him that the dog at three fourteen (seen from the side) should have the same name as the dog at three fifteen (seen from the front).' Frustrating indeed!

Read Up!

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And Borges has us consider this kind of experience as a real possibility, as he frequently introduces us to such ideas through first-person narrators who encounter these baffling phenomena almost completely on the off-chance. The infinite is something you can stumble upon in everyday life, then. An amazing thought. And in fact, do we encounter it by chance ourselves, when we pick up Borges' stories off the shelf for the first time, and begin contemplating it through him? See, this is the kind of chewy thought his stories inspire!



The possibility of encountering the infinite in the everyday, and the insufficiency of language to express it, also arise in *'The Aleph'*, a story that begins with a banal tale of lost love, and the introduction of the farcical character of Carlos Argentino, and suddenly drops you into the mind-boggling idea of The Aleph - 'one of the points in space that contains all other points.' And that is about as straightforwardly as it can be explained. Seeing The Aleph, 'the ineffable core of [his] story', Borges' narrator cannot accurately describe it in writing, but even his attempt to describe all that he sees through The Aleph is astonishing: 'Each thing (a mirror's face, let us say) was infinite things, since I distinctly saw it from every angle of the universe,' he says, and there follows a rambling list of things that he sees, which can never suffice, because he sees everything, in every way. Sure enough, the exhilarating paragraph ends. We take a breath with the narrator, feeling with him his 'infinite wonder, infinite pity.'

It is interesting that in order to explore these huge ideas, Borges has used a short form. Somehow, it adds to the wondrous, kaleidoscopic experience of reading him. One feels that had he continued to explore his ideas in a longer form, the stories would lose their impact, lengthening into laborious and (as the stories themselves demonstrate) fruitless explication, which could only end in confusion, an eventual shrug of the shoulders. Better to plant these staggering seeds within a short story, making a kind of TARDIS of it, and leave it there to see what grows.

So, if you have an appetite for big ideas, I recommend a serving of Borges. Like the elvish lembas of Tolkien's Middle Earth, one of which will feed a traveller for a whole day, his stories are mighty morsels, sure to satisfy an inquiring mind. Truly a wonder and a joy, Borges' fiction is something you can spend half an hour reading, and forever thinking about. Delicious. Bon Appetit!

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

Coming Up!

All full up? We hope you enjoyed our selection of dishes. And the best bit is the bill – there isn't one! We cook up this fayre for you every month because we love it - and because we can.

Tune in for next month's festive 'Magic'-themed issue on the run-in to 'you know what'!

In the meantime, tell all your friends about us, stay safe, stay positive and look after each other.

Just one more thing - is it snowing yet ... ?



Much love
Bridget & Harry xx



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

Just email us at TalkToUp@gmail.com