



WRITE ON !



BEFRIENDERS HIGHLAND LITERARY NEWSLETTER

ISSUE NUMBER 3

AUTUMN/ FALL 2014

It's been an exciting and busy time this past month for Write On! with Befrienders Highland's first involvement at the *Scottish Mental Health Arts & Film Festival*. More on that and the festival's readers in our feature article overleaf.

Also included is the second Write On! profile with member Graeme answering our editors' questions. New for this edition is the film & book review feature started by Jay (great idea!). So have a read & let us know your take on your recent/favourite book or movie.

It's been great to see some new contributors coming forward so we hope that encourages anyone who is yet to share their work to take the plunge and submit something. If you have any ideas for features or something you would like included in Write On! please feel free to get involved. We would love to hear from you, we want you to shape the group. After allit is yours! - Alan



Sharing with our readers, **member -editor Graeme** writes:



Since I first started befriending, I have really enjoyed the experience. I feel that befriending is a two-way process. The befriended gets another level of support and the chance to make a new friend, whilst the befriender also gets the benefit of hopefully helping someone make their life feel better. To just be able to meet up and chat or do other shared interests is always worthwhile. We all have our troubles and issues but when the meetings take place, it is good to forget the world and just enjoy the time together.

Graeme attended the screenings & readings at this year's mental health arts & film festival. He was inspired by what he saw and suggests we could make **a film for next year's event**. If you would like to be involved in any capacity from: writing, scripting, filming, photographing or starring! contact Alan on the details on the back page and we can start formulating its production. The finished film will be around 3-8 min's long. We have had some great ideas put forward so far. If you have any thing in mind talk to us!



Muriel would like to see a selection in *Write On!* composed especially with children in mind. This includes your poems and stories as well as your cartoons. Recommended children's books, films, DVDs and fun internet sites would also be appreciated.



ISOLDE MURIEL MARY
Scottish Mental Health Arts & Film Festival Readers



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Mental Health Arts & Film Festival

Three of our members (Muriel, Isolde and Mar) bravely came forward to read their work at this year's *Film & Words Evening* held at Eden Court Theatre in Inverness. All three gave very impressive performances to the 140 capacity crowd gathered in the La Scala cinema to launch the 2014 Scottish Mental Health Arts & Film Festival programme of events running from the 1st to 19th of October.

Muriel read a section from her short Story 'A Decision Made'. Isolde performed her poem 'I Feel Free' reciting the lines while dancing to a background, musical accompaniment. Mary read her touching poems 'Wait: Don't Break Down the Walls Between Us' and the humorous poem, 'Moods for Fashion' composed by her daughter Wendy.

All three were really special in completely different ways

Muriel's story was about someone's physiological turmoil whilst away on a trip. Putting the audience in the shoes of the character travelling through Canada, the narrative intrigued the audience to follow along reading the piece which appeared in the festival edition of Write On ! specially created and handed out at the event.

Isolde's practice run through & sound check created a buzz even before the evening got underway. The actual performance didn't disappoint. Isolde's poem and dance are based on an unlikely internet star who was captured unwittingly dancing at a bus stop to her favourite tune. Isolde's take on the video was both clever, beautifully choreographed & celebrated in verse, the empowering feelings that can occur by experiencing the moment.

Next was Mary, who began by reading her stirring poetry on her experiences with the Samaritans. She ended on a very humorous note with her daughter's clever blurring of the lines between fashion & psychology !



MURIEL



ISOLDE



MARY



Well done to all three for making the evening so special! Thanks also go to all the members who came out to lend their support. **If you would like a copy of the works read at the event, we have a limited number of this festival edition available. So let us know.**



Limericks

There was a young girl called PAMELLA
 Who one night while dining with a FELLA
 Shook the mayonnaise
 And did à son aise
 And ended up frightfully YELLA

- Submitted by Pam R (written for her in her youth)

I'm constantly deep with a frown
 Never up but completely down
 You come through the door
 Life's good once more
 Like flicking a switch up from down
 -- For Graeme from Isolde
 (from his poem "Flicking a Switch")

On Halloween night what I fear
 Is not enough kids will come here
 I'll lose all control
 Eat sweets in the bowl
 And gain some more pounds on my rear



- From Maureen

Quotes & Sayings

It's amazing that the amount of news that happens in the world everyday always just exactly fits in the newspaper – **Jerry Seinfeld**



Life is what happens while we are planning our future (or)
 Life is what happens to you while you're busy making other plans – **John Lennon**



Music is the soothing nectar that flows over life while we are coping with everyday stresses and strains ---- **submitted by Pam R**



A LIGHTER LOOK

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

by Irene

Piping hot soup on a cold winter's day,
 Those apples to keep the doctor away,
 After swimming, a bag of chips,
 Salt and vinegar on my lips,

Mince and tatties, comfort food
 On Wednesday nights, it tasted good.
 Ice cream and jelly, a party treat,
 With sandwiches and cake to eat.

Sausage and mash with a touch of mustard,
 Rice pudding and jam, stewed apples and custard,
 Roast beef and Yorkshires for Sunday dinner,
 And rhubarb crumble was always a winner.

Now rich dark chocolate's my guilty pleasure,
 Each little square, a moment to treasure.
 But the biscuit tin is just within reach
 And the fruit bowl contains the juiciest peach.

And there's my dilemma.
 What should I choose ?
 I'll just have them all
 And then I can't lose !



PUN ANYONE

The Litre of the Pack.



And Lynn

THE ORANGE MOON by Keith

Last night the moon was orange
 What with the fog and street lights
 'Twas a nice cheese in the sky.
 Maybe there'll be more orange moon

Sometimes it's gold or silver,
 Or white-gold like my wedding ring.
 Let the moon rot awhile,
 And we could have blue-cheese



ARROW by Isolde

Aimless arrow set in motion
Broadly arching in its flight,
Spirals skyward cross the ocean,
Piercing clouds, wispy white.

Heading swiftly to horizon's rise,
Straight on its shimmery point zips,
The arrow streaks through sunny skies
Along a path that gently tips.

Still flying high, half way there
Speeding on with humming sound
Tilting arrow whirls in air
Begins a curve earthward bound.

Lower and lower the arrow streaks
Closer and closer to the surface
Where choppy waters surge in peaks
And roll in waves that menace.

Shaft and fletching spin through water,
Plowing fast through foamy crests
But then the sea has finally caught her.
Now, floating driftwood, there she rests.



Bowman knows not where she went.
His loosed arrow he cannot find,
Landed so very far from her ascent,
Out of sight from a distant shoreline

Tossed about but ever buoyant,
Adrift at sea where the moon rules
Carried along by the ocean's current
Arrow goes where Luna pulls.

Upon the waters she exerts a force
To which all at sea must abide.
Good timing for arrow's course,
For she returns upon an incoming tide

Sauntering along the water's edge,
His foot prints eroded and then erased,
The archer spots an arrow wedged;
Within a tangle of seaweed encased.

Wondering how such luck came about
To discover his arrow back on shore
He reaches in the clump to pull it out
And vows to keep her for ever more.



*May the stars carry your sadness away.
May the wild flowers of the Highlands
fill your heart with beauty.
May its wildlife fill you with amazing joy.
May hope forever wipe away your tears.
And, May the silence of the mountains
forever make you strong.*

Submitted by David



HOUSES by Keith



**A musty old mansion is not the same as a bright modern maisonette.
Houses have souls of their own.**

A dust-filled hovel is a long way from a palace.

A council house is better than a cardboard box on the pavement.

A cottage is better than an old shed.

An ancient hut is different from a temple.

A church is religious but you can't sleep there.

There is a variety of atmospheres in houses.



WITH SOME GRAVITY

GENERAL LYRICS

Explosions of Morosity Surround Me

Fear Stops You Living

At war with the world
At war with myself

Let the worlds explode

The maelstrom in my head

An omnipresent pain that fails to clear

May be down

But the world still spins around

Tears and joy revolving.

-- Graeme

MAKE ^{or}
BOLD
MARK
NOT ^{or}
DULL
IMPRESSION

WASTED SUMS

QUESTION: *CAN YOU COME SEE THIS?*
PLUS RESPONSE: *NOT NOW, I'M BUSY*
EQUALS: WHAT A WASTE OF TIME

QUESTION: *CAN I PUT THIS HERE?*
PLUS RESPONSE: *YOU ARE TAKING OVER*
EQUALS: WHAT A WASTE OF SPACE

QUESTION: *CAN WE GO THIS AFTERNOON?*
PLUS RESPONSE: *I DON'T KNOW WHAT
MY PLANS ARE YET*
EQUALS: WHAT A WASTE OF PLANNING

QUESTION: *CAN I GET THIS FOR YOU?*
PLUS RESPONSE: *MORE STUFF TO BIN*
EQUALS: WHAT A WASTE OF RESOURCES

QUESTION: *CAN YOU DO ME A FAVOUR?*
PLUS RESPONSE: *WHY DOES EVERYONE
EXPECT ME TO DO IT ALL?*
EQUALS: WHAT A WASTE OF ENERGY

QUESTION: *CAN I SAY SOMETHING ?*
PLUS RESPONSE: *STOP LECTURING ME*
EQUALS: WHAT A WASTE OF WORDS

QUESTION: *CAN I ASSIST YOU?*
PLUS RESPONSE: *I'D RATHER DO IT MYSELF*
EQUALS: WHAT A WASTE OF EFFORT

QUESTION: *CAN YOU COME HELP ME?*
PLUS RESPONSE: *STOP YELLING & COME HERE*
EQUALS: WHAT A WASTE OF BREATH

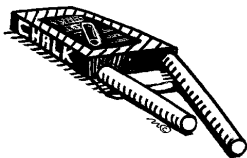
QUESTION: *CAN WE WATCH THIS NEW SHOW?*
PLUS RESPONSE: *EASTENDERS IS ON NOW*
EQUALS: WHAT A WASTE OF AN EVENING

QUESTION: *CAN WE PLEASE LEAVE NOW?*
PLUS RESPONSE: *EXCUSE ME. WE'RE TALKING*
EQUALS: WHAT A WASTE OF FRIENDSHIP

QUESTION: *CAN YOU CONSIDER HOW I FEEL?*
PLUS RESPONSE: *I WISH SOMEBODY WOULD
CARE ABOUT ME FOR A CHANGE*
EQUALS: WHAT A WASTE OF KINDNESS

QUESTION: *CAN YOU KISS ME GOODBYE?*
PLUS RESPONSE: *HAVE A GOOD TIME*
EQUALS: WHAT A WASTE OF LOVE

- ISOLDE



John H. has provided us with a brilliant example of the process of revision which leads to a finished piece of writing. We thought it well worth sharing this progression from the first two poems, “Harvest for Heroes” and “Remembrance Poem, November 2013 : Role for Retrained Soldier” to his final draft of “Remembrance”. Here is John’s second poem.



REMEMBRANCE POEM : November 2013

ROLE FOR RETRAINED SOLDIER

Post-battle Fatigue is real
 The aftermath of nerves a jangle
 On battle stance auto-pilot
 Is how he feels
 High tension alert can't wangle
 So a quick respite
 Restore to override manual

Battle stations high tension drama
 Intelligence sometimes wrong
 Children and civvies buffer stammer,
 Rip of gunfire, short then long.
 Modern warfare has become blind-man's bluff
 No winners, just staying alive
 Till the next fray from no-man's land
 Gives a bite. Ciggie a puff.

Could ex-soldiers train as teachers?
 Could the mould of discipline
 Give a role-model for delinquent kids?
 Learning respect and etiquette
 Let it be- laissez-faire
 Self-discipline, respect bides

By John H



For Now

Disenchanted
 Hurt implanted
 Broken hearted
 Hopes departed

Hold on
 It won't be long
 It's very near
 Soon be here

Can only see that fall
 The end of all
 Don't see the light
 There's none in sight

There's nothing here
 But despair
 Just driving rain
 And too much pain

I cannot contend
 With this world of men
 Slow quick sand
 No helping hand

About ready to leave this place
 When once more I see your face
 And whilst I sit with you
 It's like it's all I ever knew

So that's where you'll find me
 Right where I should be
 I'm nowhere unless I am there
 Anywhere else and I don't seem to care

Don't want to be on my own
 When I am best they leave me alone
 Just need to be with you
 It's all I have left to do

This world is so full of fear
 But when with you it doesn't come near
 We have our world of one another
 There is no need for any other

I know what lies ahead
 But we've got now instead
 So for now I'll hold you tight
 And for now you'll keep me right

By Stephen



MEMBER'S PROFILE Graeme

Graeme, thanks for sharing with our members your interest in creative writing. First of all, please tell us a bit about what originally sparked this interest and how you keep it going.

I just wanted to escape from the real world for a while. I had so many ideas in my head, I just wanted to put them down on paper.

Our readers would like to hear about what inspires your imaginative choice of themes.

My life and the world around me

Some authors believe that poetry and short stories should communicate a message to the reader.

What are your views on this objective in writing a piece?

I believe that all creative writing should communicate a message – all about life and its up and downs

Are there any particular writers who have shaped your own work? What was it you liked about their manner and style of writing?

I enjoy mainly thrillers but I just write the way that the words flow, I do not think that I have a structure as such.

The benefits from writing are many. How has your own creative writing influenced your world?

Hi, as per answer 1, my writing just allows me to open up the creativity that I hold back in the 'normal' world.

FIGHTING MY THORN IN THE FLESH by John H (from his archives portfolio)

My thorn in the flesh humbles me
I lose my temper but accept it.
Persecution leads to perseverance,
What must be,
Leads to courage, patience, fit.

My water-works limits my freedom
I cannot take life care-free
It is there as my mortal sit-com,
Like a black comedy adversity.

It's no use losing my temper
But instead to accept,
This is the cross I have to carry.
Some will say it's testing of the temptor,
To swear like a navy padre
When my patience is not starry.

The testing-time identifies with today's trials of the Lord,
To know I'm being moulded by the hands of Grace.
To know the Word to flesh, then flesh to Word,
Means soul-searching to read a fellow pilgrim's face.

Footprints in the sand homily
To know when the Lord called me
He ain't heavy, giving help civilly
The A.A.*, the G.A.*, the D.A.* anchors of serenity

*

- [A.A. *Alcoholics Anonymous*]
- [G.A. *Gamblers Anonymous*]
- [D.A. *Drug-taking Addiction D-Tox*]





A Bitter Pill (conclusion)

- from Graeme.

.... He collapsed in agony to the floor, clutching his stomach. Lisa screamed as she saw Ricky fall, whilst a work colleague frantically searched for his mobile phone in order to phone for an ambulance. In the ensuing bedlam, Ricky lost consciousness.

Opening his eyes Ricky tried to focus on the light shining above him. The light was hanging from the ceiling of what appeared to be a square room. Turning his head slightly to the left, Ricky could see that he was not alone. He could make out, albeit hazily, the figures of Lisa and the two policemen he remembered speaking to earlier but whose names escaped him. Lisa, her concern clearly shown by the frowning expression on her face, clasped Ricky's hand. She proceeded to inform him of the events that led to Ricky lying on the hospital bed, her voice low and emotional. After collapsing, Ricky was rushed to the casualty department where his stomach was pumped. The doctor had told Lisa that Ricky was fifteen minutes from death. What had caused the near fatality was attributed to a lacing of arsenic on the rim of the bottle of beer Ricky had taken a drink from. Therefore the two policemen were investigating a case of attempted murder. Ricky tightened his grip on Lisa's hand.

DS McIver interrupted Lisa and started to narrate the evidence that had been gathered. Starting with Steven's murder he slowly and meticulously read from his notebook. Steven had been murdered by swallowing arsenic, traces of which were found in a cup of tea at his office. One sip would have the killer's desired effect. Whoever murdered Steven then left by the emergency fire exit. The door's automatic systems had been over-ridden by someone obviously with knowledge of computers and the company's security processes, as the security camera focused on the emergency exit had been altered to replay the scenes of an hour before the killer entered and left. Until the attack on Ricky the police had no suspects at all. However it had been discovered that David

Pullman, who had bought the drink which poisoned Ricky, had left immediately after Ricky collapsed. The police searched his flat and they found a letter in which he confirmed he had killed Steven Robson.

The letter stated that David's mother had died whilst giving birth to him. When he was seven years old his guardian aunt had told David that his mother was advised not to get pregnant due to a heart problem. She was taking pills to try to counteract the effects of the heart problem when she fell in love. He was keen to start a family but obviously his mother was wary. Her lover gave her an ultimatum; either they tried for a family or else he would leave. As his mother was smitten she acceded to his demands. Within a couple of months she fell pregnant with David. The exertion of giving birth proved too much for her weak heart, as the doctors had feared. Her lover left the area after her death. David felt angry upon learning the truth and vowed to avenge his mother's death. Eventually, after many years of painstaking searching, David found the man he thought was responsible for his mother's death – Steven Robson. Getting a job at the same company as Steven Robson seemed the best idea to get close to him. After a couple of months the perfect plan for revenge came to David. Knowing Steven often worked late on his own, David just waited for the right night to grasp his opportunity. David was a computer expert and it had been easy to over-ride the company's archaic security systems. Steven was shocked when David arrived in his office and told him who he was. He had denied knowing David's mother but David was convinced Steven was his father. An argument had ensued for about fifteen minutes when David decided to take his revenge. Pretending to calm down, he offered to make Steven a cup of tea. In the process, he slipped in the pill containing the arsenic into Steven's cup.



Steven had taken one sip and then started to convulse. David watched Steven's death throes and then left. The note finished by saying that as his mother was taking pills for her heart problem the irony of a pill being the perfect murder weapon would not be lost on the police if David were discovered as the murderer. Guilt was indeed a bitter pill to swallow.

DS McIver surmised that David Pullman must have thought that Ricky had seen him at the office and that is why he tried to kill him. The police had instigated a nation-wide search for David Pullman but they had few ideas where he might be. The two detectives wished Ricky a speedy recovery and left.

A fortnight later, Ricky was in the office with all his colleagues and Lisa. The search for David Pullman was still ongoing. At that moment Ricky was not too bothered about David Pullman, as his band had just been offered a record contract. The champagne ordered to celebrate had just arrived. With great zealous Ricky poured champagne into everyone's glass. Once each person had a full glass Lisa proposed a toast to Ricky and his band. All raised their glasses and drank.



An hour later, Ricky, Lisa, and all the staff lay dead in the office. The call out to the off-license had been intercepted by a heavily disguised David Pullman. He did not try and kill Ricky because of any worries about having been seen; further investigation had revealed Steven Robson was not his father – Ricky's dead father was. Steven Robson and Ricky's father had been great friends and such was their likeness in both looks and attitude they were often mistaken for brothers. Direct revenge had not been possible against Ricky's father, so who better than against his brother, to whom their father had shown only love to.

On hearing of the death of Ricky and the others; whom David despised for their constant belittling of him, David swallowed the last arsenic pills he had, his revenge complete.

ANIMAL TALES



CHANGES (Looking for a Home: Part 3) from Pam

There have been a lot of phone calls made here, at least that's what Jasmine calls them. Mum or Dad pick up a funny shaped thing and talk into it. They don't seem very happy either. I have lived here for quite a while now and I am beginning to understand "people speak", especially if it is about food or a cuddle. Jasmine says it is something to do with

moving to a new house. Jasmine and William have moved lots of times and they say it is fun, new places to play and explore. I'm not certain if I want that. I like it here.

Jasmine says she wants to speak to me in private. She does this when she finds something new to eat or play with and doesn't want William to know, like when Mum dropped a sausage and William was sleeping so we ate it between us. Jasmine says we are moving a long way away because Mum and Dad have their own people who are not very well and Mum and Dad think they should live closer to them. Jasmine says not to worry as Mum and Dad always move to nice places where we can all play together.

"Teddy, Teddy, come here quick. I have bad news" calls Jasmine. "You are not coming with us. I have just heard Mum on the phone to someone who wants you to go and live with them. What will we do? We shall have to hide you away when these people come, won't we?"

"I can't believe I am hearing this. I thought Mum and Dad loved me" cried Teddy.

"They do love you very much," replied Jasmine. "William heard Mum saying to Dad that it would not be fair to take you all those miles away as you are not used to cars. Remember when you went to the Cat Doctor. You yowled all the time. William heard Mum say you are a "free spirit", whatever that is, but it sounds nice. Maybe William heard it wrong. He does sometimes get in a muddle doesn't he?"

William came in at that moment saying, "I didn't get it wrong. Honest. Perhaps it will be a better place than this."

"How can anything be better than this? It's a cat's paradise." sighs Jasmine.

Teddy was very unhappy and wandered over to the barn to snuggle in the hay.

"Uh oh, the cat's basket is coming out" whispered Jasmine to William. "Where's Teddy?" At that moment the doorbell rang and Mum went to the answer the door. She came back with a lady carrying a cat basket.

"Hello you two." said the lady. "You must be Jasmine and William. I've heard a lot about you both, all nice things honestly." The lady carried on making a fuss of them and talking to Mum and Dad.

When Teddy heard someone enter the house, his curiosity got the better of him. He slipped back into the house to listen to what was going on. He hoped he hadn't been seen but he was.



WILDERNES CAMPING, NICARAGUA STYLE by Muriel

"Teddy is in the sitting room. I'll get him for you," said Dad. He came back with Teddy clinging on to him. "Come on now Ted, meet the nice lady who wants you to go and live with her."

Teddy let the lady fuss him and knew instantly that she was a nice person but he still did not want to "go and live with her". The people talked together and at the same time the lady was cuddling Teddy. "Right then", she finished. "I will leave the basket here and come to fetch him on Friday. We will then have all weekend for him to explore."

Mum and Dad were sad but they knew that moving Teddy 500 miles away from the Highlands to the Midlands would not be fair on him, since he liked to live his own life, to wander wherever he wanted and not have to meet many people

On Friday, the lady came back quite early in the day so that Teddy would have more time to settle.

Everything happened quickly. Teddy was put into the basket. He'd put up a fight but Dad has the knack of getting cats into baskets. The lady said goodbye. Mum was crying, Teddy was crying and Dad was making sniffing noises (man crying).



A few days later, the lady who we learned was called Jean, phoned to say that Teddy was fine and settling down quite well. He had a friend called Skip who was the same colour as him and it was difficult to tell them apart at times. Skip was a much older cat who knew the ropes so after a few weeks Teddy started following him about. There was a lovely wood at the end of the garden and he followed Skip into it and they had a good time chasing leaves.

Jean continued to send photos of Teddy and Skip to Pam and Chris who missed Teddy very much but knew that they had done the right thing. William and Jasmine and the three G.S.D's moved down to the Midlands where they all settled down in a much smaller house and garden but it didn't matter. They were feeling their ages a bit and they took things easy.

THE END



Paul froze. All was still. A gentle breeze playing with the unseen leaves added their tiny voices to the quiet rustling of invisible creatures. The dim light of a weak moon allowed me to follow Paul's gaze along the narrow beam of my tiny torch. Caught in its spotlight in the dusty hollow and sitting as immobile as my companion was . . . a spider . . . a large spider . . . a tarantula spider.

As the tarantula began to slowly creep forward in an attempt to break free of the circle of light, I angled the beam of the torch so as to slowly follow its progress. A gentle touch on my arm stopped me, followed by a quiet request to leave it alone and let it go. I hadn't known until that moment that Paul suffered from arachnophobia.

I had been intending to lay out a white towel across the small forest clearing that was temporarily our home and with the aid of our one and only torch, issue an invitation to the local wildlife to come and join our party. Maybe this was not the most sensible thing to do.

We were alone, completely alone in a forest, somewhere in Nicaragua. We did not know where the nearest habitation was nor did we know in which direction it lay. Our mobile phones were useless and we were surrounded by unknown creatures, some of which we knew were venomous, snakes, scorpions, spiders . . . We had a tent, a sleeping mat, two plastic chairs and one bottle of water. Oh and one tiny torch with no spare batteries.

To Paul's obvious relief I decided it would be better if, very reluctantly it must be said, I forgo issuing my invitation to the local inhabitants and so instead we retired to our tent, even though it was very early. The comforting hum of a long zip safely enclosing us was destroyed by the realisation that the mesh tent wall, our only protection against unwanted visitors, was damaged. A large gash, almost the width of the tent, appeared to be grinning at us in the torchlight. We were no safer inside the tent than outside.

After a few moments of frantic scrabbling in my pack, I triumphantly pulled out a mosquito net which was soon embraced by the mesh wall, allowing us to finally relax. We lay in the darkness listening to a myriad of unidentifiable noises, wondering who or what was wandering around outside and hoping we would not need to 'spend a penny' before the sun rescued us. It was still early, not much later than

seven in the evening but we could not afford to waste our meagre light and so we had a long night ahead of us.

Having spent a very interesting week working on an active volcano, **Masaya volcano**, in Nicaragua,



we had decided to spend a week exploring the Nicaraguan forests before returning home. An internet search had provided two

locations, our present one, camping, and a second one in a log cabin. With the help of our hotelier, we had made arrangements to camp for two nights. Armed with a piece of paper with the booking arrangements and the name of a person to negotiate meals with, we had been delivered to the ranger station by the science team's taxi driver only to find they had no knowledge of us, or the lady named on the paper.

We don't speak Spanish and they didn't speak English. Noticing a picture of a tent I pointed to it. With beaming smiles two of the men disappeared. A short while later we were escorted to a round clearing in the forest where the two men were sweeping the ground level. I made the shape of a tent with my hands and shook my head and then pointed to them. Again beaming smiles and off they went to shortly return with a tent, two mattresses and two plastic chairs. So we had a bed, no bedding and a tent. I mimed eating, again the beaming smile and they pointed to their watch. I indicated a time and they left.

Half an hour after the indicated time, a young man ran up with a satchel on his back and proceeded to lay us out a wonderful meal, complete with fresh fruit juice. Once we had eaten he cleared everything away and disappeared. This was to be our meal pattern for the rest of our stay.

So here we were, totally alone, somewhere in Nicaragua, with no means of contacting anyone. Eventually we must have slept as we were both suddenly awakened by a loud roaring noise, and by loud, I mean very loud. It was still pitch black in the tent. We later discovered it was about 5am. The sound we were engulfed by was so loud that we could feel the air vibrating with the force of it.

Slowly we realised what it was, howler monkeys. It turned out we were surrounded by three separate troops, each warning the others of their territory rights and as the forest was in a canyon, the



normally loud calling was intensified by echoing off the canyon walls. It was the most amazing and wonderful sound I have ever heard.

Over the next two days, a young ranger would periodically arrive at our tent and take us off through the forest pointing out the animals and birds, amazing moon moths, the howler monkeys asleep during the day in the tree tops, a boa constrictor curled up in a bush just outside our camp and the spectacle of **hundreds of parakeets** returning each evening to roost in the canyon walls. Language wasn't a problem as he was armed with books and so would show us the creature in the relevant book.



It was not long before our faithful taxi driver arrived to whisk us away to our next adventure. We were looking forward to having somewhere to wash and toilet facilities. Having to 'spend a penny' in the forest when there could be anything at all lurking in the leaf litter leaves a lot to be desired.



THE FLAT-PACK ORDEAL – by Isolde

It was easy enough to open the flat pack, tearing at the cardboard ends of the box. Now came the hard part, putting the thing together. No one ever seems to want to take the time to read through the step-by-step instructions that come with pieces of build-it-yourself furniture. She thought she'd better. This would not be the first time she got half way through the assembly only to discover she had gotten a piece backwards and had to unscrew and unbolt back to where she'd taken a wrong turn. Things were going well putting bolt A into slot E and wooden pegs in board 4. She was just in the process of screwing in all those little screws to secure the back panel of the cabinet when she realized her error. Shouldn't the opening that the drawer slides in, go to the front? "Oh brother! I did it again!" she yelled. Not losing the plot entirely, she managed to undo enough to try and juggle the various pieces into their proper position.



The whole affair was so unstable that it kept collapsing. Hard to admit but beginning again and faithfully following the order of construction was going to have to happen. Behind schedule she soldiered on and achieved success the third time around. Standing up with a groan, she inspected her work, carried it off to the bathroom and noticed it matched the décor perfectly. While putting away her toiletries and canisters, she felt satisfaction.



BOOKS

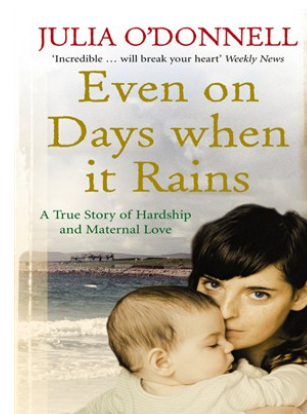


Even on Days when it Rains: A True Story of Hardship and Maternal Love **Authored by Julia O'Donnell**

Publisher: Ebury Press (Paper back 7 Aug 2008)
ISBN-10: 0091917980 / ISBN-13: 978-0091917982

Review by Jay

This is the true story of Irish singing star Daniel O'Donnell's mother. From the age of fourteen we follow her life. It was hard for all of the family but they didn't complain. Everyone did their bit to do anything to support themselves, their families and the wider community. We're given a quite in-depth, detailed description of their lives including the food they have on the island and the jobs they did at different parts of the year. Julia tells us it was the simple things in life that brought them pleasure and how small things gave them joy. Its good reading about Julia's life as she grows up, gets married and has children of her own.



One Child

Authored by Torey L. Hayden

Publisher: Element: Harper Collins 1981, London 1995

ISBN 978-0-399-12467-9 / ISBN-13: 9780380542628

Subject: child psychopathology, child abuse

Review by Maureen

One Child is a book by American author and psychologist Torey Hayden. It was first published in the United States in 1980. The material behind it is based on the author's experiences. Sheila came into Torey Hayden's class for "special children" at the age of 6. This book is Torey Hayden's story of Torey's attempt to reveal the capacity of this violent, tortured child. Parts of this book - Sheila's quiet description of her anger and fears and doubts - will make you cry. And parts of this book - Sheila's gradual realization of her own potential - may make you cheer. I think you would really enjoy and find this book a great read, as it shows an example of the struggle in life of abused children from an educator's point of view.

A sequel, **The Tiger's Child**, was published in 1995



Angel of the North

Authored by Annie Wilkinson

Publisher: Simon & Schuster UK (29 Aug 2013) HB

ISBN-10: 1471115372 / ISBN-13: 978-1471115370

Review by Jay

An in depth story of a young woman named Marie Larsen who tries with all her being to be a good nurse helping with hospital work at Hull Royal Infirmary during the war in 1941. After a bombing raid, tragedy strikes closer to home, with her mother now badly ill in hospital, and her father missing. To keep her younger brother and sister (Alfie and Pam) safe, they are evacuated. This has its own issues but Marie must do as best she can. She carries on by working

hard, fitting in and sorting out problems. Then a personal problem surfaces between herself and her beau, Chas Elsworth, whose letters and phone calls from his post have been a great support to her in the chaos.

I like the way Marie keeps busy and how she works well under pressure like I imagine so many nurses of her time did and do even today. She manages to work her shifts and have a personal life too. A good story about ordinary people facing extraordinary problems.



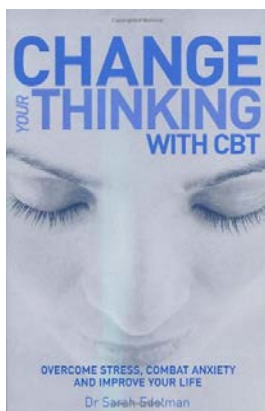
Change Your Thinking with CBT:
Overcome stress, combat anxiety and improve your life

Authored by: Dr Sarah Edelman

Publisher: (Vermilion, 2006)

ISBN-10: 0091906954 / **ISBN-13:** 978-0091906955

Review by Maureen



A practical and reassuring guide to overcoming self-defeating thoughts and behaviour, *Change Your Thinking* is soundly based on the principles of cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT), the standard psychological tool used by therapists. The aim of CBT is to develop realistic thought patterns to help us respond better to upsetting emotions.

In this book Dr Edelman demonstrates how to dispute that nagging voice in your head and deal more rationally with feelings of anger, depression, frustration and anxiety. The book also offers sensible suggestions for more effective communication and for finding happiness - something that is within everyone's grasp.

A big work with 336 pages, but a worthwhile reference that has really been of use to me. I find it very instructive, providing strategies to overcome stress and combat anxiety through changing patterns of thinking.



FILMS & DVDS

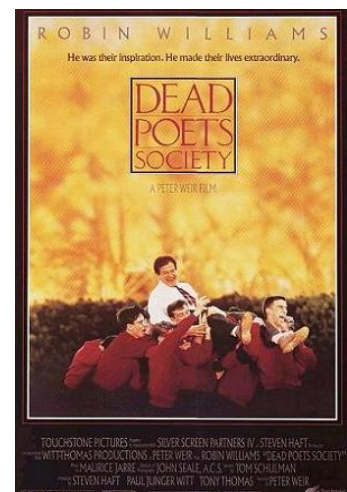
Dead Poet's Society 1989

Directed by Peter Weir

Starring Robin Williams as John Keating

Review written by Graeme

A film I've watched too many times to count. Since the sad passing of Robin Williams, my favourite film has come to the fore once again. In this successful period drama, Robin Williams tones down his usually manic comic approach. It is 1959 and the Welton Academy is a staid but well-respected prep school where education is pragmatic and rather a dull affair. Several of the students, however, have their thoughts on the learning process (and life itself) changed when a new teacher comes to the school. John Keating (Williams) is an unconventional educator who tears chapters of his textbooks and asks his students to stand on their desks to see the world from a new angle. Keating introduces his students to poetry, and his free-thinking attitude. The liberating philosophies of the authors he introduces to his class have a profound effect on his students. The film's message has had an effect on how I try to live my own life. That is, not to live a life of quiet desperation and to try and enjoy every day. So, "Seize the Day" and watch this film. You will not be disappointed.



The Festival edition of Write On is available from the office. Get in touch if you would like a copy.



The specially created magazine handed out at the festival Includes:

- Short stories by Graeme & Muriel
- Poetry by Isolde, Mary & John H

Halloween & Christmas is coming up. It would be great for the group to share some writing based on these spooky & festive celebrations!



This could be:
serious, humorous, Fiction
Non fiction, a completely different
take on the two festivities or a piece
against them! whatever your feelings it
would be great to read your take on it.
Send your work in to the usual address.



THEMES TO INSPIRE YOU

Where Are You Going ?

Making the First Step

A Laughing Matter

Walk in My Shoes

Empowerment



NEXT ISSUE'S SUBMISSION DUE DATE WILL BE 31st DECEMBER



As each issue passes we are blown away by the continued high quality work and unique perspectives coming from the writing. It really has been wonderful to see so many people come together and unite with words. We hope upcoming issues continue to evolve and make the group further connected through sharing ideas, points of view and help each other build confidence to say something special of our own. Thanks as always to everyone that submitted to issue 3 and we look forward to seeing what everyone gets involved in during the winter months.

- ALAN

Alan Duncan

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