

Up!

APRIL 2023

ENGLAND



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

Contents

Up Front! <i>The Team</i>	1
Welcome one and all	
Leveling Up! <i>Harry Gallagher</i>	2
Three of the best	
Word Up! <i>Poetry Corner</i>	6, 13
Your poems on the theme of England	& 20
Uplifting! <i>Ebb and Flow</i>	7
More than the sum of its parts	
Wash Up! <i>Jennifer C. Wilson</i>	10
Anyone seen the Crown Jewels?	
Write Up!	12
Come and join us!	
Up Sticks! <i>Julie Greenan</i>	14
From England to Spain ... and back again	
Step Up! <i>Monkseaton Morris Dancers</i>	17
Fancy a dance?	
Shaking it Up!	19
Well I never!	
Mash Up! <i>Steve Lowe</i>	21
An English pick and mix	
Read Up! <i>Jenna Warren</i>	25
The pages of England	
Coming Up! <i>'Til Next Month</i>	28
Ready for a feast?	



Photo by [Ray McIver](#), see page 17



Up Front!

Happy St George's Day and, come to that, happy birthday Billy Shakespeare!

So, with only a fortnight to go before the coronation of the new King, let's have a look at Englishness - what does it all mean, eh?

Well, for a start, St George, by all accounts, was a Roman centurion from Turkey and is patron saint of several countries as well as England. But here at Up! we kind of like that. In our humble opinion there has been far too much emphasis on difference recently - we tend to find that people are just people wherever you go.

However, let's take a look at England, shall we? Even in these straitened times there is so much to love about the country. Why not grab yourself a cup of tea (Earl Grey maybe?), step inside and help us celebrate. This month we have all sorts of stuff that pokes around England's dusty forgotten corners - you may be surprised!

Bridget & Harry x

Leveling Up!

HARRY GALLAGHER

Meet three great English women whose lives' achievements were more than equal to any man's

Gertrude Bell (1868-1926)

Born in Washington Old Hall, Co. Durham to the industrialist Hugh Bell and his first wife Margaret, those who knew Gertrude knew one thing – she was never going to live a small life. Whether it was losing her mother at the age of only 2 or her close relationship with her father, no-one can really tell, but Gertrude not only grew up holding strong opinions on every issue she came into contact with – her thoughts on the suffragette movement stick out now for all the wrong reasons – but was unafraid of putting her case forward. To her credit, she did revise her position on the suffragettes after considering other voices and opinions.

Five years after the loss of her mother, she gained a stepmother in Florence, a writer who nurtured her new step-daughter's love of learning. Florence became a lifelong close friend and role model to Gertrude, who repaid her stepmother's faith in her by going on to become the first woman ever to graduate with first class honours in Modern History at Oxford University – and in only two years.

Impressive stuff, I'm sure you'll agree but her real achievements were yet to come. Possessed with eternally itchy feet, Gertrude became captivated by the Middle East. Being Gertrude, of course, she couldn't just visit, but became fluent in Arabic, Persian and Turkish, with French, German and Italian thrown in just for good measure. Travelling extensively on horseback through Syria, Palestine, Jerusalem and Damascus (did we mention she was also an expert horsewoman?) she researched and excavated long forgotten places of worship, co-authoring archaeology books en route. In Baghdad

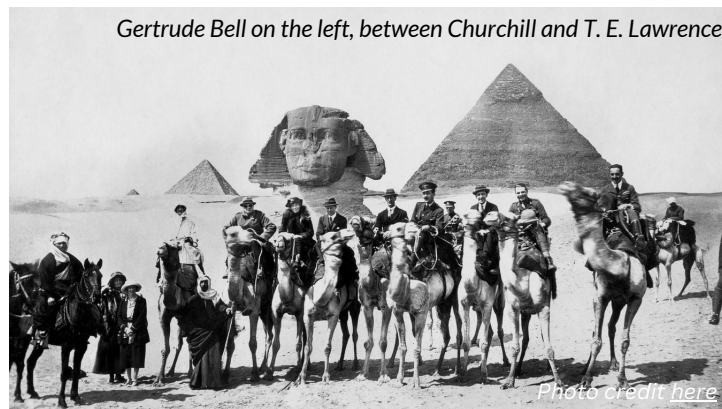
she was even captured and held prisoner until being released 11 days later. But enough adventuring (did we mention she was also a noted mountaineer who climbed Mont Blanc?), there was real work to be done.



Photo credit [here](#)

certain T.E Lawrence (of Arabia fame).

By this time it was the end of the Great War, and she was summoned as an expert on the Middle East to the Paris Peace Conference. She drew up the map of the region as it stands today. She was also instrumental in the formation of Iraq, working side by side for much of this period with a



Gertrude Bell on the left, between Churchill and T. E. Lawrence

Photo credit [here](#)

Always cursed with ill health (how she managed all that physical activity and travel is a mystery!), and having suffered several outbreaks of malaria, she was finally forced into retreating to a somewhat quieter life but didn't return to England, much less the humble north east town of Middlesbrough where her father's wealth was amassed in the making of steel. Gertrude Bell died and was buried in Baghdad, having left her indelible fingerprints all over the world map - a great Englishwoman indeed.

Leveling Up!

HARRY GALLAGHER

Sylvia Pankhurst (1882-1960)

Some children of a famous parent spend their lives emulating them, others go in a different direction entirely, almost as an act of rebellion. Sylvia was her mother's daughter in some ways, sharing Emmeline's passion for emancipation, but having fallen out with her, Sylvia strode out into the world bold and fearless and strong.



See, Sylvia had her eyes on more than just the female vote in the UK. The more she travelled, the more injustice she witnessed and she set herself to carry the fight on behalf of those

Photo credit [here](#)

without a voice, wherever she saw it.

Mind, if you were a Pankhurst you had little choice but to be politically aware and active. As well as her famous mother's beliefs and actions, she grew up in a house full of notable politicians and agents of societal change. Her father opened the house to a Russian anarchist, a French revolutionary thinker, as well as being a friend of Keir Hardie, and therefore in on the formation of The Labour Party.

So when it came to the suffragette movement for which the Pankhurst women would be forever remembered, Sylvia, as brave as ever, placed herself fully in the middle of events. She was there in 1910 to witness Black Friday when 300 women marched on Parliament, only to be attacked and molested by the waiting men, including members of the Metropolitan Police. These events are only really known about due to Sylvia's reporting of them.



Photo credit [here](#)

Over the next few years she was arrested on countless occasions, imprisoned where she went on hunger strikes and force fed in the most brutal fashion imaginable. If the authorities thought they might break her spirit, they were mistaken.

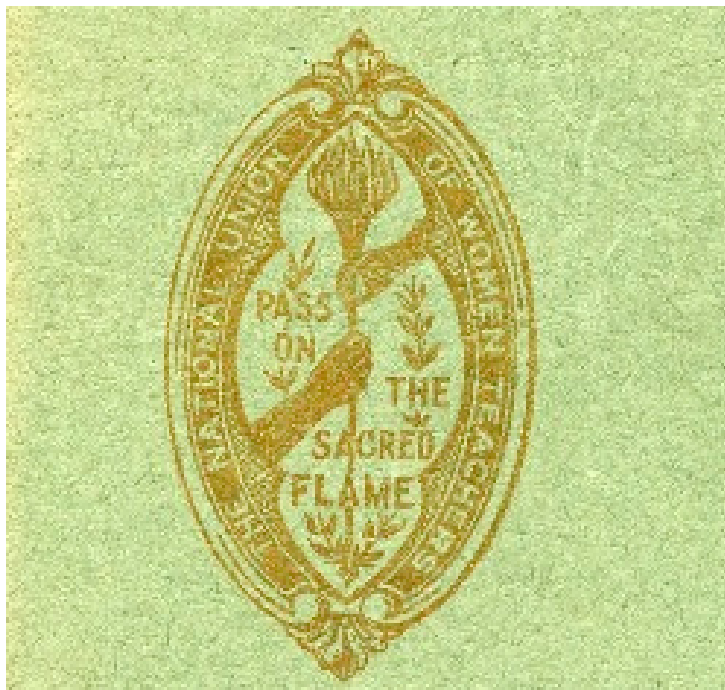
She went on to travel around Ireland and America, visiting groups of exploited and oppressed women in their workplaces, and taking up their cause. In fact it was this widening of her interests which led to the split from her mother and sisters. Such was her presence and influence on the international stage, she knew Lenin personally, debating politics with him, sometimes in agreement, and eventually not. More than anything, she believed in people coming together to improve their collective lot against often suppressive states.

As time went on, her voice carried influence in Ireland, India and Burma; meanwhile back at home in 1934 she was part of a female collective who formed the National Union of Women Teachers. Within a year the NUWT extended into the Americas

Leveling Up!

HARRY GALLAGHER

and all over the then British colonies.



On top of all that, Sylvia had been among the early spotters of the growing dangers of Fascism in Europe, setting down her warnings in a 1922 letter. In the 1930s, she became a vice-president of the League for the Boycott of Aggressor Nations and the Anti-Nazi Council which sought trade embargoes against Mussolini's Italy and Hitler's Germany. She wrote to Churchill before war broke out, urging him to take action.

In her latter years, after the death of her devoted husband in the UK - the Italian socialist Silvio Corio - she met and became great friends with Haile Salassie, Emperor of Ethiopia. He offered her an imperial guest house in Addis Ababa, which she was glad to accept, taking her son Richard with her. She eventually died at the age of 78 in Addis Ababa, where she is buried, having battled the world ... and won.

Ada Lovelace (1815-1852)

The first two women covered in this feature travelled the world to change it, but Ada - who certainly had the means to travel but was actually born and died in London - managed to change the world in a way that is now central to all of our lives.

Though her surname doesn't give anything away, she was born into a kind of cursed creative royalty. But her given surname was Byron ... as in Lord Byron, who was her father. Not that his parentage helped her in life. Declaring himself disappointed with her gender, he left the country when she was a tiny baby, leaving her just a poem and never to return.



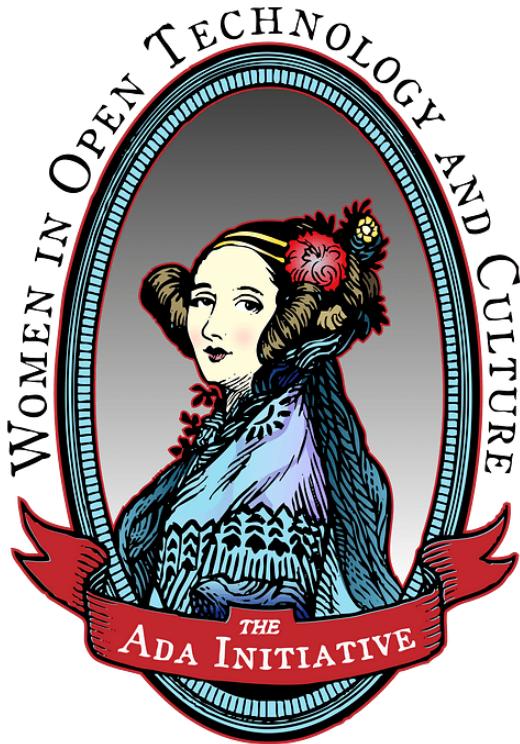
Ada's mother used her righteous anger at his behaviour by steering Ada in the exact opposite direction, ensuring she received the best education possible in mathematics, about as far from fey poetry as you could get!

But none of this reveals Ada's legacy. An outstanding mathematics student, she was quickly gaining an influential circle of friends, one of whom she forged a close working relationship with.

Leveling Up!

HARRY GALLAGHER

Step forward one Charles Babbage, eventually inventor of the Analytical Engine - or the first general purpose computer. Babbage recognised Ada's brilliance immediately and her work was so advanced that she single-handedly wrote the world's very first algorithm, making her the world's first computer programmer. Sir Michael Faraday became an admirer and Ada was widely admired for her brilliant mind.



Babbage and Ada eventually fell out, but it's arguable that her mind outstripped that of her more famous colleague. While he was naturally delighted with his invention, he didn't really grasp its long-term significance - this was 1834, remember - whereas Ada did and accurately predicted that what they had invented and programmed had enormous potential outside of merely calculating numbers.

Outside of her work, Ada found time to marry into aristocracy - she was the daughter of Lord & Lady Byron, after all - and produce two children. She died from cancer at only 36 having changed the world forever, and making all of our lives unrecognisable to her own.



And let's hear it for the unsung Englishmen ...

Leonard Cheshire - Wartime pilot & Humanitarian

Thomas Paine - Author of *The Rights Of Man* and one of the Founding Fathers of America

William Blake - Author, poet, painter & printer, who wrote *Jerusalem*

William Booth - Founder of the *Sally Army*

Chad Varah - Priest & founder of the *Samaritans*

Walter Tull - Trailblazing mixed race footballer & WW1 hero

Robert Smallbones - rescuer of some 48,000 Jews in late 1930s Germany

Sir Joseph Bazalgette - creator of London's sewage/water system, making it safe to drink

John Lilburne - 17th Century human/civil rights pioneer

Stanley Unwin - Comic genius and language mangler

Word Up!

YOUR POEMS ON THE THEME OF ENGLAND

London's Eye

What do you see?
Winking, blinking wheel.
City beneath,
Lights and life.
Beggar and beauty,
Cripple and King.
London's eye.

What do you see?
Turning, burning steel.
City below,
Water and wind.
Traveller and truant,
Believer and brigand.
How do you turn?
Where are you from?
Where do you go?
What do you see?
London's eye.

Claire Lawton



Coast Matters Seaham Rocks

Seaham rocks reclaim the rusting wrench
Folk reclaim the beaches.
Chemical blast beach lost its stench
Blown off by salt drenched breezes.

Tools are downed in Durham towns
Sea glass rolls back from the deep
Jagged fragments tumbled round
For her to use, for me to keep.

Breathing fresh, breakers heaving
once coal black beaches heritage clean
Forgotten mine shafts no more leading
Out of reach to depths unseen.

Carol Elva Greenwell

Despite all odds

Sea shanties, Cornish pasties,
Morris dancers, Punk romancers.
Advancing science, cast iron giants.
Non-compliance found in
unlikely places.

Football pundits, mouthy poets,
knee-takers, bad-law breakers,
food suppliers, fighting
liars any way we can.

The best of England,
stand defiant and
say, despite all odds:
'Welcome brother,
take my hand,
welcome to our
sodden land.'

Gerda Pickin

Uplifting!

EBB & FLOW

Lesley Wood, the woman behind a brilliant community initiative, writes for Up!

Towards the end of the first Covid lockdown in 2020 I was, as usual, swimming across Cullercoats Bay with my friends. Our group had just contributed to a call-out from the Newcastle University Women's group for a zine about how people got through the first months of the pandemic. Using a Blue Peter-style arrangement of pastel crayons, cardboard tubes and plastic bags, we had recorded our movements in the water one cold spring day, then chose words to express how our friends, and this beautiful place, had kept our heads above water through those strange times. These 'kinetics', or 'swim traces' (made using a technique I had worked out during an MA in Creative Practice, completed a year or two earlier) went to the NU Women's zine as planned, but also sparked the idea for a community arts event to celebrate community, creativity and Cullercoats. So, back in the sea, chatting and laughing, we agreed on a name and Ebb&Flow was born.



From the original 6 friends (remember the rule of 6?) this idea was broadcast in a call-out for visual art and written work on the Ebb&Flow themes of community, creativity and Cullercoats, with a

specific focus on the sea and the community of swimmers and other beachniks. The first event, in July 2020 comprised a summer-long exhibition of



the selected artworks, and a performance night, in the Boatyard Café on John Street. Both the show-opening and the 'Open Mike' on two glorious warm evenings

were packed, joyful and emotional as it was the first time most of us had been able to be together, as performers and audiences, in a long, long time.

Ebb&Flow 1.0 raised over £400 for the RNLI and led to us meeting some of the good people



working to save the Cullercoats Watch House from dangerous deterioration. So work began on Ebb&Flow 2.0, a bigger music and spoken word event aiming to raise funds for the Watch House Restoration. This took place in 2022 in the Crescent Club and raised £1,200. But the opportunity to tell the Watch House story, generate goodwill and widen community support and involvement (among the 120-plus people who came along) was just as important as the money.

The ideas for Ebb&Flow 3.0 were then brewing for a further year. This time I decided to focus on the work, the stories and the creativity of the women of the area. I started gathering threads, and getting acquainted with the rich and growing

Uplifting!

EBB & FLOW

networks of creative women in and around Cullercoats. I decided on the nearest weekend to International Women's Day in March 2023 and, after much deliberation and plenty of chats over coffee, settled on the HERitage series of events listed below. The workshop participants and performers were all women. The evening events were open to all.

- Harmony singing sessions over the four Mondays in February, led by singing teacher Jane Harland, with cakes by me. The sessions were fully subscribed within a week
- Women's Voices, a spoken word and music evening - a brilliant line-up of writers, singers and musicians led the audience on an emotional roller-coaster
- Proggy-rug making workshop, an introduction to this environmentally-friendly and very womanly craft, led by Bridget Gallagher (*sounds familiar!* - Ed.)
- Creative writing workshop, focusing on the women who inspire us, led by Mel Eaton of Creative Space North East - this one sold out in 24 hours!
- Horizons film showing and talk by local artist Penelope Payne whose work pays homage to the fisherwomen of the North East. Another fascinating and moving evening to a sell-out audience

In the meantime, community support for the



Lynn Kaya of The Cullercoats Fish Lass stands outside the iconic Cullercoats Watch House, dressed in traditional outfit.

Watch House was growing and more and more people and groups were using the space for events - a Sea Shanty group, Warm Welcome mornings, Dolphin Watch, children's activities, Creative Space journalling sessions, craft fairs, food fairs, and more. The membership, trustee body and volunteers were also growing in numbers and skills, as was confidence in the future. There was just the small (actually rather large) matter of the Watch House's snooker table which was taking up a lot of space and pushing community use to the edges. Despite strong feelings on both sides of the debate about the fate of the snooker table, a funding offer, conditional on its removal, decided it and the table taken out in mid-February. Work on the exterior of the building will start soon.

This was great timing for Ebb&Flow 3.0 as the HERitage weekend was the first big event after the space opened up. More chairs were bought for the 60-odd capacity audience for the two big events on Saturday and Sunday evening. We prettied the place up with daffodils, fairy lights and candles. It was a wonderful transformation, the perfect setting for both sessions, which were joyful, inspiring, warm and occasionally very emotional.

Uplifting!

EBB & FLOW

The Watch House was a fabulous venue for all the HERitage events, every one of which was fully subscribed. Nearly 200 people took part and over £1,400 was raised. As before, the goodwill and affection generated for the Watch House was more important than the money. It feels to me like a pivot point in the work to ensure its sustainability. The building, and its growing community, have captured my and many others' hearts. Its heritage and the stories it holds, its place as artistic inspiration, from Winslow Homer to today's creatives, and its position as a much-loved landmark above beautiful Cullercoats Bay, must continue to be honoured and roll on into the future.



KEEP UP WITH THE LATEST NEWS HERE
SCAN THE QR CODE FOR OUR FACEBOOK PAGE OR VISIT /EBBANDFLOWCULLERCOATS
/CULLERCOATSWATCHHOUSE
EBBANDFLOWCULLERCOATS@GMAIL.COM

Raising funds for the restoration of the Cullercoats Watch House

supported by Cullercoats Collective



There is no power for change greater than a community discovering what it cares about.

Margaret J. Wheatley

I alone cannot change the world, but I can cast a stone across the waters to create many ripples.

Mother Teresa

In every community, there is work to be done.

In every nation, there are wounds to heal.

In every heart, there is the power to do it.

Marianne Williamson

Wash Up!

JENNIFER C. WILSON

Our resident marine biologist takes us on a history trip in search of the Crown Jewels

I'll be honest, a purely marine biological theme on the topic of 'England' was proving a challenge this month. Until a chance conversation, and the decision was made to switch it up again and go along a combined route of the marine and the historical. There are plenty of marine-based myths in English history, and even some established facts (we'll look at both, because only using facts can be so dull ...).

One of the most famous stories on this list (and the reason I think this article should be entitled 'Lost in the Wash', is the tale of King John having lost the crown jewels (and many other priceless artefacts) in the Wash (the large estuary on the east coast, that is, not the medieval equivalent of the spin-cycle). Rumour has it that 'Bad King John', in 1216, having broken his word after



signing the Magna Carta, was travelling the country to oppose rebel forces amongst his barons. There was also a French invasion the same year (we very briefly, sort of, had a French king, Louis VIII, when said

rebel barons declared him so), and John was trying to avoid at-risk areas by travelling around the Wash rather than going through East Anglia. In October 1216, the king and his baggage train parted ways, with the latter being sent on what



the king thought was a quicker and safer route to his destination.

This is where things get murky (and not just because of the high suspended

sediment levels in the Wash, although that's definitely a component). The exact route of the baggage train is unclear, but a persistent rumour is that they attempted to use the 'Crosskeys to Sutton' causeway route, sadly, just as the tide was about to turn against them. A fitting metaphor perhaps, for King John. Whether they made such a terrible decision because of the hurry to get the baggage train away from rebels, or they just didn't listen to local advice, who knows, but the story is that the causeway was so wet that the wagons could hardly move, and ultimately began to sink into the mud, taking with them the king's most valuable goods, including books, clothing - and of course those crown jewels.

Of course, as with so many tales like this, there were plenty of stories spun around the vague known facts, of which there are actually very few. One includes the rather fanciful notion of a monk stealing the baggage train then poisoning the king, but one man somehow stealing a train which would have been accompanied by hundreds of men does seem a little far-fetched. A more likely possible option is that John somehow 'lost' the jewels on purpose, as part of some medieval insurance scam! Sadly, even if that had been the case, King John died just a week or so after whatever happened to that baggage train, and English history moved swiftly onto the reign of his son.

Naturally, as with any tale of lost treasure, there have been plenty of discoveries down the years, people convinced they've found traces of the treasure. And due to the nature of the Wash, the

Wash Up!

JENNIFER C. WILSON

shifting muds mean that what is uncovered one tide may never be seen again. Things aren't helped by the fact that the Wash has always been an important trading route, so there's going to be a lot of material lost over the years, likely including some items of value. But the crown jewels? I'm not so sure. Maybe they're the Nessie of archaeological discoveries!



Another of the most famous marine-adjacent stories in English history must surely be the daring defeat of the 'invincible' Spanish Armada by our plucky little English navy. Right? Well... I mean, let's not completely disparage the navy's tactics. The English ships, under the command of Sir Francis Drake and his fellow captains, used some fantastic strategies. And it's no mean feat that the only ships England lost were the eight fire ships which were deliberately sent into Calais against the Spanish fleet. But good old English weather, causing rough seas and harsh sailing conditions were perhaps the most decisive factor, sending Spanish ships off course and scattering the fleet. In fact, vessels ended up as far afield as Ireland and Scotland.

Now, with all this talk of the sea and coast affecting bits of our history, I had to go hunting



for a nice little Ricardian link. And I found one! In October 1483, there was an uprising led against Richard III by Henry Stafford, the Duke of Buckingham, with the backing of Henry Tudor (VII to be). As part of this rebellion, a number of forces were to either combine, or act as diversions, allowing Henry Tudor to rise to power. Tudor himself sent a number of ships, but thanks to a storm in the Channel, most were forced to return to Brittany and Normandy. The same storm caused significant rainfall across southern England and Wales, causing a number of rivers to swell, including the Severn, making it impossible for Buckingham to cross and join the other rebels. Sadly, Tudor DID make it across from France two years later, no storm to stop him that time. But at least he was delayed!

I know it's important to remain positive in these articles, so we should emphasise the positivity in the above stories... 1) Always the chance of discovering a random crown when pootling around in the Wash, 2) England wasn't invaded by Spain (no offence to any Spanish readers out there, but you have a very nice country of your own, you didn't really need ours too...), and 3) Two more years of Richard III's reign!

All that's missing is an obscure / immature film reference... Of course, there are plenty of films about British maritime history or adventures, but I'll be honest, the one which came to mind was (drum roll...) *Mary Poppins*! I mean, there's an

Wash Up!

JENNIFER C. WILSON

admiral, and the wind changing is a significant part of the storyline, which you could also argue was the case for both the Spanish Armada and Buckingham's rebellion. So as a reference, really, you could say it was practically perfect!



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

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/jenniferwilsonwriter/>

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

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



Write Up!

Come and join Bridget and Harry for a quick chat followed by a precious hour of your own creative time. There's nothing like being able to set aside a little time in the company of other creative people and seeing what you come up with!

The next of these regular zoom session will take place on **Thursday 18th May, 7pm - 8pm (GMT)** with joining instructions [here](#) and on the Up! facebook group page.



And by the way, everything in life is writable about if you have the outgoing guts to do it, and the imagination to improvise.

The worst enemy to creativity is self-doubt.

Sylvia Plath

Word Up!

YOUR POEMS ON THE THEME OF ENGLAND

ENGLAND FORGETS

England forgets and gets loose On scuffed golden fields of wilt and weeds

 It bares its back and shows its best side to the sky

Pleading the beams to fall a little longer Mizzed by rain for long months
 We get baked high on heat

And we love each other With an honesty that cannot be bottled
 And kept for when the clouds return

We are knocking back the now A song we know is the breath of trees
 We take it way back and laugh at anything

Not embarrassed to embrace, we part Slow till only fingers tip, and let go
 Walking like myths on familiar streets

At midnight, that smell of honeysuckle Or some such, longing out the high
 We glow still for a while

Until the heat leaves us, and life goes on As England remembers itself
 With half a smile, until the next time

Barry Fentiman Hall

Next month's theme is: **FOOD & DRINK**

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

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

Up Sticks!

JULIE GREENAN

One woman's journey as she falls out of - and back in - love with England

When I was 59, I went to live in Spain for a year ... and stayed for almost ten.

I was born in Sheffield, which, despite being technically in Yorkshire, had its own proud identity, a thing apart and is forever in my heart. But I'd left at 18 for Leeds and had stayed around West Yorkshire ever since. Gradually I became more and more appalled at the thought of coming to the end of my life never having lived anywhere else. I became desperate to leave Yorkshire but also desperate to leave England: England, not Britain, not the United Kingdom. My aversion, my revulsion even, didn't extend to the rest of the Union, or to Ireland.

I was sick of seeing people putting their feet on the seats on buses and trains. Sick of this country's deepening love affair with alcohol and pride in getting wasted. Sick of the rejection of the intellectual life and most of all, that misplaced superiority over all things 'foreign' except for chicken tikka masala, pizza and the annual trip to a Costa. We were still in the European Union then



and I wanted to stand on proper European soil, to live in the centre of that Europe where I felt I belonged.

I wanted to finally speak a foreign language really well. I wanted to escape into hearing Spanish all around me, seeing dark-eyed, vivid, scented people



walking down Madrid paseos. To smell new cooking aromas, to hear the sounds of flamenco guitar and flamenco heels slamming on wooden floors through a high window. So I did all that, in Madrid, in Cádiz and other places. There were adventures: happy and sad, wonderful and appalling.



After seven years or so, as deep forces often determine, I began to feel my escapade had run its course. The pandemic emphasised my isolation: single, without family near me. I wondered if my future would remain in Spain, and how it would look. I

was now well into my sixties. Would I grow old in a foreign country? It could be romantic. The solitary, mysterious exile, taking her daily coffee at the local bar, lunching at the restaurant overlooking the sea, with her book open. García Márquez, or Isabel Allende, maybe giving Javier Marías another go, now her Spanish had improved. Giving the odd English class. I'd be 'La

Up Sticks!

JULIE GREENAN

Inglesa', the somewhat eccentric elderly lady - eccentric simply by swimming in the sea all year round, and being alone, having no children or grandchildren.

It could also be frightening and dreadfully lonely.

Here's George Orwell on returning to England from abroad:

When you come back to England from any foreign country, you have immediately the sensation of breathing a different air. Even in the first few minutes dozens of small things conspire to give you this feeling. The beer is bitterer, the coins are heavier, the grass is greener, the advertisements are more blatant. The crowds in the big towns, with their mild knobby faces, their bad teeth and gentle manners, are different from a European crowd. But talk to foreigners, read foreign books or newspapers, and you are brought back to the same thought. Yes, there is something distinctive and recognisable in English civilisation. It is a culture as individual as



that of Spain. It is somehow bound up with solid breakfasts and gloomy Sundays, smoky towns and winding roads, green fields and red pillar-boxes. It has a flavour of its own. Moreover it is continuous, it stretches into the future and the past, there is something in it that persists, as in a living creature.

Closure is long, drawn-out and not yet complete. Deciding where to settle ... finding somewhere to live. Returning in stages, managing the transfer of my relatively few possessions. Bringing back with me my changed self, with Spain still in me, part of me.

At Border Control, the queue is largely Brits. This time I'm not just passing through, just for a fortnight's visit. It's where I'm going to be, back in Blighty.

I realise that belonging has a comfort and a stability that may lie deeper than a dislike of some of the ways the English behave. 'Quantity is king' - still the 'all you can eat' carveries and now new adverts for 'Bottomless Brunch - all the Prosecco you can drink.' Jackets in dull colours, black, grey. No brightness out in the dull afternoons. Feet still on train seats. People saying 'sorry' at every end and turn. The reality of Brexit now up close. Empty supermarket shelves. Chaos and delays at ports and airports. It's enough, that's enough. We know how it's turned out. It was always going to turn out like this.



Photo: Julie Greenan

But this beautiful England, so green. The trees made me weep for joy and relief. Blossom, rivers and streams. Snowdrops. Springtime - daffodils, tulips. Bluebells. The glory of autumn and the thinning of the trees to an elegant, black skeleton.

Up Sticks!

JULIE GREENAN

And sunset beyond, and early setting of the low sun. Winters are grey and cold - but I know them of old. They hold no surprises for me. They're almost old friends. Tea shops and country house gardens with old stone walls draped with wisteria. Lighthouses. Tides. Becoming intimate with the sea by swimming through the winter, under a rising red moon, a golden sunrise. With snow on the beach, under hailstones. The North and my fierce newfound pride in being a northerner.

The gradual turning point began with cycling the Coast and Castles route from Tynemouth to Edinburgh. I began to feel 'I think maybe I could belong here.'

Again, here's how Orwell said it:

And above all, it is your civilisation, it is you. However much you hate it or laugh at it, you will never be happy away from it for any length of time. The suet puddings and the red pillar-boxes have entered into your soul. Good or evil, it is yours, you belong to it, and this side of the grave you will never get away from the marks that it has given you.

And yes, in that foreign country there was always something absent. Home. Was I happy? Sometimes. Was I 'at home'? Sometimes, when the parts of me that had found nothing corresponding in England, were seen and recognised. There is a saying that 'gaditanos' (people of Cádiz) can be born anywhere. And my nature was, and was not, gaditana.

So here I am, 'home' again, in England. Well, most of me is.



Photo credit [here](#)

Did you know ...

George Orwell, aka Eric Blair, was a direct descendant of slave traders.

George Orwell's first wife, Eileen O'Shaughnessy, was a Geordie who is buried in Newcastle city centre.

For his book *Down & Out In Paris & London*, he adopted a false identity, dressed as a tramp and slept in a lodging house for the homeless.

Passionately anti-fascist all his life, Orwell fought with the Republicans in the Spanish Civil War, was shot through the throat but went on to make a full recovery.

A keen member of the Home Guard in WW2, he wrote instructions on street fighting and the use of mortars.

Step Up!

MONKSEATON MORRIS DANCERS

Handkerchiefs and bells and swords and tradition

What can you tell us about the history of Morris dancing?

Morris Dance has been part of English life for at least six hundred years and may be much older. While the style is peculiar to the English mainland, there remain some similarities to Catalan and to Basque dancers. As to the origin of the dances, this is a matter of continuing dispute and argument and [The Morris Ring](#) website contains lots of fascinating information on this subject. Monkseaton have been going since 1955, and we were formed to keep the traditional country and rapper dances from the North East alive.



Photo by [Ray Mclver](#)

As well as individual dances, you also perform longer 'mummers' plays that involve set characters. We'd love to hear more about these.

Mumming describes a range of traditional drama. Mumming is the term generally used but each region had its own local term (and plays). Monkseaton perform the Ampleforth Sword Dance and Mumming Play. The dance is from Yorkshire and the play involves a range of characters; a doctor, a clown, a



Photo by [Ray Mclver](#)

king and a body. The dance ends in the death of the 'body', the doctor can't bring him back to life, but the clown and the dancers do. When we perform this on New Year's Day it represents the killing off of the old year and the start of the new.



Photo by [Ray Mclver](#)

Should anyone get to see a Morris side in action, the dancing might look deceptively easy. Having seen some of the more strenuous dances however, we guess that's not the case?!

Some dances are easier to learn than others. Often different traditions have their own steps or movements that add another level of difficulty. You need a sense of rhythm, so you stay in time, but most people will pick it up. We like to perform the Rapper at a fast pace - that's tricky to do!

Step Up!

MONKSEATON MORRIS DANCERS

We'd love to know more about the clothes you wear when dancing.

Each Morris side has their own kit. Morris sides (the stick and hanky lot) tend to have a colourful jacket (a 'Forest of Dean') or baldricks, maybe a hat, and bells. Sword dancers may wear a military type costume or a sash.



Photo: Monkseaton Morris Dancers

The 'rapper' dances are particularly impressive with their co-ordinated sword work. Is it right that these dances originated in the north-east?

Yes, the Rapper dance is from Durham and Northumberland. In these dances, the sword is a flat strip of flexible or spring steel about 60cm long, with a rotating handle at one end and a fixed handle at the other. A sword can be bent into a complete circle and some figures require this degree of flexibility. The dance is for five, and they will often be augmented by the additional characters of Tommy and Betty. It is the fastest of all sword dances and it requires the least space (it is often



Photo by Ray McIver

performed inside pubs. It is also the most gymnastically demanding as some dances require back somersaults!

This is the dance for which Monkseaton is most recognised. Our seven sword Walbottle dance is the highlight of our New Year's Day show. Later in the day you'll find us in the pubs of Monkseaton squeezing in the Winlaton Rapper sword dance.



Photo: Monkseaton Morris Dancers

How would you sell Morris dancing to anyone thinking of getting involved?

Morris dancing gives you the opportunity to have some fun, do something different whilst keeping a bit of tradition alive. Once involved you'll learn all sorts of dances, songs and traditions. You'll spend some time dancing out, often with other sides, usually at pubs.

Step Up!

MONKSEATON MORRIS DANCERS

Monkseaton have travelled throughout the UK but also recently to France, Belgium and Spain. Every country has its own traditional dance and it's important that ours survives.

We always welcome new members - come along and give it a try.

We meet in North Shields on Monday evenings.

You can get more information from:

monkseatonmorris@gmail.com

[@7manrapper](#) on twitter

[Monkseaton Morris Dancers](#) on Facebook



Photo by [Ray McIver](#)



Shaking it Up!

A FEW CHOICE PHRASES FIRST USED BY SHAKESPEARE

Knock, knock, who's there?

Seen better days

Wear your heart on your sleeve

Heart of gold

The game is up

Laughing stock

Faint-hearted

The world is my oyster

Makes your hair stand on end

So, so

Off with his head

In a pickle

Good riddance

Wild goose chase

Baited breath

Fight fire with fire

Love is blind

Brave new world

Green-eyed monster

For goodness' sake

A sorry sight

Vanish into thin air

Fair play

The be all and end all

Word Up!

YOUR POEMS ON THE THEME OF ENGLAND

To
the flag

Windswept
shore of golden sand
where
spikes of seagrass stand
Christendom
gave root,
On
bedrock North Sea gnawed
spindrift
laden salted storms.
Jarrow
slacks a pontiff's gold
Illuminated
words
that
spoke peace and love
Of
sinners and saints
To
white, white gulls in grey stormy skies
The
word made real,
by
goose feather quill,
solid,
unyielding, timeless
ink
stained fingers through
conglomerate,
of Alum,
pigments...
hand made...



pestle
and mortar ground.
Alchemy
of the word
on
vellum transposed
Historia
Ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum
For
here the northern saints did roam
Cuthbert,
Aiden, Hilda, Oswald, Wilfred
The
venerable Bede,
They
walked their walk
England
oh my England
In
liberalism, democracy, and acceptance
to
the flag we pledge.

Andrew Hare

Mash Up!

STEVE LOWE

**Dickens & Pratchett, Elgar & Britten,
John Cooper Clarke, Cuckoos, Reggie Perrin ...
these are a few of Steve's favourite things**

What were those “blue birds over the white cliffs of Dover”?

I’ve always thought they must be swallows, guessing that the song was meant about spring and summer. After all, swallows eventually depart these fair shores for distant lands every autumn. I bet they were swooping over the channel with all those small boats in May 1940? They probably still do!



Or were they Kingfishers, whose striking blueness is a trick of the light, but who spend much of their winter hunting on coasts in rockpools? That’s always a surprise to many people I meet on my regular beach cleans, when the sight of the blue streak brightens the day, taking my mind off cigarette butts and poo bags. “You never know what you will see on a walk”, I think, only to remind myself that litter appears to be ever present (although plastic bags are rarer since we have to buy them!).

Incidentally, real bluebirds are from “the



Americas”, so it’s probably down to the lyricist, Nat Burton, being from that neck of the woods!

However, those white chalk cliffs are a stunning landmark and typify a view of England, enhanced by the song itself. Close up, the cliffs are quite green, being colonised by plants and mosses, but fresh falls of chalk are bright white. In places they are as high as 350 feet, or 110 metres, and are home to many seabird colonies. My only visit was to look at the construction of the Chunnel as a student, but I was impressed by the landscape and the juxtaposition of sea and land.

England is marked by its varied landscapes, wildlife and its real wealth of historical sites. So much to see, so many places to visit and therefore really difficult to pick any favourite places or things. Of course, English history is not really about “England” at all – it’s a miasma of bits of Wales, Scotland, Ireland and even France. So, a good place to start perhaps is to look at Borders?

During the Scottish Independence Referendum, I was tired of hearing how many people (mainly MPs) thought the land north of Hadrian’s Wall was called Scotland, when in fact there is almost a whole English County to traverse before that is the case! Not to mention the parts of Cumbria, known still as the Debateable Lands, where there has always remained dispute over “sovereignty”.

Mash Up!

STEVE LOWE



Hadrian's Wall was built as an 84-mile frontier to the Roman Empire, "to separate Romans from the barbarians", in Hadrian's own words. Looking south, I might agree - but in reverse - sometimes! Along the (old) Anglo-Welsh border runs a spectacular earthwork boundary dyke built by Offa, King of Mercia, probably during the 780s, to divide his Kingdom of Mercia from rival kingdoms in what is now Wales. 177 miles' worth of humping soil and muck is some statement, especially without JCBs!

A series of undersea landslips around 7-8,000 years ago broke through a land bridge (known to archaeologists and geologists as Doggerland). This linked Britain, Denmark and the Netherlands across what is now the southern North Sea. The huge tsunami caused a collapse of the Mesolithic culture in the area and gradual rise in sea levels cut Britain off from the continent.

This led to the formation of the English Channel, our "border" with France and the Low Countries. Known as La Manche (the sleeve), by the French, it remains both a defence against "invasion" and a border showing all the signs of conflict. So,

amongst the amazing geology and wildlife along the Channel Coast (including the Channel Islands), there are relics to remind us of a troubled past. Many of these sites are managed by English Heritage, such as the amazing Dover Castle or Battle (where Harold caught an arrow in his eye).

So I think it's fair to say that Borders are usually places of conflict, a bit like leylandii hedges on the neighbour's boundary. Incidentally Leylandii hedges were "invented" in Northumberland at Haggerston Castle, by the Leyland family. If only they knew then!



Photo credit [here](#)

The Border Reivers were raiders along the Anglo-Scottish border from the late 13th century to the beginning of the 17th century. They included both Scottish and English people, and they raided the entire border country without regard to their victims' nationality. This mayhem, murder, robbery and plundering was actively encouraged by both crowns. It was lawless, in many regards.

I am lucky enough to work at one of these Reiver sites, namely Cresswell Pele Tower, at Druridge Bay on the Northumberland Coast. In 2014, this ruin was in danger of falling down after years of

Mash Up!

STEVE LOWE

neglect and vandalism, finding itself on the Historic England's "Buildings at Risk" Register.

Thanks to local volunteers, the Pele is now fully restored and, most importantly, open to the public. Free entry ensures that visitors can immerse themselves in the history of the Pele Tower, the Cresswell family and lots of other historical aspects of the local area, including a current restoration of a secret walled garden, which will be a haven of calm and riotous colour once completed.

About 10,000 visitors have walked through this portal into the past in less than two years and the interest continues to grow, with volunteers now dressing the part (14th Century), swords, longbows and bouquets. The tower's resident spectre, the White Lady, will be non-plussed, no doubt, but surely pleased to know that this landmark is now removed from the "at risk" register, thanks to a lottery grant and thousands of hours of hard but rewarding graft, from many people.



Amongst these, a particular mention must go to my pal, Barry Mead (aka the Vulnerable Mead). Without his continued time and enthusiasm in leading this project, this might just be a private pile of rubble, hidden from view, instead of a brilliant community resource.

He would be the first to say it was a team effort but without the immense dedication of people like Barry, many of our local spaces, our heritage, environment and wildlife would be worse off. It is estimated that 2022 saw 14 million people volunteering some of their time to similar projects, in England alone!



So, why the interest in volunteering? The Greek philosopher Aristotle once said that the essence of life is "to serve others and do good," and it appears that an increasing number of us are starting to wake up

and see why volunteering is important. People are starting to understand how serving and helping each other and different communities benefits not just others, but us too.

Volunteers provide essential help to worthwhile causes, people in need, and the wider community. Indeed, many organisations and charities rely on the generosity of volunteers because they're only part-funded. But volunteering is also hugely important for the person doing it. Stress reduction, combating depression and providing a sense of purpose are just some of the reasons why people like to do their bit.

And it is fun. On a rainy day in Cresswell, you can make a medieval tile, pose as a knight, dress up in period clothing, enjoy the solitude of a walled garden, search for archaeology in a sand pit and just chat about the past with like-minded people until the sun breaks through to reveal a fantastic view of the coast from the top of a 14th Century building. Volunteers help to deliver that because they care and visitors get

Mash Up!

STEVE LOWE

that for nowt, zilch, free, gratis and without cost.
Give it a go.

So, when I think of England, it's not just football (thank goodness!). Or a flag of a saint who was Greek, celebrated in Muslim texts as well as Christian. Instead, I think of diversity; of people,



culture, chips, landscapes, history, Carry Ons, music, spirit, community, language, Ealing comedies, pantomime, crisps,

saying sorry, Henry the Hoover, crumpets and tea (builders' obviously).

Of Geordies, Scousers, Mackems and Smoggies (everyone else is Cockney). Pies at the match, long walks in the rain, the Bard, the "wrong kind of snow", stripping off as soon as the sun shows, Auf Wiedersehen Pet and, obviously, Pink Floyd.

Of the Lakes, the Toon, the Pennines, Dales, Cotswolds, the Broads and the Fens. Chester, Ely, Oxford and York. Hills we call mountains, cuckoos and skylarks, coastal fog on a sunny day, spuggies and starlings. Carsick Road, Hetty Peglar's Tump, Giggleswick and Nether Wallop.

Of reggae, ska, punk, metal and folk. Brass bands and choirs, Elgar and Britten, Dickens and Pratchett, Tommy Cooper, Spike Milligan, James Bond, Reggie Perrin and Monty Python. And, of course, John Cooper Clarke.



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.

<https://cresswellpeletower.org.uk/>

<https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/>

<https://historicengland.org.uk/>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/natural-england/about>



There's an accent shift, on average, every 25 miles in England.

David Crystal

Oh, to be in England now that April's there.

Robert Browning

What other country... could possibly have come up with place names like Tooting Bec and Farleigh Wallop, or a game like cricket that goes on for three days and never seems to start?"

Bill Bryson

Read Up!

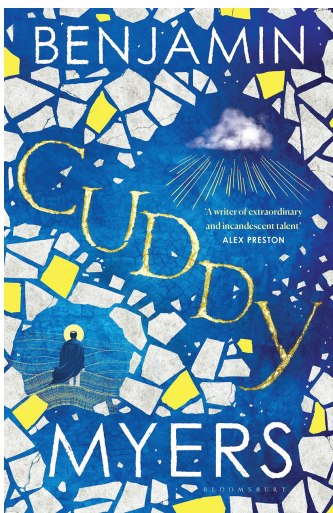
JENNA WARREN

England through the pages



When I saw this month's theme, I wasn't sure how I should interpret it. Should I just choose my favourite books set in England? Was that too broad a scope?

In the end, I decided to recommend books which I feel capture a geographical part of England, or an aspect of English culture, particularly well. This is obviously going to be a highly subjective list.

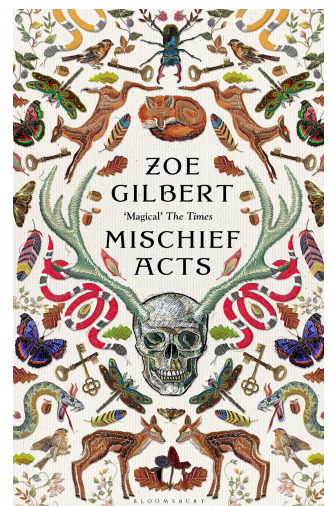


Firstly, I've chosen *Cuddy*, the wonderful new novel by Benjamin Myers. *Cuddy* is set in and around Lindisfarne and Durham Cathedral. It begins with the death of Saint Cuthbert, and then traces his legacy through the ages via a series of interlinked short narratives. Over the course of this experimental novel, we follow the monks trying to find a final resting place for Saint Cuthbert's body, then jump forward in time to the medieval period. There is an interlude set in 1650, in which Scottish soldiers are imprisoned in the cathedral following the Battle of Dunbar, and a Victorian sequence from the point of view of an academic invited to Durham to witness the exhumation of Cuthbert's remains. The final part is set in contemporary Durham and follows a young labourer who takes a job at the cathedral.

Stylistically, this novel is fascinating. Each part is written in a style appropriate to the period in which it is set. For example, the Victorian sequence is written in the style of a Gothic novel, and the contemporary part is in modern prose. If this all sounds intellectually tiring, let me assure you that it isn't. Myers is a beautiful writer, and his work is effortless, and easy to follow. This is a wonderful novel about time and place, and the ways in which human nature stays the same across the ages.

In a similar vein, but about a very different subject, is *Mischief Acts* by Zoe Gilbert. Another stylistically experimental, time travelling novel, this takes English folklore as its inspiration. The central figure is Herne the Hunter, a mythical, immortal man with antlers like a stag. According to legend, he is associated with the Great North Wood, a forest which covered parts of what is now South London. The novel begins with Herne's 'creation' as a supernatural being and follows him through time as he adopts various guises, taking us through the Victorian period, the 1960s, and finally into the future.

This is a novel about place and nature, and how humans interact with and alter the landscape. Deforestation occurs, London expands, and uninhibited wildness (personified by Herne and his fellow folkloric beings) are driven to

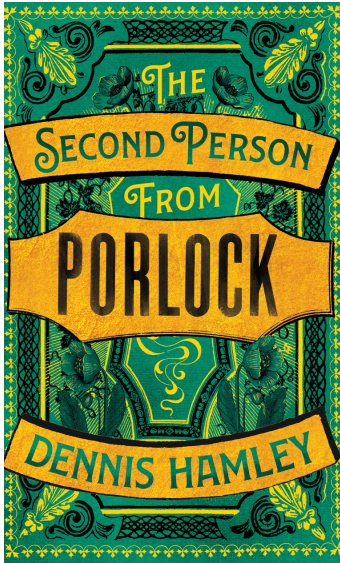


Read Up!

JENNA WARREN

the side lines and liminal spaces. It is also a novel about story, and how old tales are altered as they're passed down through the generations.

The novel has serious aspects, but it's also very playful, with a sense of humour. I particularly loved the sequence set at a Twelfth Night party in 1606, and the 1960s sequence involving a water spirit who takes up residence in a human woman's flat. The whole thing is enchanting, and so much fun.



One of my favourite historical novels of the last few years is *The Second Person from Porlock* by Dennis Hamley. This is a book inspired by the Romantic poets, particularly Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Taking place mainly in 1824, it follows Samuele, a young Sicilian who learns that Coleridge may be his father. He travels to England with the intention of meeting the famous poet, but Coleridge is struggling with opium addiction, and proves a difficult man to pin down. Instead, Samuele meets Scrivener, a student at Cambridge, who has discovered a strange annotation in a book of Coleridge's poems in his college's library.

The two young men embark on a mission to learn about the real Coleridge and discover the meaning behind the mysterious message. Along the way, they meet various people who know Coleridge personally, including the Wordsworths, whom Samuele visits at Rydal Mount in the Lake District.

I loved this book as both a tour of literary England, and a coming-of-age story. It's a difficult book to summarise, but I found it hugely satisfying, and beautifully written.

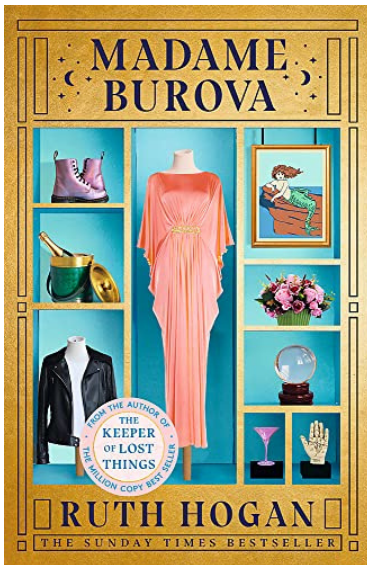
This Lovely City by Louise Hare is set in 1950s London and follows a group of characters who have emigrated to England on the Empire Windrush. The main character is Lawrie, a Jazz musician who arrives in England and falls in love with Evie, his next door neighbour. One morning, Lawrie makes a tragic discovery in a local park, and a murder investigation begins.

This book paints a vivid picture of London at a very interesting point in its history and explores what it must have been like to arrive in the city at that time. It is a time of great change: London is slowly evolving into a modern, multicultural city, but the effects of the war are ever present, and prejudice impacts the lives of the main characters. Lawrie and Evie are beautifully drawn characters, and I really cared about them.



Read Up!

JENNA WARREN



My final recommendation this month is *Madame Burova* by Ruth Hogan. This lovely, light book is set mainly in Brighton, partly in the present day, and partly in the 1970s. It follows Imelda Burova, a Tarot reader and clairvoyant who is retiring after many years telling fortunes in a booth on the seafront. But before she retires, she has a message for Billie, a woman she has never met. Billie is at a crossroads in her life: her marriage has ended, and she has just lost her job. She travels to Brighton to meet the mysterious Madame Burova, and in doing so she unravels the mystery of her own identity.

I've chosen this novel because I feel that it captures the English seaside beautifully. The 70s sections are set around a holiday camp, and it provides a great insight into tourism in England at that time, and what it must have been like for those who worked in that industry. It would make a perfect summer holiday read.

*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 2022 by [Fairlight Books](#).*



Books are a uniquely portable magic.

Stephen King

A great book should leave you with many experiences, and slightly exhausted at the end. You live several lives while reading.

William Styron

You think your pain and your heartbreak are unprecedented in the history of the world, but then you read. It was books that taught me that the things that tormented me most were the very things that connected me with all the people who were alive, who had ever been alive.

James Baldwin

Coming Up!

Well there we go! I don't know about you, but with a very untypical immodesty for English people, we thought that was excellent. Apologies for the over confidence, but we couldn't resist sneaking in another word invented by Shakespeare (excellent)!

All of this thinking and learning has left us a bit peckish. Thankfully next month's Up! has a Food & Drink theme. It will be jam-packed (see what we did there!) with delicious articles and aromatic features, guaranteed to satisfy any appetite.

One last word, we have just returned from a wonderful community event encouraging kindness to refugees. In an uncertain world, it's so important to remember we are all brothers and sisters under the skin.

Have a great month, be kind and be happy.

Love
Bridget & Harry xx



Email: admin@positivelyup.co.uk
Website: www.positivelyup.co.uk

We are determined to keep Up! free for everyone, but we're always grateful for donations that will help us continue what we do.



[Buy us a coffee](#)