

Up!

JULY 2023

SPORT



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

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Up Front!

Hi everyone and welcome to this month's edition of Up!

If we say the word 'sport', what's your reaction? A lovely summer's day watching the cricket? Strawberries and cream at Wimbledon? Or perhaps, like us, you have deeply unpleasant memories of school PE lessons, sadistic PE teachers and muddy cross country runs that seemed to go on for ever? If that's the case, then fear not.

Read on and rediscover all the brilliant things about this sporting life. We've got parkruns, village cricket, horse riding and the joys and perils of following a very small football club. All this plus your usual favourites and not a gym slip or a pair of sand shoes in sight!

On yer marks, get set ... go!

Bridget & Harry x

Turning Up!

CATHY FRANK

There's more than one reason why they call it 'the beautiful game'

Mon Blu. That's the mantra of the passionate but dwindling supporters of Scottish League 2 football club, Stranraer FC. "Dwindling" because local support is increasingly divided between the two Old Firm clubs, Rangers and Celtic, but also because the majority of Stranraer's supporters are die-hard...and dying out. I may be approaching dwindling age myself, but have only been following The Blues for about 12 years following the death of my son's best friend. "Who will I go on holiday with?" Well, me, of course. "And celebrate my birthday with?" Ditto. "And go to football with?" I'll be honest, I didn't hesitate but my heart sank. I thought I'd finished with standing on icy touchlines with the wind blowing in from the sea when he went to secondary and didn't make it into the school team.



Photo credit Bill McCandlish, club photographer

It was as cold as I'd dreaded, safer than I'd expected, and I threw myself into my 12th man role, George cringing as I shouted with



indignation at perceived injustices ("He was offside, Mum") and berating officials. I thought I'd give it a few weeks and George would hook up with other mates releasing me from my duty, but I didn't expect to be so completely hooked by then.

Initially, we only went to home games. The crowd mainly consists of middle-aged men (being kind), fewer young men, and a bunch of kids who go along to meet up with their mates, jostle for selfies with whichever player is nearby, and run around the stand spilling their chips as they go. There are a decent number of women who man the club shop, sell 50:50 draw tickets, and help with hospitality, and the overall atmosphere is a family one. If for some reason George couldn't make the match, I was comfortable going by myself. Someone would come over for a chat at half-time and my inexperienced opinion of the day's play was always heard with respect. I learnt the offside rule and the players' names, though I still get confused by positions probably because, with a squad of 19, players often have to play out of position to cover injuries. When George started courting his future wife, she quickly learned the way to his heart and I got to know her in a freezing stand over paper cups of Bovril.

Turning Up!

CATHY FRANK

In the early days Stranraer were playing in League 1 against clubs who had slipped out of the top tiers like Dunfermline, Ayr and Greenock Morton, and Rangers who didn't so much slip as crash out, following financial mismanagement and administration. Rangers climbed back from the bottom of League 2 to automatic promotion in their first season, without conceding a point on the way. On Boxing Day 2013 we were due to meet them as they progressed in the same way through League 1. We decided to go to Ibrox (or Castle Greyskull, as it's known hereabouts) to support them, along with a couple of hundred other Stranraer fans. We occupied a tiny slice of the huge stadium, compared to the 45,000 home supporters. We sang and chanted, but couldn't make ourselves heard against their drums and roars, but we did it anyway. I think we were all dreading a rout and I'd have been happy to come away without one. Rangers won a dodgy penalty but we kept the score to 1:0 for the 90 minutes and on into injury time. Our lads had had a few forays into their half, but we could sense something special was coming. George says he can still hear my voice in his ear: "Come on, Lloydy.



Come on, Andy. Go on, Jammer...yesssssssss!" and lowly Stranraer, with one of the lowest budgets in the league system, became the first team to take a point off the mighty Bears. Jammer was Jamie Longworth, a mild-mannered teacher who took on Superman status on Saturday afternoons (Stranraer is a part-time club comprising opticians, teachers, joiners etc). He inspired one of the chants "Jamie Longworth, he scores when he wants" and he became George's favourite, even sitting, in fondant form, on the edge of his 30th birthday cake. I was tempted to put him on the top tier of George and Luce's wedding cake but settled for a discreet Stranraer FC badge!



We started going to all the away games we could. Stranraer is in the furthest south-west corner of Scotland and our opponents were as far away as Peterhead in the north-east. Occasionally we'd make a weekend of it and book an apartment, have a meal out and see something of our country, but George and Luce both worked in hospitality so weekends off were a luxury. Being travel-sick, I prefer to drive and that gives George the freedom to check social media as we go. The furthest we ever did in one day was to play the Premiership side Inverness Caledonian Thistle (don't Scottish clubs have such imaginative names?!) in a cup replay one wintry Tuesday night.

I picked George up from the hotel where he worked in the morning, we had a nap in a motel

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CATHY FRANK

room outside Stirling on the way, then drove on through ever-deeper snow to Inverness, where we grabbed a quick meal and donned our thermals before heading to the ground, where we were told there would be a pitch-inspection at 7pm! Fortunately the ground staff swept enough snow off the pitch to satisfy the ref and the game went ahead. The football wasn't especially memorable and we were put out of the cup, but the match did involve one of my favourite moments. Our supporters aren't the most vociferous but ICT's were models of Hieland decorum, so our youngsters changed their chant (to the tune of La donna è mobile) to "Is this a library?" After the game we headed back to Stirling, where I'd hoped to sleep for a few hours but George had work at 9am, so we had coffee and a break then I dropped him off at 6am, and did the last hour to home. It had been a 24-hour round trip but was well worth it.



Lockdown put an end to it all, and George and other volunteers learnt how to livestream matches till we could attend in person, but the long away trips are a thing of the past. I've made it to Dumbarton and Annan (only 175-mile round trips!) but no further. I miss the traditions we had in place: we bought

smokies from Arbroath to take home, always having to air the car for days afterwards; Brechin FC made the best soup for half-time for which we swapped our customary Bovril; for Angus clubs we would always stop at a particular garden centre for their excellent soup (and free herb scone) and I'd pick up the Anya seed potatoes I could only find there! We'd see the same small band who made the away games, including one stalwart who drives from Durham to every match.

I've only felt uncomfortable at a couple of away matches, though very often I put my scarf out of sight between the car and the ground. Occasionally there's some banter but mostly their supporters are impressed that we have travelled. I've broken up a couple of arguments at home that could have turned nasty, an elderly school-marm being much more effective than a muscly steward.

Following the success of the live-streaming, George now films most home games so, after starting going to football to keep him company, I ended up sitting on my own! However my new(ish) partner made the mistake of coming along to the odd game in the better weather. We bought him a really snug coat, and last season he came to every game with me. We don't normally do birthday presents but I got him one this year...his own season ticket!

*When she's not following her beloved Stranraer FC
Cathy Frank is one half of the fabulous
Late Bloomers folk duo
Singing in close harmony and playing guitar, banjo
and concertina, they bring a wealth of experience
and passion to their performances.*

latebloomersmusic.co.uk

Word Up!

YOUR POEMS ON THE THEME OF SPORT

Fairway evenings

Thursday evening was my golf time – after work
when air cools and the sun softens its glare.

In spring, daffodils lined the first fairway
cheery sentinels of coming warmth.

Once past the first green, a glade of trees hush traffic,
providing an inviting spot for lost balls.

Eager at fifteen with free lessons and vigilant parents,
I learned the rules. Don't stand there, don't move

while others are playing – keep an eye on all the balls.
At first, I scurried around at great speed swinging big.

Then, the pace and patience of golf eased my dash.
By twenty-one my game was as fluid as a Zen master.

Well mostly.

At twenty-three, I played for the Irish Universities –
ladies' team. In the high winds of Caernarfon

we won against our Wales host, halved with England,
lost to valiant Scots who played a wonder.

My mam was proud, a green jersey, crisp
as the leaves on my beloved copper beech in summer.

Dad, long dead might have corrected my stance,
bid me keep my left arm straight!

Rona Fitzgerald

When My Dad Saved The Day, January 6th 1934

Spurs are on the break again.
The Holte End groans.
The Villa keeper flexes his fingertips.

Aston Villa 0 Tottenham Hotspur 5

In the crowd, seventeen-year old Pat
blows on his fingers, stamps his feet.
Pongo Waring's ordered off the park
for something only the ref saw
and the Holte End's hushed.

Villans rally, wave their caps,
cheer Pongo to the dressing room.
Pat sighs, pulls up his collar,
lights another Woodbine.
After the final whistle
he weaves through turnstiles,
strides down Trinity Road,
sprints for his tram.

Can this back-street youngster
score a hat-trick, bring Villa level?
He has possession, he's onside, he shoots –

Sheila Jacob

Next month's theme is: HEROES

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>

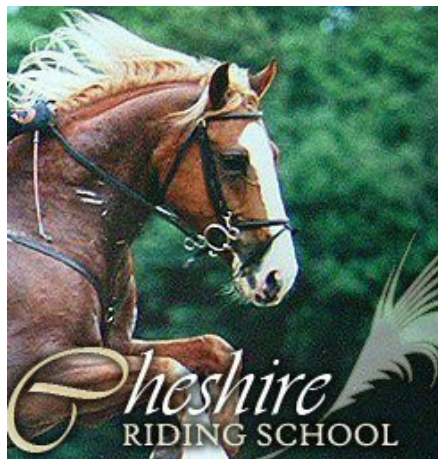
Saddle Up!

CHESHIRE RIDING SCHOOL

Up! meets Jane Hartley, an equestrian expert who tells us why the going is good

Owning a riding school is the stuff of many children's dreams. Have you always wanted to do what you do?

I have always had a great passion for horses, and have ridden since the age of 4. I was lucky enough to have my own pony from the age of 10, and competed in many local shows, joining the pony club at this time. My enthusiasm and knowledge grew over the years, and it became evident that a career in the equestrian industry was inevitable! I met a good friend at a livery yard in Tatton, where we stabled our horses together. She had a dream to own "the best riding school in Cheshire", and



whether this is now true or not, I was fortunate enough to be able to embark on that journey with her. That was 23 years ago, and we are still the best of friends and the centre is thriving.

Surely sitting on a horse enjoying a gentle hack can't provide much exercise, can it?

Many people think that "the horse does all the work", but in actual fact horse and rider should work together to gain the most from the experience. I'm sure that anyone who has taken up riding as a hobby can vouch for the fact that it can be incredibly hard work physically to learn even the basics! All types of riding, hacking included, are great for developing your core



muscles and centre of balance and coordination. You can also put into practice all knowledge gained in the riding school, whilst riding over different terrains and long distances. This can improve your

stamina, and work muscles which are not necessarily used to any great extent in other activities e.g. the adductor and abductor muscles in the inner thighs, glutes and abdominal muscles! There are multiple apps specifically for horse riders which can track calorie usage which actually do prove that lots of calories can be burned off whilst hacking!



What about those people who don't want to actually ride? Are there other physical and mental benefits to be gained from being around horses?

There are many benefits, both mental and physical, to be gained from working with, and just

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being around horses. The physical acts of mucking out, filling haynets, grooming, carrying hay bales and buckets of water, and even leading horses to and from the fields can be quite challenging! I can feel the calories being burned off just writing



about it! Many people come to our riding school as, in their words, weekly therapy! They come for their “horse fix”, a weekly cuddle with their favourite equine, a chat with like minded people and the relaxing atmosphere which the horses create. At our school, we do have sessions for those with some developmental disabilities such as autism, Down's syndrome, ADHD, Asperger's syndrome etc, and being around the horses does have benefits for these clients. Horses are naturally gentle and calm creatures, and can be great for mental health. There is nothing quite like listening to a barn full of

contented horses quietly and gently munching on their hay. Many studies indicate that being around horses can substantially reduce stress levels and anxiety.

Riding is often perceived as an expensive sport. How can you make it accessible to as many people as possible?

At our riding school, we offer really competitive prices, with loyalty schemes for our regular customers where they can get discounts for block bookings. Clients don't have to commit to weekly lessons, which allows them to just ride with us when funds allow. A lot of equipment is needed for riding, however you don't have to splash out on the most expensive brands - lots of more affordable brands are available on the market and we also offer the use of riding hats, riding boots and body protectors for those who don't have their own. We also run monthly competitions for clients, who don't have their own horses, as they can compete on the riding school horses. We have weekly pony club groups too for enthusiastic children who, for whatever reason, aren't able to have their own ponies.



Saddle Up!

CHESHIRE RIDING SCHOOL

We understand you compete in dressage? What is it about this particular equestrian sport that appeals to you?

When I was younger, my main passion was for Showjumping and Cross Country riding, having competed in these disciplines for several decades! Around 6 years ago, my horses unfortunately had to retire from jumping due to age related issues - so began the start of my new dressage venture! I was apprehensive about this at first, but having attended dressage clinics with some of the top trainers, and having weekly dressage tuition with a local British Dressage judge, I need not have worried. I LOVE it!! Dressage is SO good for improving your posture and your horse's way of

going, and also really helps you develop a better understanding of how your horse moves underneath you, and further develops the important relationship between horse and rider - I would recommend dressage to anyone!



You must have shared your life with many horses over the years. We'd love to hear about the ones that have really meant a lot.

My first love was Misty, not my pony unfortunately, but one that I was fortunate enough to be able to compete at pony club, gaining my first

ever red rosettes. From there the long and happy journey began. My first pony was Shadow, a little grey mare who will always be very special to me. Clyde was the first stallion I owned, and what a gentleman he was. We escorted many hacks around Tatton Park, and he was also a driving pony, so we could often be seen in the trap around the park! We had two foals by Clyde, and I still have one of his offspring, a beautiful little mare called Surprise, who will be 24 this year, and still acts like a 4 year old! Surprise had a great jump in her for a pony, and we often competed against the bigger horses and usually managed a top placing in the ribbons! She was my little jumping bean and will always have a special place in my heart.

My two main men at the moment are Henry and Alfie. We enjoy many an hour hacking round the Cheshire countryside, and of course, dabbling in a bit of dressage! My passion has without doubt passed on to my daughter who is a very keen horse rider, and apparently my 18 month old



grand-daughter who has already shown a keen interest in helping (or hindering!!) around the yard.

I have never, and will never, sell any of my horses. With me they have a home for life.

Word Up!

YOUR POEMS ON THE THEME OF SPORT

Legs Before Wicket

He waxed his legs so his whites would glide.
Had a pedicure so his boots felt right.
Touched his toes and took a selfie.
Hoped sponsorship would make him wealthy.
Skipped between wickets hoping Wisden saw.
Dreamt of fame on the Strictly floor.
Polished his bat so it reflected his shins.
Bent at the knee when playing spin.
Brushed his thighs between each over.
Kept his whites like the cliffs of Dover.
His pride and legs soon took a fall:
Hit his wicket – out first ball.

Rob Walton

Football

I tried to write a poem about football
but every time I put pen to paper
there were only butterflies
fluffy clouds or the night sky
birches in autumn woods
or long dark underground tunnels leading to unexpected
treasures

And I thought: Why not football?
Does it not make your heart flutter?
Don't you feel high or even over the moon when you're winning?
Are the crowds in the stadium not densely packed
trees swinging their branches in the breeze?
Is it not your entire life?

Renata Connors

HOWAY THE LAD

It may be just a pre-season friendly,
he's the wrong side of thirty; I still
get the same joy watching him play.
Diehard tackles, rampaging forward,
exhorting teammates, lusting for goals.

I'm double his age, not in his league.
At half-time he's subbed for a while.
Jack says at thirty-two he's lost some pace,
matters more at centre-back
than in midfield: You just need stamina there.

A year ago he moved up here,
outsider unsure of getting
in the local team. A year on
he's given teaching the red card,
exhausted by rule changes,

but still chosen by the manager.
I love the touchline accents,
the odd howay, lad. Afterwards
the players take down the goalposts
and, like fishermen, gather in the nets.

Greg Freeman

Park Up!

ROB WALTON

What's Free For Everyone Forever?

It's nine in the morning on Saturday 15th June. I'm about to take part in Whitley Bay Parkrun. Hang on a minute - much of that first sentence is redundant - wherever you are in the world, Parkrun takes place at 9 a.m. on a Saturday, and has done ever since the first one, the "Bushy Park Time Trial", on 2nd October, 2004. In 2008 the event changed its name to Parkrun. Whitley Bay joined the fray on June 16th, 2012, and this lovely event on our beautiful part of the coast has now taken place 463 times. Yes, all right, enough with the dates and the numbers - what exactly is this Parkrun thing? Some of you probably already know about this global phenomenon with three million participants, but if you don't, this is what the organisation says about itself: *A free, fun, and friendly weekly 5k community event. Walk, jog, run, volunteer or spectate - it's up to you!*



Because of injury and other commitments, this is the first time I've run here in over five months. It's good to be back. I've completed about 160 Parkruns, the majority at Whitley Bay, with a few through the



woods at the Rising Sun Country Park and one-off visits to others in Newcastle at Leazes Park, the Town Moor and Jesmond Dene. I've been a Parkrun tourist in Scunthorpe, Hull, Sheffield, Liverpool and Germany. And I've always been really pleased I've done them, whatever my time or level of fitness. It's a great thing to be part of, an entirely positive community coming together with a set of common goals. I've run with friends and I've run with family. We've all enjoyed it.

Before testing my injured foot on the two-lap course, I take on a very easy volunteering task: First Timers Briefing. I think I've tried six or seven volunteering roles, but this is definitely a favourite. Sixty four people are running this course for the first time. I try to resist sending them for a plodge. I begin by talking through the course, reassuring people that, even if they switch off from my dulcet tones, there will be loads of friendly marshals telling them where to go and offering encouragement. As it happens, 451 people are running or walking this morning, so there's a very good chance of being able to follow the person in front. Unless you're Daniel Alexander, who completes the course in 16 minutes and 28 seconds. (Later, as I'm doing some mental calculations about the chances of being lapped, I get lapped, and I have to laugh.)

At the First Timers Briefing, I'm asked if it's all right to run with a buggy. It most certainly is. Hopefully, that child will grow up seeing exercise

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and community as a normal part of life. They may then go on to have a go at Junior Parkrun (a 2km run or walk for 4-14 year olds at nine on a Sunday morning.) You can also run with your dog, if it's on a short lead, and your child, so long as they stay within arm's reach if they're eleven or younger.

A woman suggests her companion has cajoled her into doing it. I tell her, believing all the words that come out of my mouth, that I have no doubt she'll enjoy it. She's in Whitley Bay, the sun is shining, exercise releases feel-good endorphins and she's surrounded by smiling people. Why wouldn't you like that?



The volunteering role I have this morning allows me to participate in Parkrun afterwards, and tests my ability to remember what the dozy bloke said about the second lap being

slightly different from the first lap. I'm one of 34 volunteers today, many of whom are positioned around the course to ensure everyone is safe, follows the right route and is respectful to other users of the paths.

Some people will get lapped at parkrun, some

people will complete the course when some early finishers have gone home or gone to di Meo's for a coffee. None of this matters. It's all about running or walking at your own pace. Your time and position will be recorded via the clever barcode system and the efforts of those volunteers (did I mention how lovely they are?). You'll never come last. Parkrun has a system of Tailwalkers who accompany and encourage people towards the back of the field, ensuring the volunteer finishes at the back. If you want to, they'll have a chat.



There's something else very important I should mention about this incredibly well-organised event. It's free for everyone, forever. This is fundamental. It's also admirable. In a world of replica shirt rip-offs, £200 trainers, and a constant stream of adverts trying to separate you from the money you probably haven't got, Parkrun stands apart. It's on your side. All you need is your barcode and whatever kit works for you.

I've put my hi-vis and my lanyard back in the Race Director's car. I've had a chat with my friend Rick, a teacher from my old school in Scunthorpe I bumped into here a year or two ago. I'm starting at the back of the field heading towards the war memorial, with Spanish City looking glorious right in front of me. A run along the sea wall and a turn near the skate park, then

Park Up!

ROB WALTON

we're being directed along the prom. There's a section of pavement with alternating pink and sand-coloured flagstones. A young girl, running with her dad, quickly alternates her feet in the pavers at either side, like she's doing a football drill, maybe dreaming of World Cup glory or a trial with Scunthorpe United. She then jumps over the sand-coloured ones. I'm enjoying her enjoyment, and that's another important aspect of Parkrun. Enjoying each other's company. Celebrating each other.

I manage to get round and as I'm approaching the end I see someone has chalked The Final Countdown on the pavement. Yet another smile.



If you were to visit the [Whitley Bay Parkrun website](#) you'd be able to find out the course records, but from where I'm standing or shuffling, that's just about the least important part of Parkrun. You could also find statistics like 16,869 participants have completed 140,145 Parkruns at Whitley Bay, covering a total distance of 700,725 km, including 20,990 new Personal Bests. A total of 1,408 individuals have volunteered 11,898 times.

Hidden in those statistics are people with all sorts of different lives. People who look different, who run or walk in different ways and at different paces. United on a Saturday morning in a joyous way to improve their physical, mental and emotional health.

The only problem I have with Parkrun is I find it impossible to decide whether I prefer running or volunteering, cheering people on or being cheered on. Luckily, it's possible to do both and, honestly, why wouldn't you?

*Rob Walton is from Scunthorpe, and now lives in Whitley Bay. His poems, flash fictions and short stories for adults and children have appeared in various anthologies and magazines in the UK, USA, Canada, Ireland and New Zealand. Arachne Press published his debut poetry collection, [This Poem Here](#), in 2021. He has also written scripts and collated the New Hartley Memorial Pathway text.
insta, threads, twitter: @robwaltonwriter*

In running, it doesn't matter whether you come in first, in the middle of the pack, or last. You can say, 'I have finished.' There is a lot of satisfaction in that.

Fred Lebow, New York City Marathon co-founder

If you can't fly then run, if you can't run then walk, if you can't walk then crawl, but whatever you do you have to keep moving forward.

Martin Luther King, Jr.

Word Up!

YOUR POEMS ON THE THEME OF SPORT

Third Slip

Bowl me over, run me out,
catch me at third man.
Hit my leg before my wicket,
stump me if you think you can.

Hit me for a four, a six,
drive me through deep cover.
Tell me that we're not all out,
you're still my legside lover.

Joe Williams

Sports Day

The empty spoons with trodden eggs,
legs entwined in burlap, and
bean bags tossed beyond the pale
fail to cloud the day.

Class clown holds a baton high,
a magic wand, why pass it on?
Long gone the shaming,
slow child blaming, cheers for every try.
A lesson in how 'do your best'
Is a test passed every time.

Gerda Pickin

Soccer Shocker

I was never a one for football you know
But my brother was soccer-mad
and his enthusiasm for footy fizzed through my formative years

Living in 70's London we went to Highbury
I remember spotting Bob Paisley's bowling ball bounce
(and the rest of him of course)
when The Gunners played The Reds

10 years later in Liverpool I became one with the crowd on the steps of The Anfield
Kop as we moved together in waves of adulation, echoing the highs and lows of the
Game

20 years later I'm with my son at The Stadium Of Light.
This time we're nestled in plastic seats listening to the singing and chanting of The
Roker Roar raising its awesome voice each time they score

I was never a one for football y'know

Aaron Wright

Toss Up!

GRAHAM PEACOCK

Howzat! Meet the Methodist minister turned cricket umpire.

So, Graham, how did you end up as a cricket umpire?

I've always liked cricket: even from a young age it captivated me more than any other sport. I have a bare modicum of sporting ability though and I was never good at the game, but I played a few friendly matches from my late teens until my mid 30s. I did however watch a lot of cricket where I grew up in Leicester and sporadically at various grounds when I moved away. There is something captivating for me about the way time seems to slow and become somehow richer during a whole day's cricket watching.

When I moved to where I live now, the manse (I'm a Methodist minister) backed onto the village cricket ground. I used to take my children there, persuade one of the cricketers to open the bar, drank a pint and watched the cricket whilst my sons ran amok. In time they began to play junior cricket there and showed considerably more ability than me. My older son was selected for the 2nd XI when he was 12; I had to take him to the club, the team were short and so persuaded me to make up the numbers - I ended up playing for them for 5 or 6 years. That league had no umpires, so I was often the player that ended up umpiring: initially I was hopeless, but I got a taste for it.

A former player for the same club who umpired in the 'North Yorkshire and South Durham League' asked me to consider training as an umpire. I don't know why he asked me, although he knew I loved the game. I like to think that as he came to



one of the churches where I was minister, he thought that I had the temperament for it: it is certainly easier to deal with a rancorous cricket match than a church council!

Eventually I said 'yes': it was becoming too hard to play the game, my children were both at university - they both still play regularly - but also that same umpire became too unwell to umpire. I was with him a lot in the final few months of his life as his memory flickered and slowly faded. I conducted his funeral on the Wednesday and started training four days later: I feel that I've somehow replaced him. I also feel I'm giving something back to the many people who enabled my children to get into the game.

There are so many different forms of the game nowadays - Tests, one-days, 20-20 etc. What's your favourite form and why?

I'll watch any form of cricket, but I like Test matches best of all. What other team sport lasts

Toss Up!

GRAHAM PEACOCK

for 5 days and can still end in a draw?

I like the subtle shifts in pace; from largely stationary where nothing much seems to happen at all through to frenetic activity and the tension where a game balances on a knife edge. The matches where Ben Stokes has been captain have



Photo credit [here](#)

been some of the most amazing Test cricket that I've ever seen. In general though, Test and first class matches seem a bit like life: a strange mixture of intensity, boredom, joy, sadness and dull grey Thursday afternoons when nothing seems to happen. It's an escape from life but also a reminder of life; sometimes it almost feels like a spiritual experience.

The game has been through so many changes in recent years. What are your thoughts on things like the growing popularity of the women's game?

I think it is good that the women's game is growing in popularity: not just at the top but at the grass roots. I hope, given time, that more women will break into men's teams: at junior levels, this is already happening. The village club



that I'm associated with has a 2nd XI captain who is female: the first in the history of the league: it took other teams a while to cope with that, but she's a fine leader.

Cricket in this country has probably one format too many (The Hundred) and like all sports there is a fine balance to be struck between commercialism and the game: I think cricket is beginning to tip too far in the latter direction, sadly. I do, however, like the constant development and innovation in the game: Test cricket in particular seems so different than when I first started watching it forty or so years ago.

There has been much recent bad press about elitism and alleged racism in the game. If you had a magic wand, what steps would you take to improve things?

There's a programme that the England and Wales Cricket Board have set up called 'Chance to shine' that is targeted at schools in (mainly) deprived areas that has some success: I hope it'll grow. It'd be lovely to see more state school cricket pitches or closer relationships between clubs and schools.

I actually think that the recent report about the problems cricket has was good and a sign of hope: at last there was some admittance of problems that were 'hidden'. It has been hard to hear the professional and former professional

Toss Up!

GRAHAM PEACOCK

cricketers talk about the racial abuse that they've experienced, but I'm full of admiration for their courage. I'd hope that some of them can be formally recognised for this and be engaged with at the highest levels of the game: British culture is not always good in the way it deals with whistleblowers.

Sadly elitism and racism are a part of our culture: cricket reflects that culture. I'd hope that as our game depends so much on relationships due to the length of even the shortest game that we have more of a chance to effect change. It was sometimes said that Britain never had a revolution as the landed gentry and their workers often played for the same teams. Whilst there was undoubtedly an element of deference about this, there was something positive about how it brought different people together and forced them to work towards a common objective: I hope that we continue to be like this - I find that hopeful.

The league that I'm part of has a considerable



England and Wales Cricket Board's fully accessible children's programme

amount of diversity both amongst players and umpires: I hope that continues to grow.

Let's finish off on something lighter. What's the best game of cricket you've ever watched, and the best you've ever umpired?

There have been so many good games of cricket that I've watched, but I'll settle on the first one I saw live: Leicestershire v Australia in 1981 - the experience of seeing people I'd only ever heard about on the radio or saw on TV was almost overwhelming: akin to seeing my first gig after years of watching 'Top of the Pops' (I'm old!). I'm sure that somewhere in the house, I've got my autograph book from that match.

It was in that same season that I saw the famous Headingly Test match where at one point England had odds of 500-1 to win and managed to win: that was the match that really caused me to fall in love with the game.



Photo credit: The Cricket Monthly

I'm a relatively new umpire; I'd say that every match I umpire is the best match I've ever had the privilege to umpire! One of the strap lines of The Association of Cricket Umpires is 'The best seat in the house' and they are right: although you have to concentrate hard, you get to see some incredible skills unfolding right in front of you. If you do it well, you enable something good to happen: that feels incredibly fulfilling.

Word Up!

YOUR POEMS ON THE THEME OF SPORT

Sunday Cricket

Falling through the pavilion
I knew something was wrong.
Floor boards, splintered by cricket boots,
hadn't lasted that just one more summer.
I was caught between knees and thigh,
my pads acted like barbs and I was stuck
and dangling.

On the pitch
the flannelled enemy awaited my entrance.
Play stopped the laughter didn't.
The sacred scorebook plotted out fate,
recorded the Summer.
Shouts of Bowler's Name?
interrupted the lazy, anonymous afternoons.

Coverdale's famous cricket teas:
their secret saccharine weapon.
We went out to field, after Tea, jam packed.
The pitch looked like a long way down
to bend.
The bruises lasted until Autumn.

Steve Harrison

Football is football is football *After Vladimir Holan and Gertrude Stein*

A girl asked you
What is football
And you wanted to say
Are you crazy
I'm a busy man and I don't answer silly questions
Everybody knows what football is
But there was no mischief in her eyes
So you put down your beer
Took off your team shirt
Wrapped it around her tiny shoulders
And said: from this moment
You'll never be alone

Renata Connors

Run Pip Run.

Why was I on the start line?
How did I get there?
Why did I enter that race?

Remember how far you've come,
Remember why you started,
It doesn't matter about the pace.

Run for the people you love Mum said,
That will get you through,
You become a runner, when you love what you do.

Pip McDonald

Heading Up!

STEVE LOWE

Up!'s outdoors man tells us what's to be gained by heading up into the hills

The hills are alive with the sound of rambling! So are the coasts, the woods and the countryside. I've never really thought of my passion for the outdoors as "sport", as it doesn't really feel competitive. But if you think about this in a different way, it's often a personal challenge and I feel that is what defines a sport. You obviously need to enjoy it too and I can vouch for that, even in the face of the Scottish midge, the seeping rain or tying your tent to a tree when that Hoolie is blowing!

One thing that I am certain of is that being outdoors is a natural stimulant and also sedative (not at the same time or I wouldn't get anywhere). Mountains are superb places to be mindful as they are the very essence of permanence and continuity. They can make us feel very grounded and part of the bigger picture. I experienced this recently, just before Christmas, on the Border Ridge.



Christmas can be overwhelming for many people and I was having a "moment", a personal crisis. The prescription – a clamber up to Windy Ghyll in the Cheviots. Joined by my great mate and work

colleague, Peter Kerr, we made our way up the Coquet, through potholes and driving rain, around sheep and puddles before donning the full waterproofs, shouldering the seemingly overfull backpack and putting our best feet forward.



I'll be honest – the prospect didn't fill me with cheer when I rolled out of my snuggly duvet into the dark morning. But those dark days (in literal and metaphoric senses) would be easy to accept rather than fight. So, a warm shower followed by lashings of tea and toast helped my loins become girded and off I went on my adventure.

Pushing against the wind (theme of the morning) we opened the doors, scrambled into waterproofs and made our way upwards. It was breathtaking – not the view – the effort. But after the first three steps, it got better. We ambled our way up the slope, meandering around rocks and fences, pausing to look back on the ascent periodically (it's ok to call this "checking our progress" rather than "getting some air").

It was glorious.

Just being outside, and with a good mate, with no one else about. Hearing the wind flicking the rain across the valley, the rush of water down the stream and the slight squelch of boots on the sodden ground.

Heading Up!

STEVE LOWE

Reaching the top, it was hard to stand up as the onomatopoeic explanation for Windy Ghyll became obvious. What had felt like a wind on the approach became a gale at the top, with flurries of thick white snow screeching sideways towards Otterburn. It was a wee bit chilly too so the shelter of a cairn was welcome, as was the builder's tea in the Thermos. We could have been anywhere but I loved being there, at that precise moment, with the knowledge that the "Black Dog" was under my control.

There is lots of evidence of the role that this type of sporting activity offers in terms of mindfulness and I will try and explain what I was feeling during that adventure, because every different trip will offer a variety of sensory elements.

So, my vision comprised the interplay between light and shade in the landscape as clouds moved across the sky. Those same clouds constantly moving and changing shape (a face, a duck, Donald Trump). The myriad colours and textures of the view, changing with each footstep and the small details of the rocks, plants, lichens, earth. A flicker of movement as a wild goat crosses your view.

My hearing, always changing because noises can sound more distant or muffled in the hills and mountains. The wind, with its changing cadences, high and low, long or protracted, kind or aggressive. In the valleys, the sound of the trees rustling in the breeze, the cries of birds, the mournful bleating of sheep. My own breathing in tune with the rise in slope. The honest conversation, interspersed by solitude and personal silence.

All those scents, the air smelling clean and fresh. The rain making it hard to pick out other smells, such as wildflowers, tree sap or moist earth?



As I walk over different surfaces, my feet are doing the feeling – hard rock, spongy grasses, wet peat.

Using my hands, to feel and explore the textures all around, those cold, hard rocks, the rough or smooth tree

bark, soft or spiky grass, and the numbness of the cold.

A few deep breaths allow you to taste the air, as well as catching your breath and calming the blood rushing around from the exercise. The enhanced taste of the snacks and drinks, a reward for the effort – even the tartness of the tannin-rich tea.

All of this is unconscious of course. I'm not ticking these things off in my head. Instead, they are erasing the darkness, bringing clarity and light. I've forgotten that I am wet and cold, and although bits of my body are slightly numb, I can sense that with pleasure in the knowledge that it will be replaced by welcome feeling and the unwelcome mental numbness has similarly been replaced.

I think I have shown that I am a Rambler (in words and walks) and as such, I can confirm that I participate in sport. Indeed, Rambling is

Heading Up!

STEVE LOWE

recognised by Sport England as such!

Rambling is a great activity for anyone who wants to increase their basic fitness, while getting some important health benefits into the bargain. It is non-discriminatory and you can do it alone or with others! You don't need to be an experienced walker to go rambling - you just need to have a keen enthusiasm and a good sense of direction (or an ability to read maps - which are a topic all on their own and, in my view, one of the UK's greatest artistic treasures that everyone can own).

If you chose to, you could increase your pace and take up sports rambling or Nordic Walking. In my own case, I will stick with my leisurely wandering as I believe that there is too much to miss by going fast!



I have recently also walked sections of the English Coastal Path, the first section of which was "installed" in Northumberland. It's a really good route and shows the huge variety of coastal landscapes we enjoy here.

There is no end of "long-distance" paths in our neck of the woods including the Pennine Way,

Hadrian's Wall Trail and the St. Cuthberts Way. I once did the unofficial Reivers Way raising money for charity. This was a marvellous meandering route across Northumberland in the footsteps of the notorious border reivers. It starts in the Tyne Valley, then heads northwest to Rothbury, over the Cheviots to Wooler, and finishes with the coast path from Budle Bay to Alnmouth.



Photo: stkildastore.com

Reivers were raiders along the Anglo-Scottish Border country between the 13th and 16th centuries, with their heyday in the last hundred years during the Tudor dynasty in England.

Little did I know, when trapped in my tent in a sheep stall by a tropical hurricane, with only a Mars Bar and a Packet of McVitie's Digestives, that my later working life would revolve around this period of border conflict! Perhaps it was pre-ordained?

But speaking of ordination, I would also recommend the Northern Saints Trails. These are a network of pilgrimage routes that celebrate a group of powerful human beings known as the Northern Saints, who lived during Northumbria's golden age in the seventh and eighth centuries. The most well-known are St Cuthbert, St Aidan, St Hilda, St Wilfrid, St Oswald and The Venerable Bede.

Each trail can be broken down or combined to

Heading Up!

STEVE LOWE

suit your own pace or ability but each one offers a fabulous opportunity to explore the eye-catching places linked together in a web of history. Each route can be found in separate leaflets, which are full of background information and superb images.

These were produced by Visit Durham (northernsaints.com), although I picked mine up in

the superb Jarrow Hall, home of the Bede Museum.

Whilst you are donning your walking boots, picking up your rucksack and applying the suncream (!), try humming this little tune from one of my favourite bands, the Allman Brothers. It's a real earworm.

*Lord, I was born a ramblin' man
Tryin' to make a livin' and doin' the best I can
And when it's time for leavin'
I hope you'll understand
That I was born a ramblin' man*



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.



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!

These regular zoom sessions take place on the 3rd Thursday of the month, so the next one is **Thursday 17th August, 7pm - 8pm (GMT)** with joining instructions [here](#) and on the Up! facebook group page.



Word Up!

YOUR POEMS ON THE THEME OF SPORT

EXTRA TIME

I think about Shankly's legendary words,
which he may not even have said:
*Some people think football a matter
of life and death. It's more important than that*
as I lie on the slab, feeling like a stiff
about to be dissected in a TV police thriller,
and hear the orderlies bustling about
preparing for my procedure
and talking about whether they'll watch
the first Euros match tonight,
or England's match v Croatia on Sunday.

Their chat settles me down, reduces
my apprehension, has me looking forward
to the game myself when this is all over.
And when it is all over, the Syrian doctor
tells me they have installed five stents,
including two in the narrowest of arteries
that they fixed in the nick of time.
And I'm euphoric, like I've won
the league. I hadn't even guessed
I'd been staring defeat in the face.
The NHS – what a bloody great team.

Greg Freeman

Cleveland Haiku #660

Morning in the park---
a man practicing soccer
by himself

Cleveland Haiku #661

Morning in the park---
rim missing from
one of the backboards

Cleveland Haiku #662

Morning in the park---
tennis courts resurfaced,
no nets or lines yet

Michael Ceraolo

Next month's theme is: HEROES

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](https://positivelyup.co.uk/poetry-submissions)

Read Up!

JENNA WARREN

Can't decide what to read this summer? Let our resident book reviewer give you a few ideas ...



My first recommendation this month is *The Cassandra Complex* by Holly Smale. The protagonist of this funny and touching novel is thirty-one-year-old Cassandra, who is having the worst day ever. She's just been dumped by her boyfriend Will (without at first realising it), fired from her job in PR (which she hates, but that's not the point), and her favourite coffee shop has run out of banana muffins.



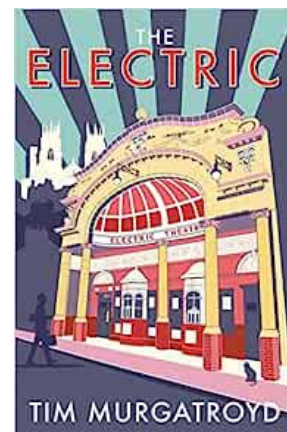
However, all is not lost, because Cassandra has just discovered that she has a special gift: she can travel back in time. She resolves to use her newfound ability to salvage her relationship with Will and prevent herself from getting fired. Unfortunately, this isn't so easy to achieve in practice. Cassandra is the first to admit that she likes what she likes and thrives on predictability and rigid routines. The novel is very much a journey of self-discovery as Cassandra realises that the things she's desperately trying to achieve are not necessarily right for her. This is a wonderfully entertaining almost rom-com, with echoes of *Groundhog Day*.

The Electric by Tim Murgatroyd is a great historical novel set in York in 1919. David Young, a talented musician, returns to England after the First World War. A plane crash during aerial combat has left him with injuries to his face and wounds to his spirit. A classically trained violinist, he finds a job at The Electric cinema in York, playing music to accompany silent films. The story makes reference to *The Phantom of the Opera*: David is given accommodation in the cinema itself, and there's a strong sense of him playing his music in the shadows and giving other people a wide berth.

However, he's soon drawn into the lives and dramas of the other characters, including pianist Louisa, for whom he develops feelings as the novel progresses, and Gladys the down-to-earth usher. There's also Laverelli, the slightly shady yet good-hearted owner of the cinema. At one point, the characters must rally together to save the cinema from closure and ruin.

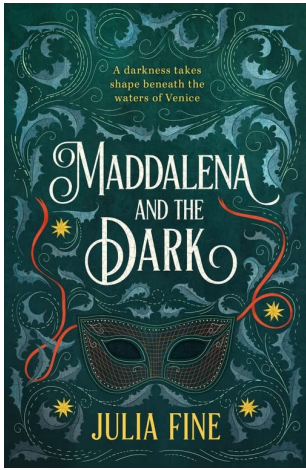
This novel offers a fascinating glimpse into the world of early cinema, especially the musical element. It also has a great sense of place: those who love York will enjoy it, and it takes in many familiar landmarks. But the novel also doesn't shy away from the poverty and prejudice that's experienced by some of the characters in the post-war city.

I would highly recommend this book to anyone who enjoys novels about the arts, especially music and film.



Read Up!

JENNA WARREN



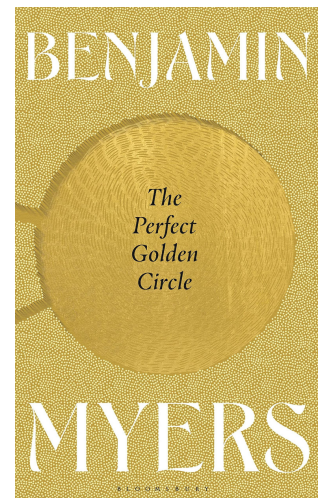
Continuing the music theme, my next recommendation is *Maddalena and the Dark* by Julia Fine. This historical Gothic novel is set in Venice in 1717, where fifteen-year-old Maddalena is sent to the Ospedale della Pietà, an orphanage where girls are given a musical education. However, Maddalena is not an orphan: her family have sent her to the Pietà to acquire ‘polish’ and throw off the whiff of scandal caused by her mother’s affair and elopement.

Maddalena soon meets and befriends Luisa, a talented violinist. Maddalena’s feelings for Luisa are complex: she falls in love with her, but there’s also an undercurrent of darkness and jealousy. To make things even more complicated, Maddalena has made a pact with a supernatural entity, the spirit of the Venetian lagoon, to help her achieve her ambitions. Soon, Maddalena encourages Luisa to make her own pact with this spirit, and Luisa asks to be the best violinist at the Pietà.

This is a richly evocative novel. Venice is portrayed as a dangerous and difficult world where a young woman can so easily lose everything. The supernatural fantasy element of the novel is interesting, but skilfully underplayed, so the reader is left to wonder if the magic is real, or a manifestation of high emotion and the dynamic between the two teenage protagonists. It’s a fascinating read for anyone with an interest in Venice, or the history of music.

The Perfect Golden Circle by Benjamin Myers is an ideal read for over the summer. It follows two men, free-spirited Redbone and Falklands veteran Calvert, as they travel around the fields of rural England, creating intricate crop circles under the cover of darkness. And that’s basically it, plot wise. But the novel is deep, poignant and wonderfully charming.

Each chapter follows the creation of a different crop circle (they all have wonderful names like ‘Throstle Henge Asteroid Necklace’). The two characters converse, and we get an insight into their individual views on the world. They also have a deep need to live in the moment, particularly Calvert, and create something beautiful. While carrying out their work, they encounter various colourful characters, including the rich and very annoying landowner from a nearby country estate. Each chapter is followed by an article from a local or national newspaper, which show crop circle mania spreading around the country (and the world) to hilarious effect.



This is a deeply lovely novel. I would love to see it adapted for the stage, as I think it would make a fantastic, if slightly surreal play. If you enjoyed Myers’ earlier novel *The Offing*, you’ll enjoy this. It captures British summertime and rural life in a similar, dreamy way. **Happy summer reading!**

Word Up!

YOUR POEMS ON THE THEME OF SPORT

Double Games

Those evenings at the Yarnbury, glorious Cinzano
and boyfriends, platform shoes, that time in London
when there were bedbugs and we went to see Hair
and fell asleep. Not ever once running cross country,
smoking behind the bike sheds, cheating at maths.
You looked like an athlete but you were rubbish at games,
then you moved like a winner on the dance floor,
scored every time you played.

Liz McPherson

Game, set and match!

It starts with love!
Continues with a volley of emotions
and back-handed compliments,
as sweet as strawberries and cream.
You ace your approach and
it pushes me to my baseline;
finding my break-point.
You take advantage of the situation,
and approach without fault;
make your pass,
set me in spin,
and I'm out, at your feet.
Game, set and match!

Chris Husband

Five things that got in the way of my teenage self becoming an Olympic track great

1. My legs, what with them being as sturdy as Instant Whip
- maybe Angel Delight on a good day
2. My heart, what with it still not over
- I can't mention her name! -
putting my Valentine's Card in the bin
outside St. Hugh's
3. My lungs, what with them struggling
to cope with the breathless panic
after Doreen Redhead caught us smoking
Consulate Menthol outside Riddings Methodist
4. My fingers, what with them being busy cutting out
race results and Daily Mirror reports of Coe and Ovett
and Cram, and sticking them in another Silvine scrap book
5. That letter I got from Stan Long, Brendan Foster's coach,
after I'd written for some training advice and he sent
me a training schedule which, and I'm not sure why
I hadn't realised this, involved actual training.

Rob Walton

Coming Up!

Well done for making it to the finish line!

We hope you enjoyed the issue and you're relaxing with a post-match cuppa and a biscuit or two - it's ginger parkins in this house. Unfortunately, the ginger parkins result in the need for more exercise!

So what's coming up next month then? Well, putting this month's edition together set us thinking about our own sporting heroes - we're talking Gareth Southgate, Martina Navratilova and Muhammad Ali here.

So next month's Up! has the theme of 'Heroes' ... any kind of hero or heroine, be they famous or not. And in our book, the real heroes in this life are often unsung.

Until then, keep doing the press ups and spend as much time outside as you can.

Love
Bridget & Harry xx



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