

# Up!

JANUARY 2023

SCOTLAND



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



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Photo by Peter Burnham

# Up Front!

Welcome everyone and Happy 2023! We hope your New Year celebrations (or should that be Hogmanay?!) were memorable for all the right reasons.

So, Hogmanay, eh? One of the many things we all associate with Scotland, which brings us neatly to this issue. What do you picture when you think of Scotland? Billy Connolly? The Isle of Skye? One of the many inventors of the modern world as we know it? How about Nan Shepherd? For the uninitiated, Nan was a hill walker, writer and all round mighty woman, who lived through much of the twentieth century - check her out!

This issue being Scotland-themed finds us wandering around Glasgow, Edinburgh, Shetland and all manner of nooks and crannies in between. There's all the usual features, plus some great folk for you to meet, so come into the body of the kirk for a wee warm.

Bridget & Harry x



# Uplands!

JENNIFER C. WILSON

**Our resident marine biologist heads north for something a little different ...**

With the theme of this month's Up! being 'Scotland', I'm deviating slightly from my usual marine biology slant, and indulging my other passion: history (all with the editors' permission, of course!). Having said that, given that Scotland has some of the most stunning coastlines in the world, I'm not going to stray too far inland. Instead, I'm focusing on some historical events which happened along that coastline, including my second-favourite historical character, and some potentially tall-tales. Enjoy!

My only worry is that other than a throwback to a ridiculous mistake in the glorious *Local Hero*, I'm currently struggling for a film reference...



We'll start fairly close to the Scottish border, and the imposing Bass Rock, just off the coast of North Berwick. These days, it's most famous for its colonies of seabirds, but although humans are merely visitors today, to count or care for the birds, there have been inhabitants there in the past, starting with Christian hermits, who chose to live there, all the way through to Jacobite rebels,



whose presence there was less than voluntary.

In the 1690s, the mighty Rock was

still a prison, and was holding four Jacobite officers, who were determined to make good their escape. When their guards were distracted by the need to unload a shipment of coal, the prisoners simply closed the prison gate whilst their guards were conveniently on the other side. The guards abandoned the Rock, and left to their own devices, the Jacobite officers took full advantage of the garrison's weaponry, bombarding any ship which got too close, and using support sent from sympathisers to keep themselves going.

After three years, the men were starting to run low on supplies, but were equally determined not to surrender. They invited government representatives to the Rock to discuss a surrender, and used the last of their supplies to host a grand feast. Thinking the Jacobite officers still had plenty of supplies, the government men offered their release, as well as that of any other currently-captured Jacobite supporter, all being granted free passage to France. The Jacobites, unsurprisingly, agreed, and handed back the keys to the Rock.

Not sure how much of a positive 'up' vibe there is to that story, other than that perhaps at heart, I believe in the romanticism of the Jacobites, and at least this was a daring escape with no bloodshed, only some majorly-bruised egos... and who doesn't love a good old fashioned tale of derring-do, and getting one over on a government body?

# Uplands!

JENNIFER C. WILSON

Onto my second-favourite historical character then. For those who don't know me, Richard III takes the top spot, but he is only fractionally ahead of Mary Queen of Scots, a heroine I spent a large proportion of my childhood stalking from one castle to the other.



Boats, and journeys by sea, played a big part in Mary's life, both taking her to glorious new beginnings, and symbolising the beginning of the end. On the 7th of August 1548, Mary set sail from Dumbarton with her own court, for the dizzying glamour of the French court, to take her place as the betrothed of the Dauphin, the heir apparent to the French throne, and in Mary's case, the ill-fated Francis. Mary, already Queen of Scots since days after her birth, was also in part escaping threats at home, but despite this, apparently kept watch on the Scottish coastline until it finally vanished from view, and was the

only person on board not to fall prey to seasickness. As somebody who has spent more than her fair share of time on various CalMac ferries, I completely understand her unwillingness to let Scotland slip from her sight.

Tragically, fast-forwarding twenty years to 1568, Mary was sailing from Scotland again, only this time to a decidedly more hostile foreign power, England, under the rule of her cousin, Elizabeth I. Most of you will probably be aware of how that ended up...

I desperately need some positive Scottish coast stories. \*Skips past the tale of the East Lothian cannibals\*

Perhaps we should explore some Scottish coastal myths and legends? Fingal's Cave on Staffa, off the west coast, is famous for its natural acoustics, and is the Scottish equivalent of the Giant's Causeway in Northern Ireland. The causeway and cave are indeed of the same general geological formation, but legend is far more fun, which states that the Irish giant Fionn mac Cumhaill built his famous causeway to reach Benandonner, his Scottish equivalent. Ultimately, the fight never happened, and the causeway was destroyed. I mean, that's quite positive – a fight



between two powerful giants would likely have ended up going badly for both sides.

Of course, as with most coastlines, especially

# Uplands!

JENNIFER C. WILSON

those with countless hidden caves, inlets and bays, as well as hundreds of isolated islands, we must mention smuggling. Along the Scottish coast, whisky is the prime subject of such business, but not just in the way you might imagine. As well as meaning the illegal import of goods, 'smuggling' to Scots meant, for a long time, illegal distilling. We'll focus on the more traditional interpretation here though. The Excise Men in Scotland had a real challenge on their hands, with Walter Scott himself noting: "Smuggling was almost universal in Scotland for people unaccustomed to imposts and regarding them as an unjust aggression upon their ancient liberties; made no scruples to elude them where it was possible to do so."

Eyemouth, in Berwickshire, was considered one of the smuggling capitals of Britain, although its most prolific individual actually smuggled tea, rather than anything stronger. Where whisky was distilled and prepared for illicit sale, the smugglers were crafty indeed, using everything and anything to transport their goods, including contraptions made to look like a second passenger on horseback, riding pillion behind the smuggler themselves.

Once again, happily, as I've been writing, a film reference has muscled its way into my brain. It's one I haven't actually seen, unfortunately, despite being so close to a small, independent cinema's showing of it during my first visit to Mull, far too long ago for me to remember the year. So then, it features the Scottish coastline, an 'interesting' relationship with the law, and plenty of a certain alcoholic beverage. Got it? It is, of course, Whisky Galore!, the iconic 1949 Ealing comedy, based on a true story, and written in part by Compton



Mackenzie. In the film, a boat runs aground during World War II, carrying 50,000 cases of whisky. A battle of morals and wits ensues, between the English commander of the local Home Guard, and the locals, who are intent on keeping the precious cargo to themselves.



And on that note, I think I may just go and indulge in a wee dram, bought last summer on

a revisit to the Isle of Mull, and the stunning Tobermory. Happy 2023!

*(For those wondering about the error in Local Hero, by the way, watch out for when Danny and Marina are watching the 'local seals'. Those animals are neither local, nor seals, and given that it was filmed on location, including Pennan and Arisaig, there is no excuse whatsoever for them not having just sent a camera crew out to find a flipping seal or two. This will always annoy me).*

*As well as being a full-time marine biologist, Jennifer also writes historical fiction.*

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Twitter: <https://twitter.com/inkjunkie1984/>

Blog: <https://jenniferwilsonwriter.wordpress.com/>

# Word Up!

## YOUR POEMS ON THE THEME OF SCOTLAND

### **Weathered**

Today's rain did not follow the oft quoted saying, rain before 7 fine by 11 but persisted all day, in differing intensities from dense-drizzle to definite downpour.

Today's rain seeped into socks, permeated pockets, and re-conformed curls into frizz, big time. It dampened desire to try outdoor activities, made us look for other things.

Today's rain has run in rivulets, fanning out on tarmac gathering in depressions, flooding the roads. The sheep, poor things, recently shorn still stand, resigned facing the wind, chewing the cud.

Today's rain, as predicted on the BBC weather app has 100% chance of falling in the next two hours dropping to 99% in the hour after that. The clouds are low, the puddles are deep.

Today's rain may stop tomorrow.

***Sarah J Bryson***

### **Raspberries**

grasping a hand grenade-ful of crimson bright whiskery fruits, whose drupelets threaten an explosion of taste. I ready my face for

these rough berry bubbles, each bursting with juice-grasping buds – an aggregate jamboree

of sweet, sometimes soury, have a blast, cheery madness of raspberry chastity or torte berry messiness

their tartness compliments my class 'n' cheeky sassiness bold as brass and merry as cranachan.

***Kate Jenkinson***

### **Castle Rock**

When a volcano builds slanted striations of stone that resist, shifting with molten mortar, a fortress that defies nature's assaults, it makes sense to build a castle to keep everyone else at bay.

***Chris Hasara***

# Up Sticks!

SHEENAGH PUGH

Meet the poet who decamped to the most northerly islands in Britain

**Hi Sheenagh, thanks for talking to Up! When did you move to Shetland and why?**

In 2008, when we retired from work. My husband is asthmatic and the air in Cardiff wasn't great for him; there is a lot of green space but Cardiff lies in a sort of valley basin and the traffic fumes hang around a lot, We had often been on holiday to Shetland and come to like it.



**Lots of people have romantic notions of taking off somewhere different and remote. What was/is the reality like?**

Well, we already knew the place well so it wasn't quite like that. And remote is a bit of a relative term in these days of internet connection. We do miss live theatre (though even there, there is [National Theatre at Home](#)). But not shopping malls, big towns or trees.

**We imagine you must have a closer relationship to nature than, say, a city dweller. Does this relative remoteness seep into your writing? And if so, how?**

Yes, it did. I had mostly lived in cities before and



always found it hard to write scenery, as it were; I needed people in the picture. Now one looks at big sky and sea and realises people are more peripheral than one thought. This is a poem I wrote soon after we moved:

## **Big Sky**

*Unbroken by forest or town, this skyline  
all hills and ocean: you look up  
and your gaze, stopped by no branch, no office block,  
overflows with sky, too much to take in  
even when you turn slowly in the circle  
of green and blue. Who knew how vast  
cumulus could boil over, or how sweeping  
the great ragged brush-strokes of cirrus,  
or, at night, how many bright worlds,  
hundreds of years away, cluster and prickle  
above our heads? It is as if,  
having lived all your life in the jewelled oval  
of a miniature, you stepped into a frame  
the size of a gallery wall, a landscape  
where a few small figures, lost against distance,  
seem to be looking for the way out.*



# Up Sticks!

SHEENAGH PUGH

**Tell us your very favourite thing about Shetland ...**

The sea being so close all the time. Our house is about two minutes from a beach and jetty where we can often see seals, sometimes otters, now and then orca.



**Having visited Shetland several times about 20 years ago, one strong memory was the amount of roads named things like Stig's Cross or Olaf's Place. Are there still many other remnants of the islands' Scandinavian/ Viking history?**

Well, our village is called Hoswick, ie "bay with houses", which is Norse Husavik. A lot of Shetland place-names are Nordic rather than Scots.



**Visiting remote Scottish islands are on many people's bucket lists. What's on yours?**

I'd like to go to Turkey, both for the ancient ruins and the marvellous food. But there would have to be an alteration in the political situation there. I am trying to learn the language, though.

*You can read more of Sheenagh's work here:*

*Poetry website:*

<http://sheenagh.wix.com/sheenaghpugh>

*Other website (translations, prose, articles):*

<http://sheenagh.webs.com/>

*Blog: <http://sheenaghpugh.livejournal.com/>*



*Wherever I wander, wherever I rove,  
The hills of the Highlands forever I love.*

**From "My Heart's in the Highlands"  
Robert Burns (1759-1796)**

# Colour Up!

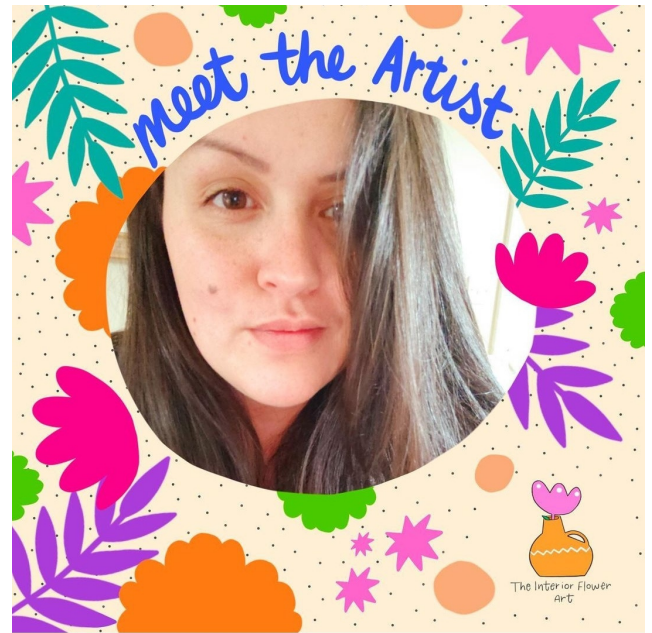
## THE INTERIOR FLOWER ART

Up! talks to Edinburgh-based artist, Maria, whose love of colour (and cats!) shines through her work

We first came across your work at the wonderful Tron Kirk market on Edinburgh's Royal Mile. We were instantly attracted by your bold use of colour. How would you describe your style and is it something that you've developed over time?

I've always been drawn to bright, and bold colours. I have two young daughters, who inspire me, with

their love of colour. As someone who lives with mental health, I found that I could create a positive mind set, by using lots of colours in my work. I would describe my style as modern and uplifting.



Owning a small business comes with its fair share of ups and downs, especially when you're juggling being a parent, too. What's the best thing about being your own boss?

The best thing about being my own boss is, being proud of what I do, and working hard for something that I've created. (It's my baby!). Also, choosing my own hours is a bonus.



# Colour Up!

## THE INTERIOR FLOWER ART

It's clear from your work that cats are a huge influence. What is it about cats, do you think, that so many people love?

Yes, cats have been popping up in my work, more and more recently. As a Cat Mother myself, I wanted to add something cheery to my work, that makes me happy. So cats were the perfect choice. I can't tell you enough, how much my cat has got me through hard times. She's my own little anxiety reliever.



We love your 'location' prints – Wroclaw in Poland, The Grand Budapest Hotel and Paris to name but a few, What location is top of your bucket list to visit and paint?

This definitely isn't a hard question to answer...India! I have always dreamed of



travelling to India, to experience the culture, the beautiful architecture, and all the bright colours. I have created a few designs of different buildings in India, and I find myself getting lost when painting them.



Here at Up! we're all about brightening people's lives and your artwork clearly does that! What would you say to anyone wanting to bring a bit of colour into their own lives in terms of experimenting with their clothes,

# Colour Up!

## THE INTERIOR FLOWER ART

interior décor etc? Are there any golden rules, or any colour combinations to avoid?

I have never been someone who believes in colour combinations. As my designs are so bold, I like to colour clash. It keeps it more fun that way! The advice I would give to anyone wanting to add a little colour to their lives is, don't be afraid! Don't think about the *what if this doesn't go well?* I say, buy the colourful painting, or the brightest shirt, and you can make it work! It's all about believing.

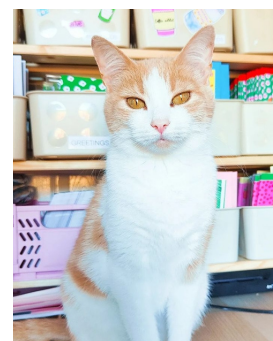


If you could invite 3 artists around for tea, who would you chose and why?

Hmm...this is a tricky one! Ok, I would probably choose Vincent Van Gogh, as I find his work so dreamy, and I'm sure he would have a story or



two to tell. Secondly it would have to be Claude Monet, as I would love to pick his brain about where he got his inspiration from, and the places he has painted in. Thirdly, I would choose my lovely friend Lorraine Miller, the artist behind *Between The Woods and Sea*. She has the kindest heart, and is such an uplifting person, and her paintings are beautiful. So who wouldn't invite someone like that around for tea?



You can see more of Maria's artwork here:

Instagram - [theinteriorflowerart](https://www.instagram.com/theinteriorflowerart)  
[www.facebook.com/theinteriorflowerart](https://www.facebook.com/theinteriorflowerart)  
[www.etsy.com/UK/shop/theinteriorflowerart](https://www.etsy.com/UK/shop/theinteriorflowerart)

# Colour Up!

## THE INTERIOR FLOWER ART

1



2



Here are three of Maria's Edinburgh prints.  
Do you recognise the locations?  
Check out the answers at the bottom of the page.

3



*Edinburgh is a city of shifting light, of changing skies, of sudden vistas.*

*A city so beautiful it breaks the heart again and again.*

**Alexander McCall Smith**

*Edinburgh isn't so much a city, more a way of life... I doubt  
I'll ever tire of exploring Edinburgh, on foot or in print.*

**Ian Rankin**

# Word Up!

## YOUR POEMS ON THE THEME OF SCOTLAND

### A wealth of shoes

On Friday he pushes out the boat in shoes  
of a Solan Goose, sewn with gut and a feather needle.  
They long to fly him many miles  
to soar for fish, to stab-plunge headfirst  
into boiling seas, herrings in his voice.  
He's the one who'll always take the leap.  
On Saturday he spiders down the cliff in shoes made of skins  
Of Tammie Norie, sewn with gut and a bone needle.  
With his caisie dangling on a rope his feet  
feel for juts and crannies, toes clinging him  
among the thrift, circling sea birds screaming at his head.  
If he falls his shoes will paddle him home.  
On Sunday he hacks the beached whale  
in bonxie-skin shoes sewn with gut and a beak needle.  
With a peat cutter he pecks the flesh  
into chunks. His feet scale the heights of the body  
nobody else can reach and he'll earn enough oil  
for his glimmering lamp for years to come.

### Notes on Orkney words:

*Solan goose* is a gannet

*Tammie Norie* is a puffin

*Caisie* is the deep basket used to collect sea birds' eggs when climbing down a cliff face.

*Bonxie* is the dialect word for the Great Skua.

**Rebecca Gethin**

### Cathedral

Stage set, the curtain rises  
A solitary sea bird  
Raises its mournful cry.  
I wait - spectator  
At a play just begun.

A couple, arm-in-arm  
Pass under the ancient arches,  
Majestic still  
Beneath the grey-blue sky.  
Footsteps of visitors  
Drown out a crow's wings  
As it flies from a nearby tree-top.

A school crowd  
Runs across the silent graves  
Of children long buried  
In this place.  
Voices mingle with the  
raucous seagulls above.

Towers and walls awake.

**Jenny Thompson**

Next month's theme is: LIGHT

Feel free to interpret the theme as you see fit and send up to 3 poems  
(no more than 20 lines each please) to: [admin@positivelyup.co.uk](mailto:admin@positivelyup.co.uk)

Full submission details can be found on our website: <https://positivelyup.co.uk/poetry-submissions>

# Up Hill!

STEVE LOWE

**Up!'s outdoors man goes 'up yon heathery mountain and doon yon scroggy glen'!**

Just before Christmas, my mate Peter and I dragged ourselves up Windy Ghyll in the Cheviots and walked part of the wonderful border ridge. Despite the howling gale, stair-rod rainfall and spells of brief sunshine, my body and mind felt refreshed by this exposure to the outdoors (and the company).



It always helps to be outdoors and to remind oneself that we are just a tiny part of a greater environment. I count myself especially lucky to be working in this field (sometimes quite literally!) and to have the opportunity to remind myself that everything is connected.

My early days of exploring my surroundings involved doing loads of things that would be frowned upon nowadays - damming streams, catching newts, trapping grasshoppers in large jars next to a busy railway, etc. But it gave me a passion for the outdoors that stays with me.

So, this quote from John Muir, one of my heroes, could almost have been spoken by me!

*“When I was a boy in Scotland, I was fond of everything that was wild, and all my life I’ve been growing fonder and fonder of wild places and wild creatures”. Perfect!*

But who was John Muir? And why is he, in particular, my hero?



Well, John Muir was a Scottish explorer, mountaineer, conservationist, botanist, amateur geologist and a writer of great distinction. He developed a passion for wild places growing up in the coastal town of Dunbar, a marvellous place to visit with its stunning ragged coastline, castle and history.

At age 10, the Muir family emigrated to the United States, where he embraced all nature from mosquitoes to mountain ranges. His passion for wild places led to a life-long quest to protect them and he has been described as “one of the greatest thinkers” in American history.

Muir’s writings helped people understand the importance of wildness. *The Wilderness Journeys* sits right next to my bed, alongside other heroes such as Eric Shipton, Ernest Shackleton and William Thesinger, within lazy reach should I need a bit of inspiration or marvel at any time.

John Muir’s activism saved Yosemite Valley in California, creating the world’s first national

# Up Hill!

STEVE LOWE

park system in 1864. Yosemite is a shrine to human foresight, the strength of granite, power of glaciers, persistence of life, and the tranquility of the High Sierra. It is best known for its waterfalls, but within its nearly 1,200 square miles, are deep valleys, grand meadows, ancient giant sequoia trees – forming a vast wilderness area.

Our own National Parks (Windy Ghyll is in one, of course), are very different to many similar designations in the world, in that they are not owned and managed by government (as a protected community resource), and include permanent human communities, which differs to other approaches across the globe.

Sadly, our windy sojourn showed that this does not always work as well, with areas that should be full of trees dominated by sheep pasture and erosion, with any sprout being nibbled before it gets a chance.

I would bet that many readers would be surprised to know that a similar approach was taken in Russia from 1895, where nature reserves called



*Zapovednocks* were put into practise. The philosophy was these had to be very large, have non-intervention management and scientific observation.

The largest is 3.6 million hectares - the Great Arctic Reserve. I would argue that this approach was also a foresightful approach in which Russia led the way.

John Muir was noted for being an ecological thinker, political spokesperson and religious prophet, whose writings became a personal guide into nature for countless individuals, probably including me! Thurman Wilkins (himself a great socio-environmental author) wrote that the primary aim of Muir's philosophy was to challenge mankind's "enormous conceit" and his mission to be "saving the American soul from total surrender to materialism". I tend to agree. In fact, Muir said of himself, "I could have become a millionaire but chose instead to become a tramp". I love that, as a lifelong tramp!



Given that John Muir was born in Scotland, it's ironic that his achievements and philosophy are not better understood and celebrated in the country where he spent his childhood. Doubly so when we consider that it was only 2002 when the first Scottish National Park was designated! The Cairngorms in case you are interested. So many fantastic wild spaces in Scotland, it would be hard to resist - including almost the whole of the country!



# Up Hill!

STEVE LOWE

Public access to all land in Scotland is governed by the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003. This grants the public a right of responsible access to most land (and water) for activities such as walking, camping, cycling, canoeing, swimming and climbing. This right applies to land regardless of ownership or whether or not it is in a national park, providing it is exercised responsibly (as defined by the Scottish Outdoor Access Code).



This is hugely different to England and Wales and a recent ban on wild camping in Dartmoor shows that there is an inconsistent approach across the UK.

For the good of the nation's health, now is surely the time when we should be extending access to nature, not taking it away!

I believe that Muir's advocacy of protecting the natural environment for the health of the planet and all its inhabitants is needed now more than ever. This was shown most evidently recently during the Covid lockdown, where nature became a vital solace for so many.

"When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the Universe". John Muir's words are as relevant today as ever.



*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.*



*Ask yourself: have you been kind today? Make kindness your daily modus operandi and change your world*

**Annie Lennox**

*There are two seasons in Scotland: June and Winter*

**Billy Connolly**

*A good gulp of hot whisky at bedtime - it's not very scientific, but it helps*

**Sir Alexander Fleming**

# Word Up!

## YOUR POEMS ON THE THEME OF SCOTLAND



### Shell Street

Tide keeps returning to rake through its treasures  
of cockle, whelk, periwinkle and lapis-blue mussel.  
It churns the shells as if in a wash tub, tosses them  
in waves, frisks them with watery fingers.  
It sucks each one between its teeth, spits them out  
and combs them to a precise fit on the ebb. Every day  
each shell gets microscopically smaller, edges clacking together,  
points cracked and smashed against one another  
to merge eventually into the sea's mattress of fine sand.  
Egret and curlew sift estuary mud at low-tide for creepers  
and wrigglers while we scrunch along the causeway  
to Rough Island, where plover and oystercatcher make nests  
in the strata of shells, the squidge and wiggle of life  
inside each one long gone leaving a shining trail across the sea.

*Rebecca Gethin*

### Shetland Swatch

Heather and grass  
tartan the hills whilst  
rock sporrans outcrop  
the pleated slopes and birds  
swirl the circling currents.

Our land locked eyes  
scan afresh the loched  
land, pools and nesses  
seeking newness in the  
windblown wilderness.

*Kate Jenkinson*

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# Up Close!

JOHN FOSTER

Scottish writer, John Foster, takes us on a walk around the city of his birth

“The City of Glasgow is undoubtedly the greatest city in the world.” So begins *The Heart of Glasgow*, a relatively short treatise on the merits, characteristics, and (sometimes) obscure history of Glasgow, with particular emphasis (as the title suggests) on the old city centre. Over its two-hundred pages the author Jack House (a popular journalist once known colloquially to his audience as “Mr Glasgow”) takes us on a narrated perambulation through the streets and lanes of his target area, highlighting the various tales associated with the sites and sights as they existed in 1965 when the book was first published.



Glasgow Cathedral

The book’s significance lies in the ability of its creator to succinctly capture a place long since vanished. Unlike most cities, Glasgow has had a strange and unwelcome habit (some may describe it as “reckless”, others as “barbarous”) of destroying its own built heritage. In a couple of years, the city will celebrate its 850th birthday, but less than a handful of buildings survive from its medieval past, most notably the Cathedral (which narrowly

avoided its own destruction during the Reformation), and Provand’s Lordship, a townhouse which originally formed part of St Nicholas’s Hospital dating back to 1471.

Glasgow (or at least its centre) is primarily of Victorian construction, rebuilt using the riches derived from when it was the Second City of the Empire and a technologically advanced powerhouse of production and heavy industry. “Progress” was the watch word of the era, as readily demonstrated in its remaining architecture.

However, my intention is not to criticise. Detractors already abound. Instead, as someone who not only works in the city but works for the city, my aims lie elsewhere. My own copy of *The Heart of the Glasgow* is the 6th edition from 1987, the preface of which outlines some of the changes that had taken place since its first publication. It struck me that it might be interesting to revisit those places described by Jack House and to understand how many could still be seen today.



Tolbooth Steeple at Glasgow Cross

In the beginning (as the phrase goes) Glasgow was originally formed of eight streets, generally corresponding to the ancient connections between the fishing village on the River Clyde and the religious community

established in the area where the Cathedral now stands: Drygate, High Street, Stockwell Street, Rottenrow, Trongate, Gallowgate, Saltmarket, and Bridgegate. As time passed the city expanded to the west, so much so that the High Street, the original umbilical, is now the eastern boundary of the city centre.

# Up Close!

JOHN FOSTER

Glasgow Cross is created by the confluence of some of these streets and remains geographically extant though its immediate environs, including the road layout, have changed over the years. In its midst, still standing proud, is the Tolbooth Steeple, an edifice built in 1626 as part of a larger building housing the jails and courtrooms and, later, the city's council chambers. Those buildings have not survived but the Steeple remains as an historical indicator.

Looking west along Trongate, is the steeple of Tron-St Mary's abridging an archway. Built in 1636, the original kirk buildings were destroyed, burned on Valentine's Day in 1793. Though the specific circumstances cannot be verified, it is generally agreed that the fire was started by the infamous Hellfire Club. The church and session house were razed but the steeple survived the inferno.



Venturing further west a visitor can discover the Britannia Panopticon, formerly the Britannia Music Hall. Dating back to 1857 it is one of oldest surviving music halls in the world.

Just to the north of Trongate is Candleriggs where the Old Fruitmarket and City Halls remain, following renovations and change of use.

Originally a market complex the property dates to the mid-19th century and continues to play host to a range of different events and is the home of Glasgow's Centre for Music.



Nearby are also the old Sheriff Court on Wilson Street, the foundation stone of which was laid in 1842, and Hutcheson's Hospital in Ingram Street which was built in 1805 to replace a building previously removed in 1641. Besides the Cathedral, the Trades House on Glassford Street can claim to be the oldest property in the city still used for its original design dating back to 1794. However, the Scotia Bar in Stockwell Street may argue that as their business apparently dates to 1792, it has a stronger claim. Sloan's, just off Argyle Street and the Argyll Arcade (which was itself built in 1828), is another old public house having been established in 1797.



# Up Close!

JOHN FOSTER

Not far from Sloan's is the UK's oldest commercial building with a cast-iron edifice. Built in 1856, Gardner's Warehouse sat on Jamaica Street.

Today it is a pub called the Crystal Palace, but the original architectural design can still be seen. The Ca d'Oro building on the corner of Gordon Street and Union Street is another example of a similar construction process and was erected in 1872.



South of Glasgow Cross, just off Saltmarket to the east, lies St Andrew's Parish Church. Though planned by Glasgow's Town Council in 1734, it would not be built until 1756, its design selected by competitive process, the winner being inspired by St Martin-in-the-Fields, Trafalgar Square. The area around it, St Andrew's Square, was not created till many years later. However, St Andrew's-by-the-Green (which overlooks Glasgow Green) is actually slightly older, construction being started later but completed earlier in either 1751 or 1752 depending on records.

To the west is Bridgegate, the road which led to the first bridge across the River Clyde. On its corner with Saltmarket is where the city's first bank, the Glasgow Ship Bank, was founded in 1750. By 1845 the building had been converted



with a pub on the ground floor, the Ship Bank Tavern. Remodelled in 1904 the bar continues to welcome visitors and patrons as the Old Ship Bank. It is also here on Bridgegate that another steeple survives, this time from 1659, as part of the Merchants' House. In 1817 the property was sold and demolished, but the steeple was retained. Further to the west on Clyde Street is St Andrew's Roman Catholic Cathedral, built in 1816.

Further south lies Glasgow Green, a public park dating back to the fifteenth century. Within this open space resides such attractions as: the Nelson Monument (the first such monument to Nelson erected in Britain and dating back to 1807), the Doulton Fountain (created as part of the first Glasgow Exhibition in 1888), and the People's Palace and Winter Gardens (first opened in 1898). Originally the site of the annual Glasgow Fair, it now regularly hosts large open-air concerts and international music festivals and was also where James Watt famously had his "Eureka" moment in 1764 which would lead to the invention of the steam engine.



# Up Close!

JOHN FOSTER

Heading north from Glasgow Cross takes the visitor back along the High Street and, ultimately, towards the Cathedral, Provand's Lordship, Glasgow Royal Infirmary, and the Necropolis. Though the historic heart of the city, few ancient features remain here, though mention should be made of the Ramshorn, variously named over the years, its graveyard was used from 1719 and its church (St David's) built in 1824.

Given the restrictions of writing such a piece, I'm mindful of all the other worthy places I've missed, such as George Square, Royal Exchange Square, the City Chambers, St George's Tron Church, the old Stock Exchange and many, many locations too numerous to summarily list.



That is to say nothing of the great buildings designed by such luminaries as Charles Rennie Mackintosh, and Alexander "Greek" Thomson. However, I hope that this article has helped illuminate and highlight some of Glasgow's remaining historic, architectural splendours, and to recommend further reading of Jack House's original work: *The Heart of Glasgow*.



# Write Up!

It was lovely to see some of you at our inaugural online Write Up! zoom this month.

This will be a regular session with the next zoom scheduled for **Thursday 23rd February, 7pm - 8pm (GMT)**.

Look out for the event appearing with joining instructions.



Whether you're a seasoned writer, or just starting out on your writing journey, everyone is welcome. We'll be there armed with writing prompts for those who'd like them, but basically this is an opportunity for you to carve out an hour's free writing time and 'meet' other writers for mutual support and encouragement. See you there!

# Word Up!

## YOUR POEMS ON THE THEME OF SCOTLAND

### Spring

It's often slow for us here in Scotland  
our latitude shared with Moscow.  
Our northern coast tipping Norway.

Of course, daffodils are key, cheery, yellow  
lining the central reservation of great western road  
promising better days, stretching to the hills.

I miss being on the hills in the dark day of Winter.  
My body longs to walk and walk, chatting  
with the birds, hearing the water sing -

thinking and collecting images and sounds.  
Like the day in late April it snowed on Ben Ledi,  
we saw a red kite teaching their young to fly.

The definitive sign of spring for me, even with a wind chill  
is folk eating out in cafés and restaurants -  
and a Glaswegian man in shorts!

*Rona Fitzgerald*

### Hen Ogledd

Back and forth they came,  
Cumbric, Pictish, Britons all.  
Border peoples raided, traded,  
and mixed the bloodlines well.  
Gaels and Scandinavian folk  
were loving, fighting, one.  
Before the lines were drawn on maps  
were set in hardened stone,  
the rivalry of them and us  
did not dissect and polarise.  
Now Welsh, now Scot,  
more Dane then not,  
the genomes tell us, brothers still,  
divide and conquer never will  
unblend us from our kin.

*Gerda Pickin*

### Father's Heart

Black warning flags wave on the wind  
Sirens sound loud on the shore.  
Big thunders roar far in the sea.  
All fisher boats are rushing back home  
Only one is sailing towards the storm.

The old fisher man stares with hope  
That he will get just on time,  
To help his son and pull the trawl  
Before the clouds bring the dark.  
No storm can scare the father's heart.

*Petrouchka Alexieva*

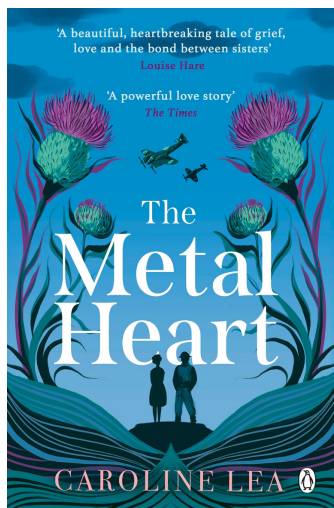
# Read Up!

JENNA WARREN

Up!'s resident book reviewer shares her 'north of the border' reads



For this edition, I thought I would write about some of the wonderful books I've recently read which are set – or partly set – in Scotland.



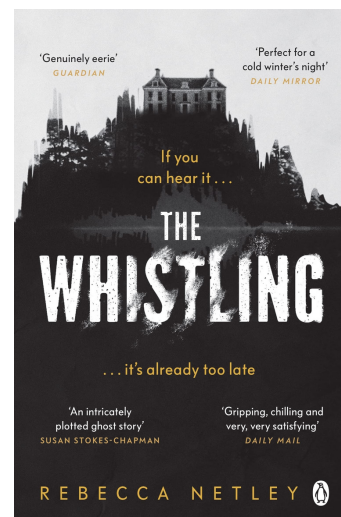
My first choice is *The Metal Heart* by Caroline Lea, an historical novel set on Orkney during the Second World War. We read this in the book group I host at [Book Corner](#), my bookshop, and we had a very interesting discussion about it.

The main characters are twin sisters Dorothy and Constance. Since the loss of their parents, they've been living alone in a bothy on a tiny island. Their work as nurses brings them into contact with the Italian prisoners of war who are brought to Orkney to construct barriers at the entrances to Scapa Flow. Dot falls in love with Cesare, one of the prisoners who is also a talented painter. While the Italians are building the barriers, they also embark on a project of their own: the creation of a chapel from two Nissen huts.

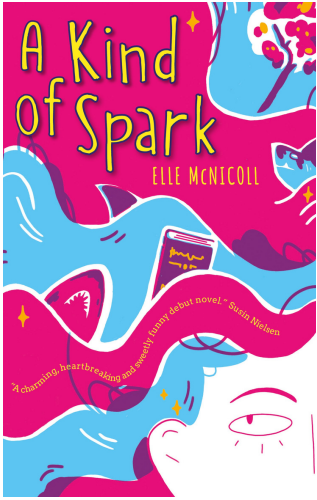
This novel is both a love story and a mystery, but it's also a fictionalised account of one of Orkney's most famous landmarks. The beautiful Italian Chapel can still be seen today. I visited it in 2021 and was very moved by both the loving attention to detail and the stories of the men who built it. Caroline Lea takes certain liberties with historical truth in order to tell her story, so she includes an interesting author's note detailing these, as well as suggestions for further reading.

Continuing the theme of Scottish islands, I recently enjoyed *The Whistling* by Rebecca Netley. This is very much a traditional ghost story with some familiar elements. The main character, Elspeth, arrives at a grand house on a remote island to be nanny to a young girl called Mary. Mary's twin, William, died a year earlier in mysterious circumstances. Elspeth bonds with Mary, but she soon realises that something is haunting the house. Lullabies float down the corridors, and a strange whistling can be heard at night. It also becomes clear that some of the islanders know more than they're prepared to reveal.

I read this book over two days between Christmas and New Year. It's a gripping and atmospheric story, and it brings the remoteness of the island and the wildness of its coast to vivid life. It's the perfect book to read during the winter. The novel is written in clear, easy prose and I raced towards the end, because I was desperate to see what would happen!







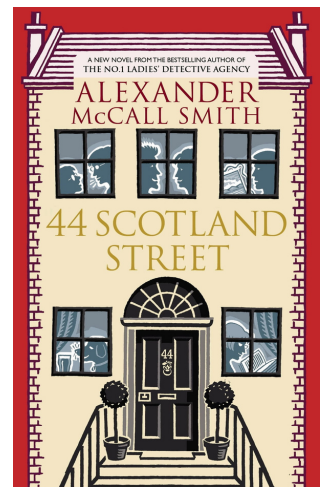
I can't write about books set in Scotland without mentioning the brilliant Elle McNicoll. I reviewed her latest novel *Like a Charm* in this column a few months back, so this month I would like to recommend her debut novel, *A Kind of Spark*. This is a middle grade novel, aimed at children aged from around eight and above, but with crossover appeal to teenagers and adults, too. The main character is eleven-year-old Addie, who is autistic and passionately interested in various topics, including sharks. Addie is having a difficult time at school. She's bullied by some of the other students, and one of the teachers (the thoroughly awful Miss Murphy). Her sanctuary is the school library, where a supportive librarian helps her research her favourite subjects.

Miss Murphy introduces a new class topic: witches. Addie is instantly intrigued. She learns about the real women who were put on trial for witchcraft in her small Scottish town hundreds of years ago, and is shocked that there's no memorial to them. Addie relates to the witches, suspecting that they were misunderstood like her. With the help of friends and family, she decides to campaign to erect a memorial to these forgotten women.

This is a wonderful story about being different and standing up for what you believe in. I loved Addie, and the other characters are great, especially her older sister Keedie, who is also autistic and studying at university.

At the time of writing, Elle McNicoll is about to publish her fourth novel, *Like a Curse*, a sequel to *Like a Charm* set at Loch Ness. I can't wait to read it.

Finally, I would like to recommend the *44 Scotland Street* series by Alexander McCall Smith. These charming books are set in Edinburgh and were serialised as a 'daily novel' in *The Scotsman* before being published in book form. As a result, they're quite episodic, rather like a long-running literary soap opera. The books follow the ordinary lives of a group of characters who are originally connected because they all live in the same house which has been converted into flats: 44 Scotland Street. The later books branch out from this, bringing in new characters. My favourites include the vain, handsome, and infuriating chartered surveyor Bruce, and five-year-old Bertie, who just wants to have fun and be an ordinary five-year-old. Unfortunately, his pretentious mother Irene has other ideas. There's also Cyril, the dog with the gold tooth, who sometimes seems to have more insight into what's going on than the humans do.



These books are gentle and funny, and I love the way the characters talk about all kinds of topics, from history to art to philosophy. They also capture the charm of Edinburgh beautifully.

*Jenna Warren is a bookseller and writer from Teesside. She studied Theatre and later Creative Writing at university. She runs Book Corner, an independent bookshop in Saltburn-by-the-Sea. Her debut novel, *The Moon and Stars*, was published in October by Fairlight Books.*

# Coming Up!

Well, we don't know about you, but we're exhausted now from tramping over all of those hills and glens and wandering the streets of Glasgow and Edinburgh - not to mention a brisk swim up to Shetland and back!

What better way to rest than to have a wee sit down with a cuppa and a biscuit and look forward to the coming of the light. Yes, it's that time of the year when the sunset gets a little later every day, bringing with it the promise of increased warmth and light.

Speaking of which, 'Light' just happens to be the theme of next month's Up! So those writers among you, get your thinking caps on and send us some poetry. Why not join us at our next Write Up! session? It's online and completely FREE - what could be better in these straightened times than an hour dedicated purely to yourself in the company of other writers, a pen in your hand and the freedom to write whatever you want.

In the meantime, amidst the continuing cost of living crisis, let's make sure we keep looking out for one another. Many things may be more expensive but love and kindness will always be free.

Take care  
Bridget & Harry xx



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