

# Up!

1ST BIRTHDAY EDITION  
OCTOBER 2021

Wellbeing

Accentuating the Positive



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

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"Well hello"



"Do you have a favourite saying?" asked the boy.

"Yes" said the mole

"What is it?"

"If at first you don't succeed, have some cake."

"I see, does it work?"

"Every time."

*The Boy, The Mole, The Fox, and The Horse (Charlie Mackesy)*

## Up Front!

So here we are, with our first birthday issue. What began in the dark days of Covid lockdown as an idea to brighten a few people's days seems to have grown, and we now have readers across the globe - who'd have thought it?!

However, instead of singing happy birthday to ourselves, we'd much rather say thank you - to our in-house writers, to the National Lottery Community Fund for their support, to our Board, but most of all to you our lovely readers, without whom there would be no point in producing this labour of love every month.

So what do we have for you in this issue? Well, as our *raison d'être* is to shine a little light, we've focused in on Wellbeing. We take a look at a hatful of positive stuff going on right now to make life better for all of us, and we hear from the people who are making it happen. In fact, we're literally all-singing and dancing this month! All that, plus the best of the poems you've sent us and the usual great features from our writing team.

Dive in!

Bridget & Harry x



# Surf's Up!

STEVE LOWE

**What's that you say? Up!'s outdoor man has gone on holiday? Read on ...**

What better place to be writing about wellbeing but from an island in the North Atlantic, surrounded by azure seas, golden sands and breath-taking views of mountain and moorland?

There are gannets dive-bombing into the clear, cold water and the only sound is the breaking surf - a regular pulse that soothes the brain and that "somewhere else" which wild places seem to touch.

My "island" is a temporary retreat, marooned by the high tide but shortly to blend back seamlessly into the beach as the ebb flow returns. But it really is a fitting analogy because the peace and tranquillity has brought forth an "island" of calm in my otherwise seemingly hectic life.

Wild places are a magnet for my worn-out mind. They refresh the parts that other things can't! Music, books, chat and laughter all do pretty well but, for me, there's nowt like some rain on my bonce, a purposeful stride and the interloping tonic of birds, plants and dramatic scenery to just "hit that spot".

Today, for example. It's cold and windy (they call it autumnal) and the weather hasn't quite made it up its mind. Drizzle, soak or shine? But I have stepped out along a rugged coastline regardless; armed with my trusty binoculars, just in case.

The clifftop path astride precipitous cliffs gets a little too much adrenaline going as a healthy



respect for heights (some may prefer to call it what it is - fear) presents itself when the edge is close and slippery grass offers the opportunity to emulate the gannets. But that

water does really look so inviting! Luckily there is no-one around, other than blushing barnacles, to prevent a skinny dip and the warm sun dries me quickly afterwards whilst recovering my modesty (although why is it always hard to get socks onto wet feet?).

Fully clothed and back on the march, the skies decide to empty their contents as a cloud bursts, to provide a proper soaking that is somehow less refreshing than the plunge I have just enjoyed. And the wet clothing manages to become clingfilm to the legs, chaffing and rubbing.

Yet the views, the exercise, the whole experience is more breath-taking because of that brass monkey dip as the endorphins shoot around inside the blood stream, stimulated by the events. In fact, they make me voracious for more.

Because that is precisely what nature gives you. Forget the underlying release of pleasure chemicals for a minute and simply absorb the whole thing. You ARE part of your environment and I firmly believe that this is what draws so many of us to landscapes and wildlife. It has been

# Surf's Up!

STEVE LOWE

my life and once I am gone, I hope my kin can obtain the same joy that I do from the great outdoors.

As I scrawl these last few words (on pencil and paper!), a beautiful pair of ravens soar overhead, riding the breeze, fearless and free. These are Odin's (the All-seer) birds, Huginn (thought) and Muninn (memory), who fly all over the realms of men to gather crucial information for the one-eyed God.

One tattooed on each of my arms, perhaps they recognise a fellow traveller and appear to show that all is well? Yet to remind us that the world is fragile and requires respect. I heeded their message.



*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.*



**Optimistic October 2021**

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
1 Write down three things you can look forward to this month	2 Find something to be optimistic about (even if it's a difficult time)	3 Take a small step towards a goal that really matters to you	4 Start your day with the most important thing on your to-do list	5 Be a realistic optimist. See life as it is, but focus on what's good	6 Remind yourself that things can change for the better	7 Look for the good in people around you today
8 Make some progress on a project or task you have been avoiding	9 Share an important goal with someone you trust	10 Take time to reflect on what you have accomplished this week	11 Avoid blaming yourself or others. Find a helpful way forward	12 Look out for positive news and reasons to be cheerful today	13 Ask for help to overcome an obstacle you are facing	14 Do something constructive to improve a difficult situation
15 Thank yourself for achieving the things you often take for granted	16 Put down your to-do list and do something fun or uplifting	17 Take a small step towards a positive change you want to see in society	18 Set hopeful but realistic goals for the week ahead	19 Identify one of your positive qualities that will be helpful in the future	20 Find joy in tackling a task you've put off for some time	21 Let go of the expectations of others and focus on what matters to you
22 Share a hopeful quote, picture or video with a friend or colleague	23 Recognise that you have a choice about what to prioritise	24 Write down three specific things that have gone well recently	25 You can't do everything! What are your three priorities this week?	26 Find a new perspective on a problem you face	27 Be kind to yourself today. Remember, progress takes time	28 Ask yourself, will this still matter a year from now?
29 Plan a fun or exciting activity to look forward to	30 Identify three things that give you hope for the future	31 Set a goal that brings a sense of purpose for the coming month	ACTION FOR HAPPINESS			

**Happier · Kinder · Together**

<https://www.actionforhappiness.org/calendars>

# Up Sticks!

## PENELOPE THE TRUCK

Meet husband and wife team, Kerry & Craig, who we bumped into on our recent road trip. Restless souls and keen adventurers, they are making their dream a reality.

Having met Penelope personally, we can confirm she's a very distinctive lady! What can you tell us about her?



Thank you! She certainly stands out from the crowd. She started her life as a workshop vehicle in the army, she's a

Leyland DAF T244 and had a very easy life in the military serving in the parachute regiment and did a short tour in Iraq before retiring to the dealership where we were lucky enough to find her! Currently weighs in at 8t and we hope to keep her under 8.5t when we finish the build, that includes 400l of fresh water and 200l of diesel, here's a little top trump info on her;

- Date in service 1995
- Cummins 5.9ltr turbo diesel engine
- 145 bhp (she's slow on steep hills)
- Max speed 89km/h (we got her to 60mph on the M56 the other day but 50 is more comfortable - 40 preferred!)
- Permanent 4x4
- Hi-Lo ratio with diff lock
- Air brakes
- Power steering (thankfully!)
- Seating for 2 (was 3 but we removed the middle seat)
- Cargo capacity of 5000 kgs
- Designed to cross a 0.5m trench, Ford at 0.6m
- Currently doing 12-15 miles per gallon



When we met you both, you were at Loch Ness - how did the rest of your trip go?

Despite challenging high winds in what is effectively a small lorry, it was simply stunning. We adore Scotland, something about it just feels like home and without said challenging weather you simply wouldn't get such epic landscapes. We went up to Skye, over to Lewis & Harris and then down through the Uists but we really could have doubled the time we spent there, we're avid hikers and didn't get our boots on nearly enough. The main purpose of the trip was a shake down for longer ventures and we're pleased to say she passed with flying colours!



How about your long term plans for Penelope?

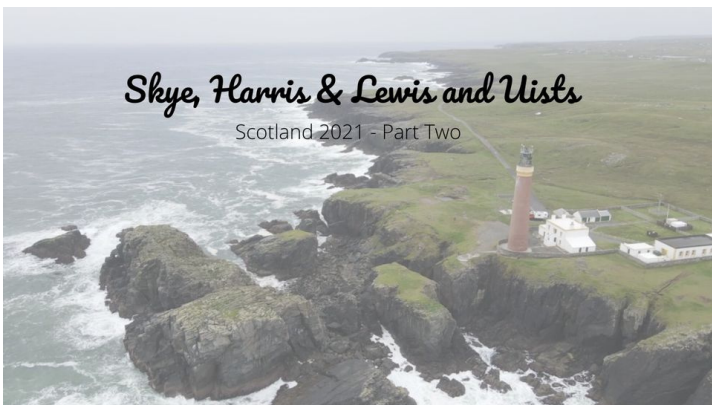
There are some modifications we still want to make, purely because we can, but in 12 months time we will be leaving the UK for good! We're selling the house and everything along with it and heading off East with Georgia as our initial goal destination (with plenty of stops along the way), then we will decide where beyond once we're there.

# Up Sticks!

## PENELOPE THE TRUCK

Lots of people dream about taking a year out and travelling the world, but you're actually going to do it! How are you planning on making your dreams a reality?

We actually hope to be away for more than a year but to keep things realistic we are blocking out 12 months initially. For the next 12 months; we both have three jobs, so we work a lot, but we have some ambitious financial plans to enable the travel to take place so needs must! While on the road; as well as the savings we are building up, we also have a few opportunities to create income while we travel, our YouTube channel and blogs etc as well as remote working which we are working on building up now, while we have the resources and the flexibility. We will both seek the opportunity to take a 12 month sabbatical from our 'main' day jobs if the option is there.



It's such a big, wonderful world out there, how on earth do you decide on a route, and are there any places you definitely just have to see?

That's a difficult question! The route will be mostly unplanned, but of course the hot air balloons over Cappadocia, ancient temples throughout Greece and the gigantic stone heads at Mt Nemrut to name but a few. We have a planned part way destination which helps, but we do aim to get through to lands beyond Europe pretty quickly.

We're both very well travelled and favour remote wilderness and dramatic landscapes so overland travel suits us well. We seek to avoid main cities, opting instead for small local villages full of culture, family and tradition, the paths less trodden, where you can truly immerse yourself into local life.

If you want to follow Kerry and Craig on their adventures, check out the following links:

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

<https://penelopethetruck.com/links/>

<https://www.instagram.com/penelopethetruck/>

# Word Up!

## YOUR POEMS ON THE THEME OF CELEBRATION

### **I Scored The Touchdown**

Even though it was a perfect pass  
right in my hands  
nonetheless  
I scored the touchdown

The offense line blocked the rushers  
leaving me wide open  
but still  
I scored the touchdown

Not my first touchdown ever  
not even my first in this game  
regardless  
I scored the touchdown

My touchdown dance was so perfect  
I got a flag and six figure fine  
oh well  
I scored the touchdown

It resulted in a fifteen yard penalty  
ultimately cost us the game  
too bad  
I scored the touchdown

*Carl 'Papa' Palmer*

### **Inauguration**

(On 14 October 2021 I Stephanie Boyce formally became the first person of color to become president of the Law Society of England and Wales)

She takes the stand.  
October. Black. History.  
Made by a woman.  
Over here, a 'she'  
has become president,  
a black president,  
at last.

In this darkly august hall  
-drenched with faux Gothic  
where portraits of plantation-  
sponsored sons cling on  
shadowed walls – they  
celebrate letting in  
new light.

*Helen Shay*

### **Washing up on New Year's Morning, 1 January 2020**

Scraping the curry off last year's plates  
and rinsing off lipsticked stale ale;  
I can still taste the laughter

as glasses clink in a clouding sink,  
where turmeric leaves its sunshine stain  
and uncrossed knives remain

uncrossed and glint for those  
who share the glow of saffron  
with a wink of chilli.

Washing up not washing away,  
still savouring, forever savouring  
the spice of camaraderie.

*Janette Ostle*



# Make Up!

## WRITESPACE

Meet Mel Eaton, a woman on a mission to spread a little creative joy

Mel, you run creative skills workshops, especially writing and art. What do you think it is about creative expression that makes us feel good?

Many of us look to creative activities, not just because we enjoy them but because of how they make us feel internally. We simply feel good when we create – creating gives us a sense of ownership and pride. Immersing yourself in creative activities can help you to understand the world and your place in it. It gives us a sense of identity and belonging. Creativity also opens you up to simple joys and helps to reignite the love of small pleasures.

In my workshops, I like to establish a gentle, non-pressurised environment where people feel comfortable opening up without the fear of judgement, criticism or failure. Inventiveness occurs when we relax and allow ourselves the time to be curious, to experiment and take risks that we normally wouldn't.

Writing and art are the mediums by which I can explore my emotions in a non-verbal way. I also advocate other methods of creative expression –



sculpture, crafting, movie-making, photography, music, dance, theatre, yoga, meditation – the possibilities are endless. Of course, you can be creative in other areas too – maths, science, business... Creativity and self-expression is not necessarily

just limited to the arts!

Increasingly, the link between creativity and mental wellbeing is being acknowledged. Do you have any examples you could give us of seeing this up close?

Partaking in creative pastimes can help us manage our mood and boost our wellbeing. They help to restore our emotional balance and inner harmony and alleviate stress. So many people who have been to my workshops have said how much more positive and energised they feel after permitting themselves the time and space to express themselves.

Our lives are so busy. We put so much pressure on ourselves - motherhood, fatherhood, work, relationships, financial concerns, caring for others ... Too often in life we set ourselves standards that we're not capable of reaching and this can lead to high levels of stress and anxiety. We worry so much about what constitutes 'success' that sometimes we just forget to STOP and slow down and love the world we are in. I love to hear comments in sessions about how people feel that 'time appears to slow down' and how they have just enjoyed 'being lost in the moment.' Creativity really is a great distraction tool!

As well as reducing anxiety and depression, many attendees have reported that taking part in



# Make Up!

## WRITESPACE

creative experiences has helped to bring back 'a sense of self' and increased feelings of self-worth and self-value. It's always lovely to see personal confidence develop within creative sessions. At the start of a session I can almost feel that sense of tension and unease and it's wonderful to see it ebb away as people immerse themselves in their art.



Above all, I love seeing the power of connection in my groups. Engaging in creative activities can help us breach feelings of isolation and loneliness.

There's something about taking part in the arts that brings about a gentle bonding with others. I have met so many incredible people in my workshops and have made so many lovely friendships over the past couple of years. I honestly feel like the lucky one!

Last but not least, let's also not forget the fun side of creativity. My favourite comments come from those who report feelings of connecting with their inner child again – being playful and experimenting and just enjoying activities for the sake of it! Then there are those who just like getting messy. I'll say no more- you know who you are!

**You work across ages, from young children to ... well, shall we say 'senior' people? Do you think we become more resistant to creativity as we age or is the propensity to just create for fun always there regardless?**

The advantage children have over adults is that to them anything is possible. Their imaginations are boundless and their hopeful minds have no limitations. The world of a child is one of imagination and wonder and they will confidently

experiment, explore and invent without fear of making mistakes.

Naturally, as we grow older our inner creativity starts to decline. We become more socially aware and start to push ourselves towards conformity. We begin to experience failure and worry that whatever we create is not good enough. Sadly, this self-doubt can crush creativity.

As adults, we really do have a lot to learn from children and sometimes I think that we just have to go back to our younger minds and regain that earlier sense of playfulness and curiosity.

**There are lots of us who were told at school that we weren't very good at one or other aspects of the arts. What would you say to those people?**

Be brave! Take the risks! Just go for it and find the flow! Seek out new activities that ignite your passion and interest, pastimes that make you feel good inside and bring you inner peace and joy.

Life is too short to worry about what other people think. Open yourself up and listen to that inner child again - the child that isn't afraid to sing or dance or draw, the child that just experiences life for its pure joys.

So take the plunge in 2022 and make creativity part of your daily diet! Try something new with the knowledge that it's going to have a great effect on your mental, social and emotional health! Remember that getting hands-on with something new and creative is important regardless of skill level; it is the taking part that counts!

Creativity really is magical. It's a gift that can help us to live happier and healthier lives.

***You can find out more about Mel's creative sessions here:***

**<https://www.facebook.com/writespacenortheast>**

# Hole Up!

## THE HUT OF WELLBEING

Up! talks to Alan Carter, Director of Reforesting Scotland about their fabulous vision - a retreat for those who really need it

**Thanks for agreeing to talk to us. We love the idea of the Hut Of Wellbeing. For our readers, could you tell us how the project came about?**

Some years ago, the law in Scotland was changed to make it easier to get planning permission for simple woodland huts. One of our members planned to build a hut of his own, but a diagnosis of inoperable cancer made this into an impossible dream. As a result, he thought what a good thing it would be to have a hut somewhere that was available for short stays for people in positions like his - without the stress of building and owning a hut.

Reforesting Scotland pioneered the original change in the law, and we now work to support hutting and make it available as widely as possible, so we agreed to try to make this dream a reality. We have had support from an estate and a hutting community in Fife that is keen to host the hut, and a steering group of hutters, carers and members has been working on hut design, planning issues and fundraising. We recently launched a crowdfunder at [www.crowdfunder.co.uk/hut-of-wellbeing](http://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/hut-of-wellbeing).

**The hut itself is beautifully crafted but is quite basic and simple in design. Is this simplicity an intrinsic part of the 're-connecting with nature' experience?**

Yes, huts are now defined in Scots planning law as simple structures of no more than 30m<sup>2</sup>, off grid and made of natural materials. They must be designed so that they can be removed easily at the end of their lives, leaving no trace. The idea is to



make them low impact and affordable. In countries that already have a strong hutting tradition, huts provide a connection to a wild place for people living in cities, with one family sometimes owning and returning to one hut for generations. The simplicity is part of this: it gives a freedom from the distractions and concerns of day-to-day life and removes the barriers that we build between us and nature.

**What do people get from a stay in the hut that they wouldn't get from, say, a hotel break?**

There is now lots of evidence that being amidst nature has many benefits for both our physical and our mental health. People who spend time in nature have better health than those with a similar background who do not, and hospital patients even recover faster if they have a view of trees from their window. Contact with nature increases qualities like calmness, joy, creativity and concentration, while reducing depression and anxiety.

This effect is strongest when people not only spend time in nature but when they also notice and develop a connection with it. We might visit nature from a hotel, but in a hut we are in it all day and night, with the sounds of the woods around us even as we fall asleep. Repeat visits to a hut allow a deeper connection with a place to develop, seeing it in different seasons and conditions.

# Hole Up!

## THE HUT OF WELLBEING



In the [video](#), there's talk of a need for a 'hutting revolution'. Do you have plans for more of these great facilities to be made available to people in need of them?

At the moment we are concentrating on making this one hut a success! However, the idea has already inspired others and we have had people getting in touch to ask for advice about how they might do

something similar in their area or institution. A doctor who contributed to our crowdfunder said that they wished they had something similar in their area that they could prescribe for their patients; and someone from a Scottish university picked our brains about building a hut for stressed staff and students.

If we can demonstrate that the idea works, we will have experience and a template that can be reproduced elsewhere, both by ourselves and by others. We want there to be lots of different models for hutting and we hope that in the future the Hut of Wellbeing will be not just one hut but a type, available to all who need them.

*Well we don't know about you, but we think this is a brilliant idea. If you want to find out more about Reforesting Scotland or their campaign, just go to:*

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/118307858251185>



*Nature in her green, tranquil woods heals and soothes all afflictions*

**John Muir**

*The quieter you become, the more you are able to hear*

**Rumi**

*Adopt the pace of nature. Her secret is patience*

**Ralph Waldo Emerson**

# Sing Up!

GERRY BELDON

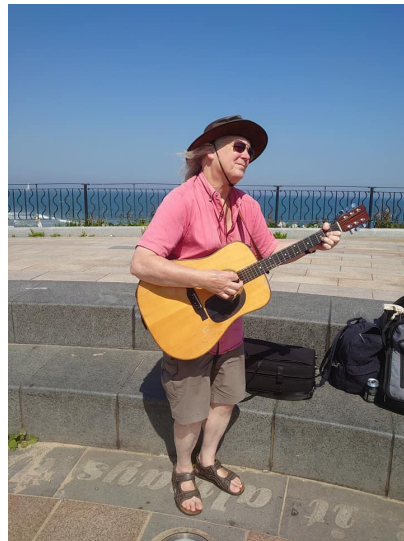
**North east legend and all round 'good guy', Gerry Beldon, on why music is good for body and soul**

I'm writing this on World Mental Health Day - 10th October. We should probably celebrate the fact that there is such a day, and that people are beginning to discuss topics around mental health – some are even prepared to admit to issues with their own mental health.

But we have a very long way to go, despite the staggering prevalence of these issues – almost half of all adults believe they have had a diagnosable mental illness at some point, and 30% have had a formal diagnosis.

Of course, we are all aware that there are many more options for treatment these days, even if waiting lists are forbidding, but there are steps we can all take to look after ourselves – the psychological equivalent of going for a brisk walk or a jog.

There are many who preach the benefits of sport – especially team sport – as a way of keeping the whole person fit : “*mens sana in corpore sano*”. There is a body of evidence for the benefits of “Mind Sports” such as Chess, Scrabble, Bridge etc, especially live



and in person. Even Crosswords and Sudoku can be beneficial.

And increasingly, the benefits of participation in communal singing are backed up by research. Formal or informal choirs, for example, support

social contact. In addition, the physical benefits of singing including respiratory, circulatory and neurological improvements.

But perhaps the best antidote to the pressures of modern life is the joy and sheer exuberance of the informal ‘singaround’ – coming together in a room with a group of random individuals to celebrate and share a wide variety of music.

There is no need for formal musical ability – anyone can participate, deriving all the social benefits of shared activity, with no pressure to compete, and the affirmation that comes from the appreciation of everyone in the room when you present your song, poem, story or tune.

There are, of course, Buskers and Open Mic sessions, which present opportunities to showcase individuals or groups, but there is an undeniable magic in the simplicity of the pure acoustic session, allowing wider, impromptu participation without the need for plugging in.

The breadth of knowledge and talent in our local music scene is an endless fascination. In one recent session we heard a number of centuries-old dance tunes, an acoustic rendition of a heavy metal song, a bit of rock and roll, country, blues, and a couple of brand-new songs performed by the authors. Not forgetting the original poetry from our very own local bard! (*that's enough of that!* – Ed.)



# Sing Up!

GERRY BELDON

There can be learning moments, emotional highs and lows, remembrance, sometimes sad, sometimes joyful, often exuberant. But what I can promise is that you will leave these sessions happier than when you arrived, and that, in today's stressful world, is no mean thing.

Dive in, enjoy, refresh your soul!

*Gerry leads music sessions at The Brewery in Whitley Bay, every Wednesday from 8pm, and at The Three Tuns, Shildon, every Saturday from 8pm.*

*Details of other sessions, events and clubs are on the [North-East Folkies Facebook](#) page. For readers in other regions - and there are quite a lot of you - just have a google and we bet you'll find plenty of opportunities. Go on ... have a wee sing - you'll feel better for it!*



## Cartoon Corner

Up!'s resident artist brings you more fun facts ...

Scientists have discovered that the genome sequence of great apes and humans is very similar. And so it comes as no surprise to find that apes and humans also share an interest in many aspects of wellbeing.

Here we see a blissed-out gorilla in full yogic flight - om, om, om.

**You can contact John at [pickinjohn@gmail.com](mailto:pickinjohn@gmail.com)**



# Word Up!

YOUR POEMS ON THE THEME OF  
CELEBRATION



## Slender

The air cools, feels thin like morning  
mist clearing to display the gold  
of fallen leaves. Beak-pecked apples  
moulder on sodden grass. November,  
when abundance slims to scarcity,  
tightening its belt, yet cutting a good figure.

The waif-like veil becomes sheer  
between the worlds, as life folds  
into unlife. You cannot call it death,  
not when the rich wood-soaked scent  
of damp decay defies that, whispering,  
'Hush, all of this will renew'.

I breathe deep, clench in my stomach,  
becoming slighter but stronger,  
celebrating the slither-turn  
of the year, knowing  
this is not  
the end.

*Helen Shay*

*My three year old grand-boy, moody from his  
nap, drags his blanket to the patio, sits down  
to wake up, watches me watering flowers.  
Suddenly he jumps up, points, no longer half  
asleep, "Papa, you're making magic!"*

## Arbor Artist

garden hose rain  
showers flower baskets  
spraying pastel prism mists  
onto rays of summer sunshine  
papa painting rainbows in the sky

papa painting rainbows in the sky  
onto rays of summer sunshine  
spraying pastel prism mists  
showers flower baskets  
garden hose rain

*Carl 'Papa' Palmer*

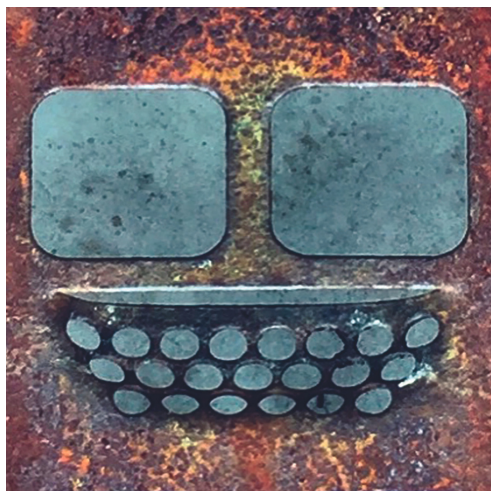
Next month's theme is - FOOD

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](mailto:TalkToUp@gmail.com)

# Beam Up!

CHRISTINE JEANS

Musician and photographer, Christine Jeans shares her 'Saturday smiles'. As she says, 'when you start noticing, they pop up everywhere!' We're particularly fond of the mushroom - which one's your favourite?





# Listen Up!

REVEREND ELIZABETH BROWN

Revd Elizabeth Brown, a Church of England hospital chaplain, writes for Up! about the history and current practice of hospital chaplains.

HOSPITAL CHAPLAINCY – THEN AND NOW

## Chaplaincy in General:

Although most folks associate pastoral care with Vicars, there is (and has always been) a hugely diverse group who support others in different ways. Chaplains (both religious and non-religious) work in nursing and care homes; the police and military; the courts, local government and parliament; hospitals and emergency services; the retail and commercial sectors, and schools and sports clubs. The North-East alone has well over a thousand Chaplains, paid and unpaid. Many are inspired and supported by their belief communities, religious or philosophical (such as Buddhist or Humanist). Chaplains embed themselves in a particular place and space, coming alongside others to best understand and support their situations and lives, offering pastoral care, meeting people where they are.

## Christian Beginnings:

From the time of the Apostles, supporting those in need out in the community was seen as a priority, and the seven great Christian virtues included caring and supporting the needy, the sick and the dying. At Rosslyn Chapel near Edinburgh, there are beautiful carvings which represent these virtues – with one (charity) swapped with one of the seven deadly sins (avarice) possibly to remind those who serve others to ensure that their actions were not done for selfish gain!



## Monastic Roots:

The first hospitals in Europe were monastic infirmaries and leper houses, growing up at the same time as similar early Islamic hospitals. Many monks and nuns became skilled apothecaries and nurses. This is why even now some senior female nurses are called Sister (the term Matron is derived from the “Mother” of the convent). Chaplains have been part of hospital life from the start. Often monastic hospitals were separate from their community (due to infection risk) and the Hospital Chaplains would be the priests sent to oversee them, ensuring the physical and religious wellbeing of patients. These infirmaries and houses fulfilled everything we know now as health and social care, based in the belief that physical, mental and spiritual wellbeing were all one.

## Abrupt Endings and New Starts:

Monastic healthcare almost completely ceased in England in 1540, with the dissolution of the monasteries. Three monastic hospitals, however, remained in London due to a public petition to Henry VIII – St Bartholomew’s, St Thomas’ and St Mary of Bethlehem (later known as Bedlam). It wasn’t until the 18th century ‘Enlightenment’ that modern hospitals emerged, serving purely medical needs and

# Listen Up!

REVEREND ELIZABETH BROWN

run by trained physicians and surgeons. A few Chaplains remained but mainly arrangements were made between parish clergy and local hospitals and alms houses. Certainly, when the NHS was formed in 1948, there were only 28 full time Church of England chaplains.

## Modern Times:

By 2010, though, there were approximately 325 full-time healthcare Church of England chaplains and 1,500 part-time, with chaplains from other Christian denominations, religions or belief groups (such as Islam, Judaism, Buddhism and Humanism) making up the rest. Since 2017, the UK Board of Healthcare Chaplaincy has kept a professional register. It provides public accountability for paid healthcare chaplains and promotes high standards. Chaplains registered with the Board study at post graduate level, continue their learning every year and can call themselves a 'Board Registered' Chaplain. I am one of these. In addition, there are thousands of unpaid hospital chaplaincy volunteers across the country, also from different backgrounds and faiths.

## Myth-Busting:

If you ask someone what a Chaplain does in a modern hospital, you'll most likely get the answer that they support three types of people - patients of faith, the dying and the bereaved. This, of course, is true, but these are only a small part of the role. Chaplains provide a cradle-to-grave pastoral service for any patient who would like it, which can include visiting a 99-year-old one minute and a new-born and their family the next. We also support visitors, especially those who come regularly.

## Total or Holistic Healthcare:

Supporting a person's spiritual life is a very important part of their overall care, with physical, psychological, social and spiritual wellbeing all interacting. Certainly, if a person is worrying about their home or family, religious practices (e.g. prayer, modesty or fasting), moral choices (e.g. veganism) or even their hobbies (e.g. is their garden being watered), it can disrupt or delay their outcomes. Chaplains teach their clinical colleagues how to support spiritual needs and recognize spiritual distress, and often contribute to the strategy and values of their organizations.

## Definition of Spirituality:

A good understanding of spirituality is really important. Christians often use the term to describe the type of worship and prayers they prefer; others might use it as a term to separate themselves from religion (saying "I'm not religious, but I am spiritual"). The true definition though is much wider. A nursing professor in 2018 described spirituality as: "in everyone; unique and deeply personal; changing in response to life's events and experiences; what makes us tick and buzz, and motivates us. So, a person's spiritual life is always worthy of dignity and respect."

A hospital chaplain in Scotland, wrote recently about our spirituality:

"Each of us weaves for ourselves a tapestry in life made up of many threads. These threads are the different aspects of our lives, which give meaning, shape and purpose to our existence - everything from enjoying a hot bath to watching rugby, special relationships we have, our beliefs and values, to our membership of the church or a miner's welfare club."

## Spiritual Needs:

Spiritual needs are therefore beyond purely religious ones; non-religious people have

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spiritual needs too. Chaplains offer support to everyone. Certainly, it's important for hospital staff to recognize where a person's "life tapestry" might begin to unravel. Being in hospital can in itself start the edges to fray, with keeping in touch with family, friends, faith and work being harder, especially since Covid. Often, people don't have access to important possessions which help them keep on an even-keel - in fact, one of the exercises we do with new staff is to get them to imagine what they would pack if they themselves were coming into hospital, and how they might feel if they didn't have those things to hand.

Being in hospital can, for some, cause sad feelings or bring back difficult memories; Chaplains support and help anyone who needs to talk. Faith and religious practice often have a deeper importance for patients while in hospital too, whether they have been churchgoers for years, have turned away from or lapsed in their faith, or are starting to think about faith for the first time. Baptisms in hospital are relatively common, from babies through to the elderly and everyone in between. Weddings occur occasionally, under strict guidelines.

## **Talking and Listening:**

Often a Chaplain is the only person a patient can talk to who doesn't have a vested interest in the conversation. Chaplains are not allowed to evangelize, or even share about their own faith unless a person asks - so, instead, attentive listening is at the centre of our work. Asking simple questions (like "how is your day" or "what's on your mind") can be enough to open

up a conversation and then the Chaplain listens carefully, sometimes asking questions to clarify what has been said, to help the person with their own thinking. This type of pastoral encounter helps people to release or handle emotions; consider concerns; feel less isolated; or work out what help they need.

## **Spiritual Distress is not Depression:**

Worries or even spiritual distress are most often not a sign of mental illness - these are just ordinary people struggling with difficulties or sadness. Many GPs now employ Chaplains to help them. A pastoral listening ear is proven to help people avoid clinical depression in the long run. A problem shared is a problem halved, as they say - and often Chaplains are available at short notice to provide support for issues or difficult life events, meaning that people are less likely to end up needing clinical mental health support.

## **Who are Chaplains?:**

This seems a strange question to end on, but the answer draws all of this together. Ways of approaching and listening to others can be taught but, at the core, Chaplains are people who feel inspired to reach out to and support others through difficult times, giving their time and empathy. Most are inspired by a mixture of compassion and experience, whether coming from their faith or their values. Whatever their inspiration, all see it as a privilege to do what they do. Not all are professional or full time - in fact, we have a group of volunteers who give up a couple of hours a week to support patients, being trained and supported locally. If you feel that this is something you might like to consider, feel free to contact the Lead Chaplain of the Trust closest to you.



# Word Up!

YOUR POEMS ON THE THEME OF  
CELEBRATION

**Willows**  
(after Ivon Hitchens)

sometimes  
you can hear the voices in the woods  
sighing by a sycamore tree  
singing of a green willow,  
streams of light filtering the riverbed,  
the tangled pool, the linear stretch,  
the gate between shadowed waters,  
the leaf, the path, the veins,  
the patterned willow boughs  
gently curling grey-green leaves  
flowing from olive-brown arcing stems,  
sometimes  
you can see the music in the woods

**Barry Smith**

Next month's theme is - FOOD

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](mailto:TalkToUp@gmail.com)



[offdowntherabbithole.org](http://offdowntherabbithole.org)

**It's all about the 'Tops'**

Excited tugs at her mother's hemline  
a hug of her American Tan safety nets  
she clicks the key, unlocking the door  
wide eyes survey the red tiled floor  
tucked behind the old porch pillar  
in a plastic basket, white pint bottles stand.  
Delighted at the nectar cream inside  
perfectly divided from the white below.

As always, they're not the first to feed,  
greedy garden birds with pointy beaks already  
pecked the silver foil into jagged peaks just enough  
to sneak in and steal some of the precious 'Tops'.  
Tiny hands help carry one safely inside, watching the line  
keeping it steady as ice-cold drips drop from the bottom.

Bowls of golden flakes sprinkled with Tate and Lyle  
wait ready as Daddy gives her a wink and smiles  
and he pours without shaking that daily celebration  
each spoonful of sweetness a dream on the lips.

**Adele Duffield**

# Step Up!

## CLUB 30-80

Up! talks to Roger Newbrook about the benefits of a good boogie

**Can you tell our readers a little bit about your Club and how you got started.**

In spring 2016 my friend Rosie and I decided to host a dance night for the over 30s at North Wing, a community space in Ouseburn. We called the night Club 30-80 as a pun on the holiday company name Club 18-30, switching the focus onto us “oldies”, the over thirties! We figured there were loads of people out there like us who would still be up for a dance but not necessarily want to go to a nightclub. We didn’t want to focus on one particular type of music or one particular era, and we were keen to build the playlist around requests from the people who came. This fitted in with our new strap-line “dance to music YOU want to hear” too.

We put up posters in pubs and advertised in *The Crack*. We didn’t know what was going to happen or if anyone was going to turn up, we’d never done anything like this before. We thought it might be a one-off but were pleasantly surprised how many people turned up and seemed to really enjoy themselves! Afterwards we took email addresses and sent round a questionnaire to see if they would come in the autumn. The feedback was brilliant, so we booked in extra dates.

I’d never DJ’ed before but figured I’d give it a try. It turns out to be really good fun.

We set up a Facebook page ([www.facebook.com/groups/club30to80](http://www.facebook.com/groups/club30to80)). Our members (about 350) post requests and chat about all manner of nonsense. It’s quite a little community now. I also run a blog with personal



musings and event information and playlists ([blog.club30to80.co.uk](http://blog.club30to80.co.uk)).

We’ve hosted five live events a year since. We have our regulars and always some new faces at each event. We get people from across the age range too (30-80), and as a result the mix of requests is eclectic but always fun! We have had people in their 70s pogoing to the Sex Pistols and raving out to Fat Boy Slim. We even allow “young” people in sometimes; appropriately accompanied, of course!

**Here at Up! we firmly believe that a good boogie can really benefit body and soul. Is this your experience too?**

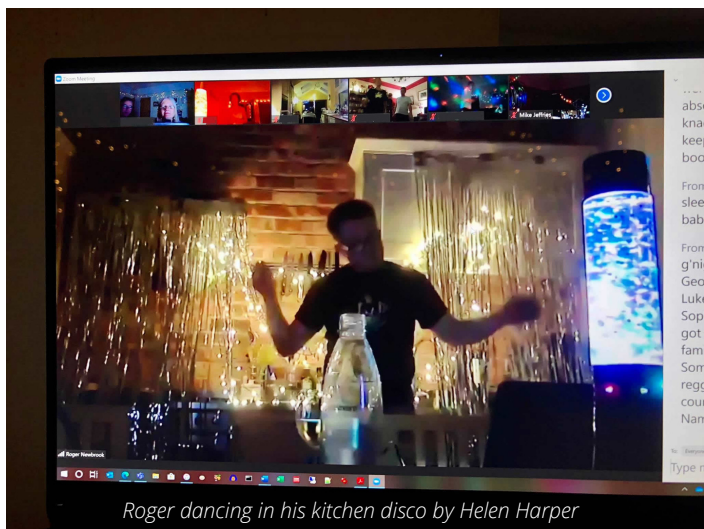
Absolutely! I’m fully in favour of an impromptu wiggle whenever the need arises. It makes me smile.

When Lockdown hit last year the wellness of body and soul became even more important. We took our activities online, I set up a streaming service from my laptop to the internet (to make an online radio station) and a Zoom room for dancing and chatting. These “Stay Home Specials” were held fortnightly and we turned kitchens across the land (sometimes Europe, New Zealand and America too) into impromptu discos complete with lights, mirror balls and even, a smoke machine with an attendee on roller skates!

Our Stay Home Specials had themes, partly to stop me playing the same songs each time. We’ve

# Step Up!

CLUB 30-80



celebrated (amongst other things) two Lockdown birthdays, Yorkshire Day, Halloween, Advent, Earth Day, Europe, the anniversary of a huge lump of gold found in the Australian Outback and the invention of the hole punch! Themes are fun.

I didn't expect people join in with these online events, but the response was phenomenal. People have said how much it has helped them escape the weight of COVID restrictions and was something they looked forward to. It has been a joy for me too. Seeing people responding to the music I played and seeing them laughing and smiling was such a positive thing.

As I write, we're about to re-enter the "real world" again tomorrow with our first event in a proper venue, meeting face to face for the first time in 18 months. Club 30-80 is finally "goin' out"! There's a little trepidation countered by a lot of excitement at the prospect. I think it'll be really good fun.

I asked this question to some of our club regulars too:

*Dancing just seems to make me feel better whatever is going on... Rosie*

*I don't think I realised how much I missed dancing until the first "at home" you hosted at the beginning of Covid. I realised I'd missed dressing up, and the fun and mood elevating effect of hearing great tunes, and "moving to the rhythm", to misquote Grace Jones. And the company, of course! Ruth*

*I never knew dancing around a kitchen could be as much fun as it is. Fantastic tunes and brilliant company. What more can I ask for. Pam*

*At uni I used to go to alternative clubs in Leeds (e.g The Phono) and dance almost non-stop for four hours to (often angry) music. It kept me slim, healthy and, most of all, sane. It offered total catharsis. I miss it badly. Jo*

**In the same way that so many people were told as youngsters that they can't sing, lots of people believe they can't dance. How do you go about encouraging your members to strut their stuff?**

Generally speaking the audience doesn't need much encouragement to get up and dance, particularly to a song they or their friends have requested, that's part of the beauty of the idea behind Club 30-80 I suppose, it's an interactive disco. You can never really know what's going to fill the floor. The popularity of *I Lost My Heart to a Starship Trooper* never ceases to amaze me!



We've hosted our parties at a number of local venues since we started but have come to think of Prohibition Cabaret Bar (where the old Jazz Café

# Step Up!

## CLUB 30-80

used to be) on Pink Lane in Newcastle as our home from home.

It's a great space, done out in 1920s speakeasy style with a lovely laid back, friendly atmosphere and most importantly it's an inclusive, safe environment. I think this helps people to feel relaxed and comfortable too. They host all sorts of great events from Cabaret and Comedy to live music, parties and even theatre performances (<https://prohibitionbar.co.uk/>)

### **There's so much great dance music out there, how on earth do you decide what to play?**

Largely, the audience decides what we play. We start off with a sort of skeleton playlist of songs and add in their requests.

About two thirds of the songs we play are requests that come in either beforehand (email etc.) and on the night on Post-It Notes we provide. We try to play music from the 40s to the present day and a typical party will include some disco, Motown, glam, reggae, swing, punk, pop, rock, new wave, Goth, indie, electro and easy listening classics and anything else in between. It can get a bit chaotic!

**A personal question to finish on. You step into Dance Heaven and hear the start of a track that makes you race to the dance floor. What's playing? ...**

That's a tough question. I have a really eclectic musical taste but I really love all kinds of electronic music. Ironically I did have a bop around the bedroom yesterday while ironing to Sparks' "The Number One Song in Heaven" so that seems fitting for starters.

Do you think they'll let me make my own playlist?

### **Quick update from Roger:**

*after our "goin' out" event last night: we wanted to see if we could still have a good time beyond the confines of our kitchens! We can, and did! Our first live date since March 2020 was brilliant.*

**Our next event is on Saturday 6th November.**

**Details on our Facebook page:**

**[www.facebook.com/groups/club30to80](http://www.facebook.com/groups/club30to80)**



*Hand in hand, on the edge of the sand, they danced by the light of the moon*

**Edward Lear**

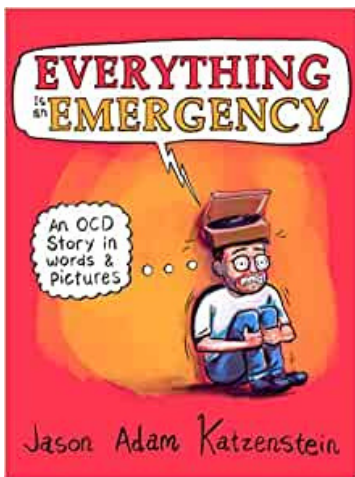
*Those who were seen dancing were thought to be insane  
by those who could not hear the music*

**Friedrich Nietzsche**

# Read Up!

MEGAN PATTIE

Up!'s resident book reviewer brings you some of the best wellbeing reads



With the rise in mental health conversations which has rightly come out of the extraordinary circumstances of the past two years, has arisen another phenomenon: that of graphic novels and illustrated books covering mental health themes. One of the first of these that I came across was *New Yorker* cartoonist Jason Adam Katzenstein's *Everything Is An Emergency: An OCD Story in Words and Pictures*, in a *Vice* interview with Katzenstein led by a journalist who was also an OCD sufferer. This interview linked directly to the pandemic by addressing ignorant claims made by a Stanford professor that "we all need OCD now". It appeared then, that Katzenstein's graphic novel, illustrating - literally - that OCD is far from useful under any circumstances, was very much needed at this time.

Katzenstein's book narrates his personal journey with OCD, starting in childhood and showing the many ups and downs of recovering from and living with a debilitating mental illness. In it, he uses his cartoon-style artwork to show what experiencing Obsessions and Compulsions is really like, literally rendering these abstract and difficult to understand things visible in a visceral, effective, and sometimes even humorous way. In places, *Everything Is An Emergency* is very much comic; from the quip about "Queen Amygdala" to the characters Katzenstein assigns to the various facets of his OCD, Katzenstein uses comedy not only to render serious and scientific parts of his story accessible, but also, as he says, to reduce the power his mental illness has over him by mocking it.

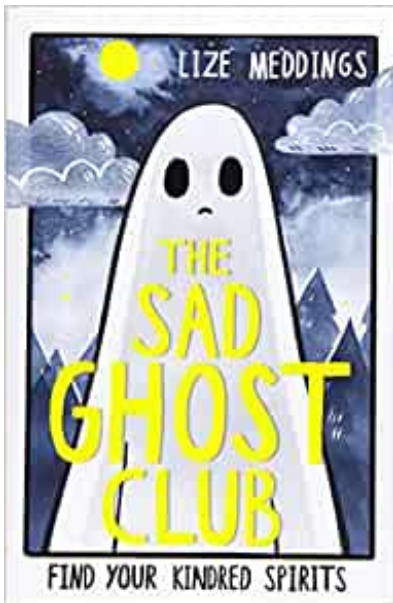
On finishing *Everything Is An Emergency*, I have felt better educated, heart-warmed, and, as an OCD sufferer myself, seen. I would never have imagined a book like this before, but it appears that Katzenstein has struck upon a really effective way of telling this story by putting it into a graphic novel.

Another artist who has used this form to explore mental health themes is Lize Meddings, the artist behind internet comic *The Sad Ghost Club*, which uses non-narrative comic strips to offer comfort and support to people with mental illnesses, who don't feel like they belong to any other "club". In 2020, Lize Meddings' first full *The Sad Ghost Club* graphic novel was published. Aimed at teenagers, the main character of this book has anxiety, and having psyched themselves up to attending a party, they recognise and approach a "kindred spirit" who suffers from depression. Together, these two explore



# Read Up!

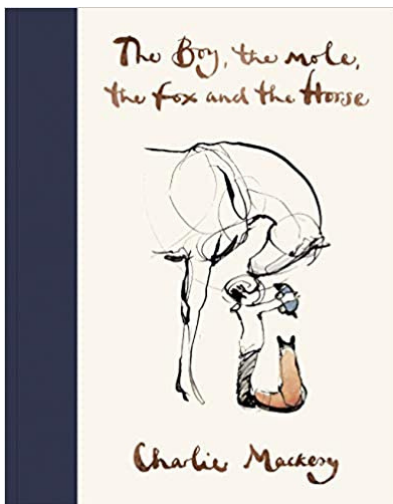
MEGAN PATTIE



each other's worries and world-views in an elucidating conversation that shows the different ways one can look at life and how one moves through it.

Meddings' illustration style is simplistic and soft, and, like Katzenstein, she uses images to better show her characters' thoughts and emotions, and how, in the context of mental illness, these can become overwhelming and even threatening. Her main characters appear as people who have sheets thrown over themselves – ghost costumes – which brings to the fore the feelings of being diminished and unseen which mental illness sufferers experience. The essence of Meddings' story and the online community she has created is that sufferers of mental illness are not alone, that there is a "club" you can belong to, where you will be supported.

As it was published as *The Sad Ghost Club #1*, I am looking forward to more of Meddings' gentle, compassionate story-telling in the future.



On the flipside of these narrative graphic novels is the appearance of heavily illustrated, mostly non-narrative books for adults, which seek to offer solace in a time when we need it most. Charlie Mackesy's *The Boy, The Mole, The Fox, and The Horse* was a sensation that came along at just the right time for many of us. While you can read this cover to cover and follow the story of The Boy and his animal companions, just as much can be gained from it by dipping in and out; opening a page at random, like a kind of comfort oracle, and sinking into Mackesy's easy, splotchy style and soothing words.

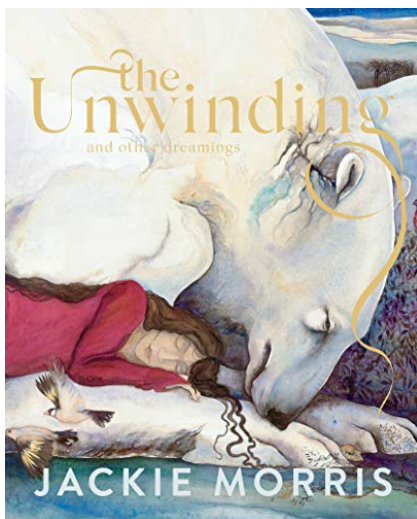
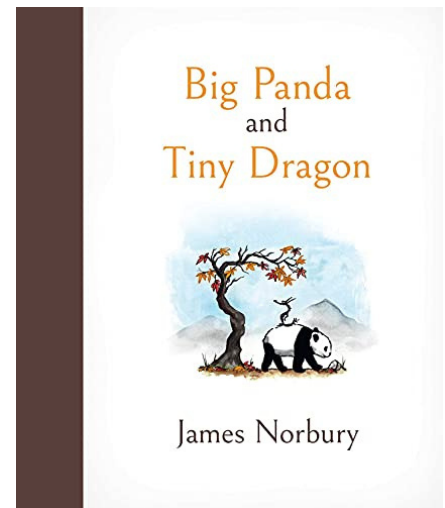
Mackesy covers all kinds of worries and troubles that one may face, approaching them with incredibly empathy and offering other ways of thinking about things, sometimes with a pleasant sense of humour (usually courtesy of The Mole). It is no wonder this amazing book has struck a chord with so many.

Following in the footsteps of Mackesy is artist James Norbury, whose book *Big Panda and Tiny Dragon* was published earlier this year, and is inspired by Buddhist teachings. Norbury's beautiful illustrations offer much needed escape, and invite you to travel through the highs and lows of life

# Read Up!

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with two unlikely friends, who are figuring out how best to approach their troubles and triumphs together.



Taking these ideas further is Jackie Morris' *The Unwinding*. The pages of Morris' book are covered edge to edge with colour illustrations in Morris' whimsical and enchanting style, and she explicitly states that "the author's wish" is that you do not read this book cover to cover, but open the book at random when you need to escape into the wonder and imagination of the stories and worlds within. I have done as she bid, and noted that her stories are without lessons or even, really, conclusions; their entire purpose is to be wallowed in without criticism or analysis. Much as John Keats says in the film *Bright Star*, when comparing poetry to a lake, "you do not try to work the lake out; the point is to be in the lake", Morris' stories and images are not meant to be studied, but experienced. They are there to light up our imaginations and let us leave our world of worry and rules for a little while. Morris even includes a prescription and directions for how best to use her book, so that we get the most out of it. This book is a medicine.

Now that the ball is rolling, I think we will see more books like these appearing and I look forward to seeing how they further the conversations we are having around mental health, and also how they inform which books adult readers can turn to for "self-help". If you are finding yourself wanting to understand mental illnesses better, or perhaps needing a bit of support yourself, you could certainly do worse than starting with these, and I hope you find what you are looking for within their pages.

*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!

Got through it all? We told you it would be a bumper issue, didn't we!

So without further ado, onto year two ...

Next month we'll be inviting you to sit down in Cafe Up! and enjoy our food-themed issue.

Whilst we have a few tasty choices on the menu already, there's still room for more so we'd love to hear from you if you have any positive food-related stories you'd like us to feature.

Until then stay safe, look after each other and don't forget, amidst the rush of everyday life, to stop and smell the coffee.

See you next month!



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](mailto:TalkToUp@gmail.com)