

SCOTTISH MAGAZINE
CHAIRMAN'S
AWARD
AWARDS 2012

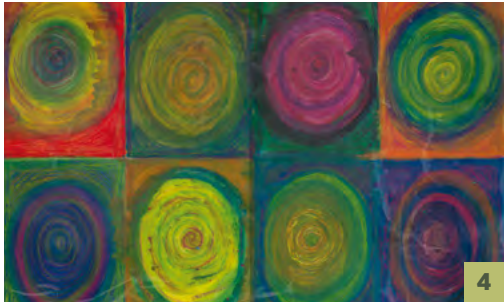
KOESTLER AWARDS
MAGAZINE
JOURNALISM
PLATINUM

KOESTLER AWARDS
GRAPHIC
DESIGN
GOLD

STAR

ISSUE THREE





1 GRACE

Mark Shotts
Oil on canvas

2 TRUE GRIT

Kieran Barlinnie
Acrylic

3 TROUBLED STATE OF MIND

Colin Dumfries
Watercolour

4 UNTITLED

Anon Corton Vale
Water pastels and pencil

5 UNTITLED

Anon Greenock
Pen

SONNET SOCIETY

ISSUE NUMBER

THREE

WINNING ARTWORKS

Congratulations to Lindsay, from Low Moss, and Brian, from Barlinnie, who were picked as the prize winners from Issue Two. Lindsay's short story, The Coodgie, went down really well and was praised in numerous feedback forms. Brian's work, Paint Pots, showed both skill and confidence in depicting an everyday object familiar from our art classes.



UNTITLED

Anon Greenock
Watercolour

Welcome to Issue Three of STIR, the award-winning magazine created and edited by prisoners in Scotland.

You may have heard that STIR was entered into the 2012 Scottish Magazine of the Year Awards. We were delighted to hear that it won the Chairman's Award. The judges commented on our 'beautiful production values, fantastic design and inspiring editorial' and said this was 'truly special work from an unusual background'.

David McMurray, Chairman of the judges, and a publishing consultant, visited Shotts prison to present the award to some of the editorial team. He specifically mentioned the high quality of the artwork in STIR. Our team collected the award on your behalf. Your work, paintings, drawings, stories and poems, was of such a high quality that STIR beat every other publication and won the award.

The magazine also won a Platinum and a Gold at the Koestler Awards, the national awards scheme for excellence in prison arts. The Gold was awarded for graphic design and the Platinum (the Koestler Trust's highest award) for outstanding magazine journalism. This represents a significant achievement for a young magazine with just two issues to its name!

When you submit work to STIR magazine, the editorial team attempts to find the best piece to fit a page or theme. We have been very impressed by the volume, high quality and variety of your art and writing, and have a database of all submissions to date. If your work is not in this issue of STIR then you could see it appear in future editions. Indeed, this issue has some work which was submitted for Issue Two. Thank you for all your contributions, your efforts are very much appreciated.

Once again we have acted on your comments and have tried to improve the submission forms and the process for submitting work to us. Please continue with your feedback, both positive and negative. We were happy to see that STIR One and Two have clearly had an impact and directly influenced some of the images and written work which you submitted for STIR Three. In this issue we have introduced a page for first time writers and artists, called Emerging Artists.

We are also setting up editorial subgroups for STIR in other prisons, and are delighted that Glenochil have already established their editorial team. If you are interested in the process, why not see if you can join your prison's STIR group? We look forward to more groups joining in.

The theme of this issue is 'tattoos'. We focused on the history of prisoners' tattoos in particular. The theme for Issue Four will be Food; you can use food in your art, or be inspired by food, the colours and textures of it. We would also welcome stories, poems and flash fiction about your experiences around food.

STIR is your magazine where you have the chance to showcase your art. They say that expressing your creativity in whatever form (painting, drawing, stories, poetry, music) can heal the soul, and inspire understanding. We will continue to do our best by you and your submissions. Please continue to be creative and submit your work to us via your learning centre. STIR is nothing without you, keep this your magazine.

Edited by Benno, Dean, Iain, Steven, Jok, Alex Shotts

The views expressed in STIR are not those of the Scottish Prison Service.



At HMP Low Moss, we have been working on a small project examining the idea of the tragic hero as he appears in many of Shakespeare's plays. We looked at the plot summaries of some of Shakespeare's tragedies and quotes from each of the plays. We then decided to write about these tragic heroes in sonnet form.

The tragic hero starts the play as a good man and is often part of a noble family or a great soldier. As the play progresses he becomes increasingly 'bad', however, the reasons for his downfall are often forces which are beyond his control. For example, if Macbeth had never met the witches, perhaps he would never have done the dreadful things he did to become King of Scotland? If Iago had not implied that Othello's wife Desdemona had been unfaithful and presented her handkerchief as proof, then Othello may not have taken her life. Both Hamlet and Romeo wanted revenge but it was arguably a ghostly encounter and a family feud which meant this pair each met a tragic end.

The students who wrote these poems have been referring to themselves as the 'Sonnet Society' and by reading their sonnets, you can get to know one of Shakespeare's plays in just sixty seconds! As a group we also composed a poem on how to create your own tragic hero.

DEALBH - CLUICH NA H- ALBA THE SCOTTISH PLAY

I decided to write this sonnet on Macbeth which appeals to me as everyone has a 'fatal flaw'. Macbeth's fatal flaw is his pride, mine is my addiction. I also decided to give the poem more of a Scottish connection since it is more sometimes known as 'The Scottish Play'. By using Gaelic words and words used in the East Coast and from other places all over Scotland I have told the story of Macbeth in this Scottish sonnet.

It wiz a driebt nicht as Macbeth came hame,
Ach ai the noo the three weird sisters sing.
Telling gid Macbeth that he'd be king,
So led way his burd, a plot to cause pain.

Soon Duncan is deid and Banquo is tae,
Macbeth kills Banquo's bairns in a bold quest.
A barry banquet with a ghostly guest,
And the witches say he cannae be beat - eh!

'Oot damned spot! Oot! Oot!' says Lady Macbeth.
Noo tops her sel awe because a tha shame.
And was brave MacDuff not bore aff ah dame?
Noo the tragic hero is done by death.

Double, double, whit trouble and sicht toil,
Macbeth's dark ambitions met in the soil.

Lee Low Moss

HOW TAE SCREEVE A TRAGIC HERO

Tha tragic hero is gid at first,
He is often a man eh a noble birth.
If he's no a king he has fought in a war.
But the tragic hero is gid at first.

How he faws down is'nae his fault,
Hags that mak him radge an open vaults
Mak tha tragic hero start tae rot.
But how he faws doon is'nae his fault.

The tragic hero has a fatal flaw,
He's greedy, jealous, vengeful an awe,
So the tragic hero will end up deid.
Because the tragic hero has a fatal flaw.

The tragic hero is gid at first,
How he faws doon is'nae his fault,
The tragic hero has a fatal flaw,
Romeo, Othello, Macbeth an awe.

English Class Low Moss

IN FAIR VERONA

I saw the film a number of years ago, I've heard the Dire Straits song many times and now I've written three sonnets on the tragic love story of Romeo and Juliet, one summarising the play, one from Romeo's perspective and one from Juliet's point of view. I empathise with Romeo and understand how he felt to be part of the Capulet gang.

It all began on a midsummer's night,
Two noble families, scrapping in the street.
Sentence is death for one caught in a fight,
Capulet party, star-crossed lovers meet.

Romeo says, "Juliet is the Sun."
Juliet says "He's a Rose," she's his wife.
Mercutio is killed by Tybalt's gun.
Romeo flees, avenging his friend's life.

A lost letter and a game of high stakes,
Rose sees his Sun dead, thinks it is finished
Drinks the poison as our Juliet wakes,
She takes his dagger, now all are punished.

For never was a story of such woe,
Than of Juliet and her Romeo.

Robert Low Moss



SWALLOWS
Willie Dumfries
Pen



MANGA
Willie Dumfries
Pencil

PRISON TATTOOS

Prisons have been around for centuries, prisoners come and go, trends are ever changing, however one enduring practice remains: tattooing.

We humans have been permanently marking our skin for thousands of years. The Maoris of New Zealand are probably the best known for their ancient tribal designs. They used no words, only shapes and patterns, showing region, loyalties, rank, prowess and spiritual concepts. Most of the Island people stretching from New Zealand, up to Japan and all the way across to Hawaii, shared a passion and a tradition for tattooing. The Japanese preferred to depict wildlife, especially fish and birds. Another trend of theirs was the use of beautiful flowers.

As you travel west through different countries and cultures, the depictions also change. Indians favoured exciting pictures of leaping tigers and fierce monkeys, or Gods in their many guises. Africans used scarring to draw designs onto their skin. Some tribes would use multiple cuts to the face as decoration. In Europe and Russia, tattoos had a more political edge, depicting flags, countries, religions, military regiments, gangs, sports teams and stars. In the Americas the traditions were similar to those in India and Japan.

Before the advent of religion and science, people used symbols, stories and songs as a means of communicating complex ideas or beliefs. A symbol tattooed on the skin acts as a silent communication between the bearer and the viewer.

The Popes who ruled Europe banned tattoos because of their symbolism and Pagan origins. For many Europeans, getting a tattoo became an act of defiance. The symbols, words and pictures held a special meaning and importance.

In Europe they had no exotic wild animals or beautiful fish. Most Europeans lived in crowded cities, enduring a hurried pace of life which was too far removed from the beauty of nature to appreciate very much outside of themselves and their close families' struggle for survival. Many city dwellers attempted to ease their struggle by joining an organisation or gang; a xenophobic 'us against the world' mentality created divisions and the early history of European tattoos shows these divisions proudly displayed on the skin.

In more recent times tattoos have been worn by a smaller percentage of the population. The symbols, words and pictures are as diverse as those who wear them.

Tattoos have proven to be far more popular among people who have limited means of showing their individuality, such as sailors, soldiers, and in particular, prisoners. Prison authorities have traditionally stamped out individuality and banned tattooing, which of course made it far more popular than it might otherwise have been.

French prisoners from the penal colonies in South America are famous for their myriad of different tattoos. Henri 'Papillon' Charriere, in his book Papillon, spoke of his own tattoos and those of his fellow prisoners. He referred to one prisoner in particular as 'The Masked Breton', an ex-convict who had covered his face in so many tattoos that he would be a social pariah and unemployable if he returned to France.

Prisons from Russia to America have an underground network of tattoo artists who help their fellow prisoners to break the rules and obtain an illegal tattoo which the guards cannot confiscate. Prison gangs use symbols to show affiliations, rank, achievements, defiance and celebration.

Most prisoners take time to reflect on the past and also plan for the future. A tattoo can help them make a declaration, show defiance, celebrate an event, cover up an old tattoo and erase bitter memories, show new beliefs or dreams, or just simply serve as decoration.

Getting a tattoo anywhere outside of a clean shop with safe practices can be like a game of Russian roulette. There have been reports of infections through tattooing both inside and outside of prison. The drugs epidemic has ravaged prisons as much as society and has brought with it blood-borne viruses. Intravenous drug abuse and HIV are no longer as widespread, however a significant percentage of drug users have Hepatitis, which is deadly and can make getting a tattoo a dangerous practice.

No one believes that 'doing time' is easy (not even the right wing journalists who pretend that it is). If getting a tattoo helps a prisoner in any way, then it is difficult to condemn the practice. All we can do is ask people to be very careful and put as much effort into hygiene and safety as they put into the artwork.

There is good news! In Scotland our culture is changing. The old days of a widespread unhealthy mind-set, intravenous drug abuse, and hate filled tattoos declaring loyalty to Irish terror groups, or the words 'Cut Here' on the neck, or 'F##k the Polis' are fading into memory.

Most young people coming into prison these days are far healthier, physically and spiritually. They want to look good, not bad. They use the gym to stay fit and sculpt their muscles, most are drug free and like many popular footballers and celebrities, their tattoos are works of art, done by experts in safe and hygienic shops, not by glue-sniffers in a back close.

Tattooing will always be practiced in prison. Our young people are in a healthier state than we were twenty years ago. The healthier mind-set of our younger prisoners should ensure safe practice, and better works of art.

Jok Shotts



JUST KEEP BELIEVING
Claire Corton Vale
Pencil

We don't have prison gangs in Scotland. A number of prisoners do have tattoos relating to street gangs, however most Scots prisoners use tattoos for personal reasons. Certain tattoos are used as anti-authority symbols such as the Black Rose, the Anarchy symbol and having BC tattooed on the wrist, which is a reclaiming of the 19th century British army's punishment tattoo for identifying a Bad Character.

The V mask and V symbol, from the 2005 film V for Vendetta have become popular tattoos. The film is set in a nightmare future where Britain is ruled by a totalitarian government. A freedom fighter named V wears the mask and wages a one-man war against the fascist government. He sends out 200,000 free masks and urges the public to join him in a protest march to parliament, which he promises to blow up.

Life has imitated art as the V mask and symbol have become a brand adopted by protestors, anarchists, and the hacktivist group Anonymous. Since 2005 people have been wearing the masks at protests across the globe.

Editorial Board Shotts



Alex Shotts



Tattoos are great for showing the world a little piece of your personality and are also a way of reminding yourself of events in your life.

My tattoos are a mix of prison and outside works. They all have a story to tell, although the meaning may not be apparent at first glance. On my right shoulder (prison tattoo) I have a comb which deliberately looks like a straight razor with the word Trusky on the blade. It may appear to others as a symbol of violence however the real meaning is more sentimental. When I was a child my granddad would tell me and my brothers tales of his heroics during WWII and how as a Spitfire pilot he had been shot down and had to fight Nazis, crocodiles, sharks and even a sabre toothed tiger with only his Trusky (trusty) steal comb to defend himself. He had a great sense of humour and the stories were fascinating. When he died I was devastated as he was the closest thing to a father I had. I felt a tattoo would be a great symbol of my love for him and rather than get something like his name, or Pap as I called him, his Trusky comb seemed a fitting symbol of the man he was and it summed up how I saw him; trusty, dependable and strong.

On my right forearm I have a dragon (outside tattoo). I went to get my partner's name tattooed but changed my mind on the way to the parlour and got a dragon done instead. I was 18 and thought it was hilarious that I had a dragon to represent my missus. Years later I got her name on my left shoulder (prison tattoo). It is done as an ambigram which reads the same from all angles; the design was inspired by Dan Brown's Angels and Demons book.

I have my two daughters' names done, one on my back and one on my left forearm (outside tattoos) in Old English text as a symbol of my devotion to them. To represent my mum I have the rugby thistle which she bought me. It's fitting as she loves rugby and used to train my brothers team.

On my left hip I have a crappy little tribal tattoo which I got when I was 13 or 14. I got it on my hip so my mum wouldn't see it. That totally defeats the point of it though, as I got it to rebel when I received a terrible report card.

I have two nautical stars, one on each side of the top of my chest (prison tattoos). They have been mistaken for gang tattoos as a film about Russian gang tattoos featured them. I have them as a symbol of brotherly love, one for each of my brothers. I didn't want to have men's names tattooed on me. Interestingly, in American prisons, the stars represent a longing for home, so I've got a double whammy of explanations if asked why I have them.

Magoo Shotts



BUTTERFLY
Laura Corton Vale
Pen

TRUCK ART

A vibrant, stylized illustration of the Taj Mahal and its reflection in the water, framed by a colorful border. The scene includes a peacock, a elephant, a lotus flower, and a small boat with a person, all set against a yellow background.

**Nicky, John, Andy, Andy, Stephen,
Darren, William, Martin, Paul,
Mark, Jamie Barlinnie**

Mark Barlinnie



ARTIST VISIT

ALEXANDER GUY

Alexander Guy is currently working in Glasgow from a studio space that's open to the public. At 'In Public', Stockwell Street, anybody has the opportunity to work alongside Guy. For £20 per day (£10 concession), he will share his considerable experience and knowledge, no matter your level of artistic experience; beginners and experts are all welcome. It's an opportunity too good to miss.

Benno Shotts



2



Alex Shotts



2



ST/R

KOI CARP
Willie Duffries
Ink on paper

As she looked out over the bay Belle knew why Robert had chosen this place, Portpatrick, a small fishing village on the West Coast of Scotland. The views from the harbour and over to Ireland were spectacular on this crisp autumn morning.

THE PROPOSAL

Excitement was rising in her stomach as she leaned on the harbour wall taking in breaths of fresh sea air, she loved the looks her city clothes were getting from the locals: her well fitted suit, fine polo neck sweater and luxury wool scarf. She leaned back to admire her manicure. She'd had it done the previous afternoon in Glasgow and the nail technician had asked if she was doing something special this weekend. Special - oh yes, surely meeting your boyfriend's mum had to be special, had to mean the relationship was at last moving on. Could this be the proposal she had always dreamed of? She had asked the manicurist to pay special attention to the third finger of her left hand, just in case.

Robert was different from any other boyfriend she had met. He was polite and funny with fantastic manners: so much so, that she landed on her backside on the floor the first time they went to a restaurant, when he pulled out her chair. Oops, didn't see that one coming. At least the waiter managed to step over her (although it was a bit rude of him to keep on walking with her hair extension still attached to his shoe!) Never mind, they say lopsided hair is in this year.

The first time Robert hailed a taxi to take her home, he walked right into the middle of the bustling street, avoiding all the oncoming traffic, and stopped a taxi. So impressive. Unfortunately, the street was so busy he must have been distracted by the traffic and he forgot to pay the driver.

Robert was a very private person and seldom talked about his family or growing up in what she could only imagine were luxury surroundings, but she had overheard him talk of 'Her Ladyship' on many occasions. Belle just knew when he suggested that they go away for a special weekend, saying he wanted to introduce her to someone special and had a special question to ask her, that this was the big moment at last - meet Mummy and then the proposal. They had come to his beloved Portpatrick, the home of his birth.

Belle could hardly wait: goodbye to single girl's nights in, no more dating internet idiots who always used an awful lot of imagination to describe themselves and their personalities, and were a letdown in reality. 'Strong physique'- more like big and fat; 'quiet and interesting' - stupid and boring. And the classic 'friendship, but may lead to relationship', then having the cheek to call her frigid and prudish because she didn't dive into bed on the first date. No, Belle, you can kiss goodbye to all that. You are about to become a partner, someone's other half, Robert's someone special, soon to be Robert's wife, perhaps even a Lady one day.

Her heart started beating so fast she thought she would burst. This is going to be my special moment. She thought of her friends, Hilary and Emma, with their snide remarks: 'No one special yet Belle? Same boyfriend as last year, Belle? Never mind, one day you too will find true love like us.'



Back at the village Belle made her way to the hotel. Robert was travelling down later that night; he had 'a little something' to pick up from the shops - not too little, she hoped, admiring her left hand again. They would have a quiet night, a candlelit dinner, and then make plans for the following day 'if all goes well', he had said. She must admit she had never seen him quite so animated before; he was obviously thinking of their future together.

Dinner went well and it seemed Robert was finding it hard to keep his little secret to himself - just as she had. She had phoned her friends to tell them that something special was going to happen to her at last, and of course she exaggerated the situation. Yes, Robert had whisked her off to a romantic village by the coast, booked her into a five star hotel (well, if you counted the two broken stars on the wall outside you could almost make them into five), and yes, he had insisted she splash out on a special outfit. Champagne would be flowing he said, so yes, it could only mean one thing!

He had asked her to bring some special clothes, not just her city suits and weekend dresses; something less formal he said, so she had bought some country wear: fairisle cardigan, tweed trousers and a wee jaunty hat, all things that she thought would make her fit in with his family. Although since they had arrived, he had not mentioned his family or when exactly they were going to visit. Never mind, she was sure it would all work out in the end.

After dinner they went for a walk and everyone they met as they strolled along the shore front asked how Her Ladyship was, and seemed genuinely interested in Robert's reply. She looked away at this conversation, just in case he caught a glimpse of her smile - so big that he had to know she was on to his little plan.

'How's Her Ladyship this weather? Bet you're here to spoil her for a wee while...a new winter coat eh? Saw her yesterday and she is looking well, but I'm sure she'll benefit from a little bit of love and care and, of course, a little female touch makes all the difference,' one old man sniggered.

They had a brandy in front of the fire before going to bed and Robert said, laughing, 'Make the most of this - tomorrow night may be a bit different'.

Belle immediately thought of an old, rambling manor house and cold corridors, wind blowing through the cracks in the ancient windows. 'Never mind. I'll have you to keep me warm.'

'That's the attitude,' he said. 'I knew you'd be up for this, our own wee adventure...Oh no, mustn't say any more!'

When Belle woke next morning Robert was already down at breakfast, and as she entered the dining room in her new 'Country File' clothes she was sure he gasped - with delight surely.

'I think you better change before we go and meet Her Ladyship,' he said.

She had failed. Those posh country shops had let her down; they had guided her as to what to wear, but still, she wasn't classy enough to meet his mother. She ran from the dining room up to her bedroom and threw herself onto the bed. She wept for a few minutes until she realised he was not coming after her. Get a grip, don't spoil this now - you made a little mistake. He'd probably told her to get changed for her own good; perhaps she would have been mistaken for a farmer's wife or farmer's daughter. He was right - she would get changed.

He banged on the bedroom door, but she wouldn't let him in.

'I'm sorry,' he said. 'I didn't mean it like that; it's just your clothes are not suitable for what I had in mind.'

'It's ok,' she called back. 'I'm getting changed.'

'Good. Well, I'm off down to the harbour to meet Davie... he's the harbourmaster. I said I'd be there at 9.30, so I'll meet you down there.

Belle pulled herself together. She changed into a linen trouser suit with a little chiffon peach blouse, teamed up with skin-coloured high heeled shoes - perfect, she thought.

As she made her way down to the harbour she passed Robert's car. Glancing in, she noticed that the bottle of champagne which had lain on the back seat when he arrived last night was gone. She wondered if he had put it in the boot or taken it with him. She saw Robert wave from the other side of the harbour and the feelings that rose up inside her made her blush a little. She was so lucky and happy.

When she got closer to him, she thought she saw him shake his head. Perhaps her outfit still wasn't classy enough, she thought, but he laughed.

'That is so you,' he said. 'So typical of you. Never mind.'

Belle had no idea what he meant, but to her it didn't matter what he said. He was gripping the bottle of champagne and had a little white carrier bag in his hand.

'Are you ready?' he asked, as if he was stifling a laugh.

'Yes,' she said, heading for the car.

'No, this way.' He turned towards the harbour steps. 'Now close your eyes, please.'

As she did this, Belle thought her heart was going to burst out her chest. Not here, not now, surely! She panicked a little as she realised that Her Ladyship was meeting them here, at the harbour, and she hadn't even applied her lip-gloss.

Robert guided her a few steps, then stopped. 'Just a sec' he said, and she heard the rustle of the carrier bag. She felt him place something on her head. Oh my God, is this a tiara, a family tradition? Instantly she visualised herself walking down the aisle like a princess, with the heirloom tiara on her head.



Robert said 'Open your eyes, Belle; I would like to introduce you to The Lady Arabella Higgins' whilst pointing to an old fishing boat tied up at the harbour steps.

Belle was astounded, especially when he announced, 'Oh, one other thing' and from the carrier bag he produced a hat with 'SKIPPER' written on it. 'Look, to match your 'SKIPPER'S MATE', he chuckled. Her hand went to her head. She was speechless.

Dazed and shocked Belle heard him say, 'Don't look so disappointed. Even Davie says all she needs is a new coat of paint and a little feminine touch and she'll be magnificent. Now for that important question. Would you like to join me in a tour of the British Isles, fishing and relaxing onboard Her Ladyship? A mystical magical journey! I will be the skipper and make the decisions about where we go; I'll maintain the boat while you cook and clean. Oh, it's going to be such fun!'

After a moment, he went on, 'I know, you're overwhelmed. Right, pass me that champagne. You can do the honours, and don't forget to break the bottle on her side - it's bad luck if you don't. Oh, and be careful, mind your nails - bet you thought I didn't notice you'd had a manicure for the occasion!'

Elaine Cornton Vale

1 RUSTY BUG

Chris Low Moss

Acrylic

2 HARBOUR

Raymond Barlinnie

Acrylic

3 CLONE WARS

Benno Shotts

Pencil



A LONG TIME AGO... IN A GLASGOW FAR, FAR AWAY...

One incident in my life that had a profound effect on me was the start of my passion for movies. It began in the winter of 1977 and the movie was Star Wars. I was seven years old. I remember the experience like it was yesterday with that sort of jaw-dropping, awe-inspiring, mouth-wide-open wonder that any other seven year old would get from maybe, a trip to Disneyland, Florida.

The showing at the Odeon Cinema in Renfield Street couldn't come quick enough. The period between my excited leap out from under my Darth Vader duvet, until the two o'clock start of potentially the greatest cinematic marvel of all time, felt like an eternity, but it arrived and it did not disappoint. In fact, it surpassed even my young, idealistic expectations.

The first thing that amazed me was the size of the queue. It was right along the entire length of the building and then around the corner. We had arrived just before 1 p.m. My dad was of the impression that arriving an hour before the movie began would ensure us a place at the head of the line and as a result, we would have our pick of the best seats in the house. He hadn't bargained on all the other parents who'd had the same idea. Hundreds of excited children with hundreds of annoyed, bored and increasingly agitated mums and dads, who were constantly checking their watches as if willing two o'clock to arrive, lined the streets. We reluctantly joined the back of the queue, but weren't there for long as another load of movie-goers appeared behind us after only a few moments.

The tension was palpable; I had a feeling which was a cross between excitement and borderline nervous anxiety. What if we were too far back in the queue? What if we didn't get in?

Suddenly, a glimmer of hope appeared. The people in front of us moved a few steps forward. We followed. Then another few steps about a minute later. Finally the long line of waiting customers had begun to move. Slowly but surely, child by child, family by family, they bought their tickets and made their way inside.

I remember asking my dad for a coke and some popcorn as we neared the ticket office and I got my first glimpse of the confectionary area. He told me we would be better off getting our seats first, and then he would go and stock up on sugary treats, hotdogs and fizzy drinks, while I looked after the seats. This way we would get better seating than the others who were now queuing for food. He was telling me this as he paid for our tickets, and that slice of cinema information gold, along with my ticket stub (which I still have, by the way), made my father a legend to me from that moment on.



TAT-TALE

BAD TO THE BONE

When I was 14 (1997 - I looked older than I was) I got the Playboy insignia tattooed in an elaborate plan to have my slender feminine stature instantly boosted to a cool bad boy image. After all, Playboy is a male pornography magazine. The babes will love it and my peers will see me as "the dude" or so I thought. To my horror it backfired. First mother dear spotted it; she almost slapped it off my skinny arm and grounded me for nearly a year. Wait - it got worse! A few years later, Playboy hatched a cunning plan to branch out into a female brand, thus making my tattoo more synonymous with girls and gays everywhere.

What made it psychologically disturbing was I had been too much of a rebel and ended up in a YO jail. Terror began, shower and gym times. My tat became a question mark to all inmates who seemed to have a good giggle at my expense. Ergo now you see a ¾ sleeve of pure evil. And I'm happy to say my bad boy image has been restored. You can still see Mr Playboy rabbit, obscured to be my secret, which I now share with you.

David Glenochil



Bernard MacLavery visited HMP Glenochil recently, as part of our Book Week Scotland celebrations. A large number of prisoners turned out for this visit by a writer renowned for writing books such as “Cal” and “Lamb” as well as short stories and screenplays.



1 THE POISONED GLEN

Anton Shotts
Oil on canvas

2 A PERFECT VIEW

Colin Dumfries
Pastels

3 DOMESTIC

Graham Barlinnie
Pastels

There was an air of excitement as we all waited for Bernard to arrive. When he did arrive, he was introduced to us and started talking to us in a relaxed manner. He looked quite at home considering his surroundings.

I have never been to a writer event or talk before but I found this one very interesting as Bernard talked about his early days starting to write and what problems he had to face during those times. He said that writing for magazines and being part of a writers' group helped him in the early years. He didn't do well at school and he reassured us that you don't need academic qualifications to be a writer. You just need stories to tell.

Bernard read us an extract from his latest novel, “The Anatomy School,” and gave some useful writing tips to anyone who, like myself, would like to follow in his footsteps in writing. Some of the best tips were:

- Focus on the senses of touch, sight, sound and smell
- Visualise your stories – “all stories are a series of pictures”
- Get inspiration from newspapers, from things you read or see, and from your own life
- Try writing flash fiction

Flash fiction is a very short story which can be anything from a few lines to a few paragraphs long and which creates a picture or world in miniature.

Here is my first attempt at flash fiction, inspired by Bernard MacLavery's own writing:

WISDOM OR VIOLENCE?

Mr Wisdom should have been called Mr Violence, as when anybody got into trouble he would open his desk drawer and pull out his long cane stick, bending it and letting it snap back, swinging so it made a whistling sound as it sliced through the air. Any time you saw the cane you knew it was five or more of the best and believe me the cane was a sore implement of torture for anyone on the receiving end of it. Your pals would say, “before he hits you lick your hand – it stops the pain”. Stops the pain my arse. It only made the pain last longer.

Shaun Glenochil

Why don't you try writing your own Flash Fiction for the next issue of Stir?

WRITER VISIT BERNARD MACLAVERTY

A DOUBLE DUNT?

My tattoo is a reference point. Not just to one instance but a bookmark to a certain chapter of the photo album of memories in my head. To a time in my life that I thought I would never want to forget. An anchor to times of youthful carelessness.

Those were the days before prison.

Now the ink is more like a grave, a tombstone to the past, than an anchor.

It does the exact job that I had intended it to do, and it sits there, totally neutral, on my skin. However, it doesn't only remind me of good times but reminds me of all that I have lost, all that I will never have again.

I can see the faces of my friends who were there at the time, sharing the same tattoo, but it has been so long since I have seen them that I have no way of knowing if they share the fondness I have, or if they even remember the instance at all.

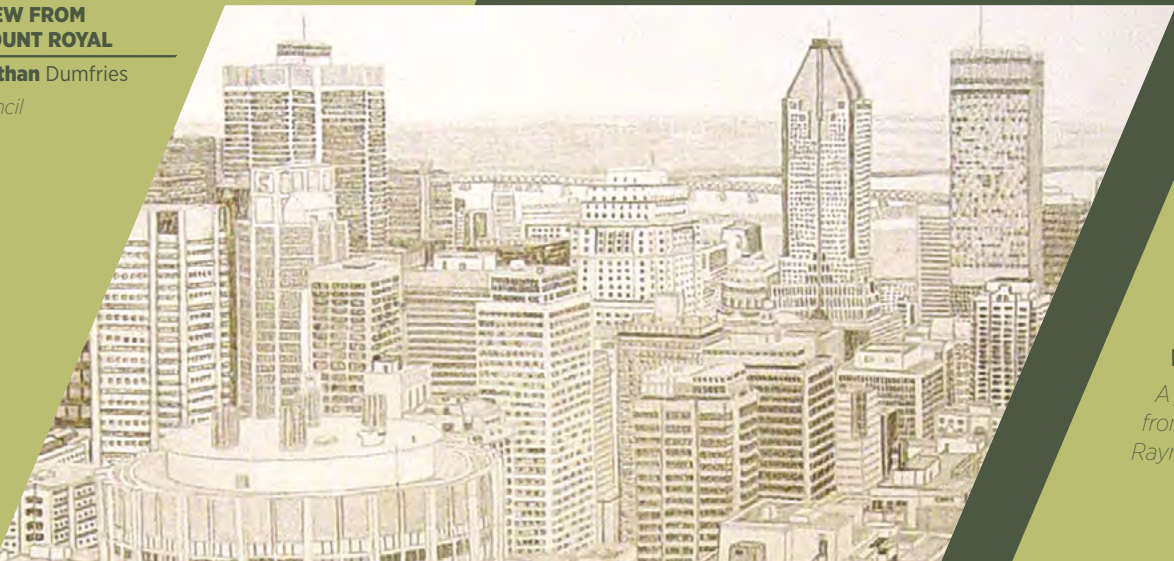
Do they remember it in the way I do?
What does it reference for them, in their lives?

Is it a double dunt for them, in the way it is for me?

Anon Glenochil

**VIEW FROM
MOUNT ROYAL**

Nathan Dumfries
Pencil



UNEXPECTED HAPPINESS

In the sky it's dark
It's a morning moon.
The boy passes the newspaper to a friend.
Happiness and love are one together
And go beyond the death road.
Unexpectedly they enter the morning light,
They almost think of taking an early morning coffee.
Beauty comes slowly near each other's thoughts

Kevin and John Barlinnie

A jigsaw poem, created from words chopped up from a previously unseen poem – in this case, Raymond Carver's poem "Happiness"

LOVE

In the silent night...
It is a deer, fleeing, into a mirage,
As fragile as a woman's touch,
The intangible reflection of the moon on water,
The ghost of a moment,
This: is my torment.

Fleeting mist blows,
Awakening the memories,
Like a snake, conquering by touch and sight,
The taste of honey on a razor's edge,

I welcome the mist, eyes shut tight,
And wait for her to come; only then am I free

Mark Shotts



TATTOO 2

Willie Dumfries
Pen

INSPIRING

George Wyllie ? George Wyllie
Straw Locomotive ? Straw Locomotive
BURN ? BURN
PIN ? PIN
SO SHARP ? SO SHARP
QUESTIONMARK ? QUESTIONMARK
QUESTION ? QUESTION
PAPER BOAT ? PAPER BOAT
HOW ? HOW
YOU ? YOU
FLOAT ? FLOAT
ON A CREST ? ON A CREST
OF A WAVE ? OF A WAVE
THANK BOAT ? THANK YOU
GEORGE WYLLIE ? GEORGE WYLLIE
FOR THE MEMORY ? FOR THE MEMORY
BYE ? BYE
GEORGE WYLLIE
?

David Low Moss

**HOMAGE TO
GEORGE WYLLIE**

David Low Moss
Media?



Scarred for life it seems
A memory for all time
Beautiful tattoo

Tattoo Haiku

Dean Shotts

NEIL

We've always been together
And never been apart
And now you've gone and left me
And broken all my heart
I thought we'd be together
Until the end of time
But then I went and left you
When I committed this bad crime
I really cannot take this
You never said goodbye
I never will get over this
I say to God, just, 'Why?'
You took my little brother
And now I am alone
I don't think I'll be able
to make it on my own
I miss you and I love you
And I wish that you could stay
Goodnight, God bless my gorgeous boy
I'll see you soon I pray
They say that only the good die young
And that I know is true
And now my life is over
Since the day that God took you

Debbie Cornton Vale

MANY HAPPY RETURNS!

Dear John letter arrives in the mail
2012, fourteenth birthday in jail
Age catching up, move as slow as a snail.
Feel my life is in a shambles
Forget about chocolate cake and candles
Need to get rid of em... love handles.

Rewinding back to when I was young
Stress of living, life on the run
Time arrested by Cops carrying guns.

Think of my mother the great romancer
Incarcerated in 2000, my sister dying of cancer
Careful son, stay away from that chancer.

What I would give just to be free
Relaxing in sunshine close to the sea
Happiness delivered without any fee

Colin Shotts

THE CASTLE

There's a castle on a hillside;
Its halls are filled with pain.
Courageous tides of soldiers died
For freedom, in our name.

Over by those castle walls
Are waves of words unspoken,
Contained by lonely cries and calls,
As forgotten hearts are broken.

So many tears have fallen here;
These castle walls run cold
With silent screams, and tainted dreams
Of stories never told.

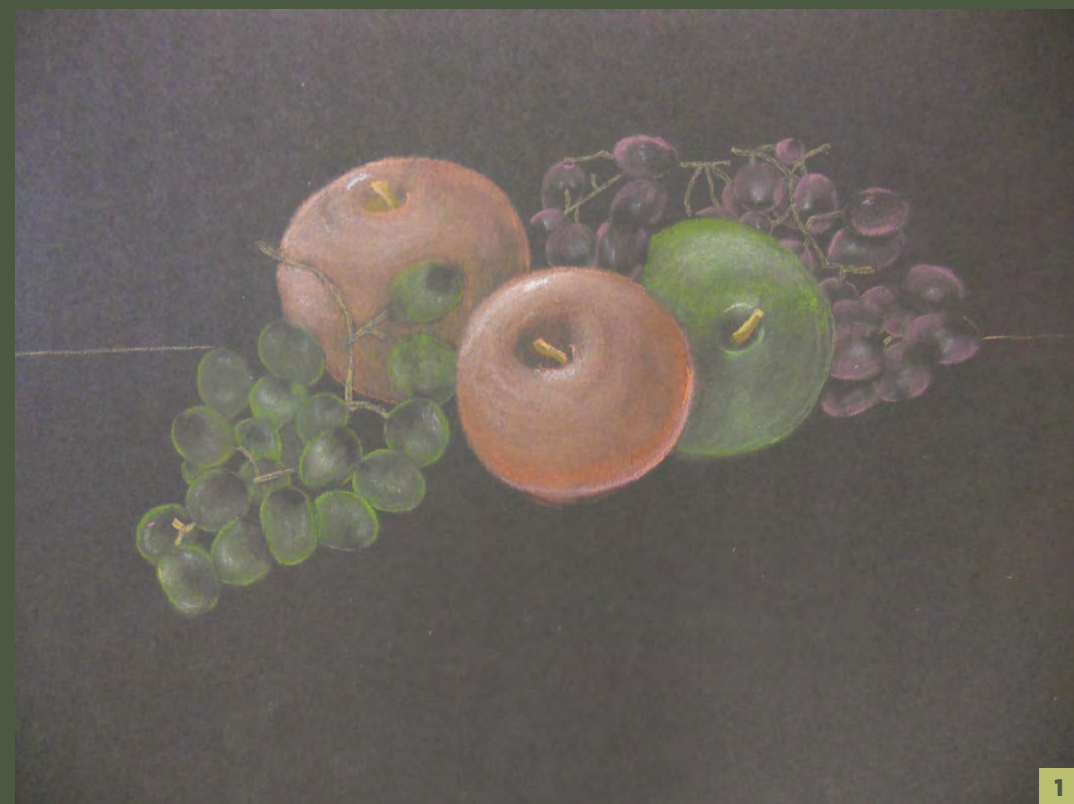
There's a castle on a hillside
With memories so strong;
Those castle walls will one day fall –
Its pain will carry on.

Susan Cornton Vale



TATTOO 1

Willie Dumfries
Pen



1



2

1 STILL LIFE

John Barlinnie
Pastels on paper

2 MY LOVELY KIA

Steven Shotts
Acrylic on A

THE STARS LOOK DOWN

There are stars on TV.
There are stars in the sky
There are stars in the corner
Of those big blue eyes

I find myself starstruck
And blinded by the light
There is an angel
That came down on a star tonight

Her presence is beautiful
It's those big blue eyes
I catch myself stargazing
I've got butterflies

I could look into those eyes forever
I see there is a star light
Shining down upon me
Shining on me
Setting me free
From this prison cell
That's been a living hell

Ross Shotts

THE STAR JAR

If I saw a star
Falling from the sky
I would reach up and catch it
And put it in a jar

It would twinkle at me
As I lie in my bed
When I dream
I will go on a journey
Upon my star
To a far off place
Where things are peaceful and calm

Steven Shotts



I got hooked on art classes while in Shotts. I loved having the chance to produce pieces of art I could be proud of. You didn't have to be brilliant at painting or drawing to experience the freedom you get from art. Personally I took it as an opportunity to grab a second chance of something I had let go at school. I regularly attended the art class in Shotts, and thoroughly enjoyed it. I heard the boys were crying when I left, probably out of sheer JOY...

EMERGING ARTISTS

THE SCREAM



The Low Moss work 'Scream' was inspired by the Shotts' Mona Lisa from the first edition of STIR. Twenty five individuals contributed to the creation of the image, using acrylic paint, inks, pastels and pencils. Some squares were done quickly, while others took more time. The students chose the Munch's iconic image following much discussion in the art class. The work currently hangs from floor to ceiling in the reception of the education suite in Low Moss.

THE SCREAM

Group Low Moss
Mixed media on paper

WHAT'S HAPPENING?

It could be
Friday afternoon
Or 8.30pm
Or any weekend from 4pm
Every week like clockwork
I see them
Struggling to fill their time
Seekin out
Trying to get eye contact
"What's happening?"
Even if you hide away
A few heads pop round
Lookin to invade your space
Let me in
Their eyes say
"What's happening?"
The newbies can't escape
Want to be accepted
I escape to the gym, a cure for the boredom
What's happening?

John Glenochil

HARVEST HAIKU

Flautist without form
Desiccated russet blades
Harvest moon peeking

This is the result of my first attempt at writing a Haiku. I composed it shortly after the leaves started changing colour. The second and third lines are particularly redolent of autumn, my favourite time of year.

Andrew Low Moss

EVOLVE ART

I discussed continuing with my art on release with a few people in Shotts but I found it very hard to find anywhere that could provide a steady art classroom or workshop for ex-cons. So much so, I kicked the idea around the auld grey matter and started approaching people in the know about starting and running one myself. Everyone I spoke to thought this was a great idea. I made a list of people to contact and had the help of others who suggested who to approach. I was introduced to several organisations involved in art/theatre/rehabilitation which in turn led to yet more contacts. As a result of all these discussions I have been offered some space in the HUB in Maryhill in Glasgow. I would hate to leave my interest in art at the jail gates, so this is a new place for people who leave prison and want to keep up their interest in art in the community. This will be somewhere to come and keep your mind free from all the worries of the world, a place to help you settle back into civvy life, maybe the start of a new road. I believe the project will take off and with continued support, I see a change for the better. This would not have been possible without the help and advice of various people and I would just like to thank all at the Scottish Prison Arts Network (SPAN) for their help. We're off and running.....

William Sinclair Evolve Art

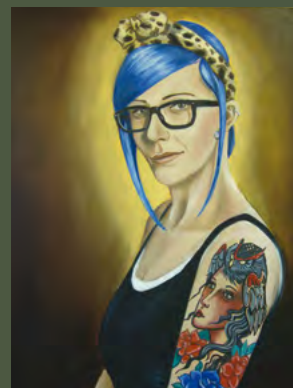


If you're getting out and are interested in continuing with art classes on the outside, please get in touch, the Hub operates Tuesday to Saturday 9:30 am to 9:30 pm. My sessions will start on 9 January and run on Wednesdays (9am - 12 noon); Thursdays (2pm - 4.30pm) and Fridays (9am - 12 noon).

For further information please contact Roddy Sinclair (Centre Manager) on 0141 945 3855 The Maryhill Hub, 186 Wyndford Road, Glasgow.

CREATE A STAR

THIS ISSUE'S WINNING COVER

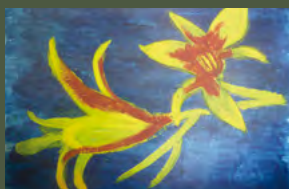
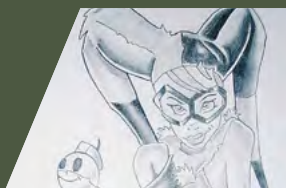


ARMSLENGTH
Benno Shotts
Oil on Canvas

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS FOR ISSUE FOUR

Issue Four will focus on food as the main theme. We are looking for any artwork inspired by food. Another theme in Issue Four is flash fiction. We look forward to seeing any work created by this method.

As ever we want you to send us visual art, short stories (max 1500 words), poetry and life writing. £20 each will be awarded to the creator of the best picture and the best written work.



We can't feature every piece of artwork we receive but here's a selection of what we got for this issue.

CONTACT

Hand in your work to your Motherwell College Learning Centre through the following contacts

WENDY MILLER
HMP Barlinnie

LORNA CALLERY
HMP YO1
Cornton Vale

JOHN OATES
HMP Dumfries

RACHEL CLIVE
HMP Glenochil

JACCI STOYLE
HMP Greenock

EOGHANN MACCOLL
HMP Low Moss

INIGO GARRIDO
HMP Shotts



**AWARDS
FOR ALL
SCOTLAND**

LOTTERY FUNDED

**motherwell
college**

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