

**Issue 1. March 2018. Featuring Moyra Donaldson,**

**Colin H Davidson, FORTY WORDS Winners and more....**

# The Bangor Literary Journal



**Foreman, Four Men** by Colin H Davidson

## Editors' Welcome

Hello readers!

Welcome to the inaugural issue of The Bangor Literary Journal.

Buckle up in your armchairs, as we have a jam-packed first issue for you, including special features showcasing poet Moyra Donaldson, artist Colin H Davidson and our FORTY WORDS Competition winners.

In addition to this, we have a wide selection of outstanding poetry, flash fiction, photography and art on the theme of 'Firsts' from both emerging and established creatives from all over the world, for you to enjoy.

When we put out the call for submissions to the first issue of the journal, we never expected to have well over 200 poets, writers and artists take the time to submit their work to us. What a delight reading and viewing the vast range of interpretations on the 'firsts' theme; and what a difficult job whittling those down to the exceptional pieces that you will discover in the journal.

Moreover, with almost 250 entries to the FORTY WORDS Competition, we had another demanding job ahead, which would equal any marathon (my husband can testify to this as he has taken part in several), involving the period of anonymous non-stop reading of every entry twice. This was subsequently followed by a chapter of intellectual and emotional debate regarding the top ten poetry and fiction pieces. Finally, crunch time came, and we had to decide on our two winners and runners up. Delivering the good news to the successful writers was the highlight of the process; the race; the journey.

Thank you to all our contributors, readers and supporters. We really hope that you enjoy your experience of the first issue. Please feel free to share, print and save it. With 70 pages full to bursting with talent, you can take your time dipping in and out of it. Put the kettle on and enjoy.

Kind Regards,

Amy and Paul.



Amy Louise Wyatt



Paul Daniel Rafferty

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## **FORTY WORDS Feature**

Submissions and Competitions

# Featured Poet: Moyra Donaldson

We were very fortunate to chat with the hugely talented Moyra Donaldson about her inspirations and her career as a writer. Enjoy.



Moyra's writing desk



Moyra reading at Aspects Festival 2017

**Moyra, tell us a little bit about yourself. When, where and how did you discover your talent for poetry and writing?**

**I was very lucky to be brought up in a house full of books.** My mother read to me as a child and I developed a great love for books and story. I was also sent to verse speaking classes with the wonderful Molly Drummond, just across the road from where the Blackberry Path Studio in Bangor is now. Through learning a wide range of poems by heart and speaking them aloud, I discovered the pleasure of the music of poetry, as well as how the words spoke to the heart. As a teenager I wrote poems (badly) and read a lot of poetry, creating my own 'anthology' of the poems I loved, copying them out into a notebook. In my last year at school I won the Belfast Telegraph short story competition, then went on to university to study English language and literature, convinced that I was going to be a writer.

At university I lost confidence. There didn't seem to be any female voices being taught and I struggled to find any contemporary female Irish writers. As a young woman in the 1970's I felt side-lined and un-regarded. **I was silenced by the influence of absences.** Recently reading Susan McKay's essay in the new *Female Lines* anthology, and listening to a documentary about the Women's Coalition, it was brought home to me just how deeply

misogynist our society was at that time and how disregarded were the voices of women. On graduating I went on to do a post-graduate degree in Social Work and put away thoughts of writing. As Ruth Carr puts it in her essay, also in the *Female Lines* anthology, 'The paucity of opportunities for women writers, particularly those not taken up by academia, cannot be overstated. Only those who lived through the period can really know what it was like.'

In the early 1990's there came a turning point for me. I didn't get a promotion that I was sure was mine and this caused me to re-think. I realised I wanted to go back to my desire to write, to re-visit that part of myself; so I joined a local writing group, Ards Writers. Poet Martin Mooney was tutoring the group and Damian Gorman was another tutor, **and for the first time I found myself encouraged and supported amongst other people who understood the writing bug.** I also discovered that whilst I had been away from poetry in the 1980s, a new network of women poets had grown up thanks to Ruth Carr and the Word of Mouth collective. They organised reading events and workshops that gave a platform to female voices and through those I met women who were powerfully supportive, people like Joan Newmann, whose Summer Palace Press made a significant difference in redressing the gender imbalance in publishing. The poet Noelle Vial and others in Donegal were also powerful influences for me at that time. I can still remember the thrill of having my first poem published. Since then I have just kept going, hopefully developing my skill and voice. I am very grateful for the opportunities I have had, first published by the indefatigable Rene and Denis Greig of Lapwing Press and then by Patrick Ramsay of Lagan Press who also widened publication opportunities past the academic circle to other voices, regardless of background and gender.

**Because of my own experiences I have always been keen to support emerging voices.** I was a founding member of the Creative Writers Network in the late 90's and I'm aware of how much it can mean to have the support and encouragement of other writers. It is fantastic to see the proliferation of new voices, especially the number of women being published, though we still have a way to go in terms of full equality and recognition as evidenced by the Women's Cannon movement to honour 'forgotten' women poets and to encourage men and women to pledge to boycott anthologies and festival events that are gender imbalanced.

**Tell us a little bit about the subject matter of your poetry. How and why do you choose your specific subjects and themes? Who are your main influences?**

Like most poets, I write out of my life experience; relationships, family, emotions, life and death and everything in-between. I also look for things that prick my interest, whether it is something I read or see or notice around me. I make notes and allow my thoughts to grow

around it, tease out what it is that has fascinated me about it, what it was it that attracted me to the subject; the subtext. **Sometimes a subject can obsess me for a long time.** I became fascinated by the history of the eighteenth century, the birth of science, the Age of Enlightenment, how it was so different to our own time and yet so similar in terms of the human stories and concerns. This led to quite a number of poems that made up a large part of my collection *Miracle Fruit*. I was also for a while very interested in the concept of the Freak Show and the stories of the people who displayed themselves, or were displayed, as freaks. I travelled to the Hunterian Museum in London to see the skeleton of the Great Irish Giant, Charles Byrne, a native of the North of Ireland who moved to London to exhibit himself and whose body was procured by nefarious means by the anatomist John Hunter. I tried to tell his story in a poem. Similarly, the Fabulous Hilton Sisters, Daisy and Violet, conjoined twins. Daisy, the Fat Lady travelling America. I really enjoy doing the research for these kinds of poems.

I find great comfort and inspiration in the natural world and it is a recurring theme in my work. In particular **I find myself returning to landscape and its influence on us. Also birds and horses; horses not only being my notional totem animal, but also a big part of my every day.** I've been around horses all my life. I recently wrote a poem for my daughter Claire who is equally horse addicted. It is called *Not Metaphors* because though horses are written about a lot in poetry, used as metaphors for all kinds of things, I wanted to reflect the sheer hard work and physicality of caring for them in the real world.

I suppose another theme throughout all of my work is the magic and mystery of life. Someone recently commented to me that in reading over my work, he could see what particular mood I was in within each separate collection. I'm not sure about that!

## **Tell us about your poems which are featured in the journal.**

**A Quare Few Things** was written as a 21<sup>st</sup> century response to Ovid and is about the different circumstances we find ourselves in over a lifetime and how we are changed by them into different things at different times. Thinking about the legacy of the violence here, and the expectations from peacemakers who want us to move on (as I also want), prompted me to write 'I have sat down at a table/spread with the corpse of my child/ and been expected to eat.' What a lot is expected of some of us.

**Mare** is one of a series of horse poems that I have been working on recently. I came across the story of the Byerley Turk, one of three Arab stallions that are the founding fathers of all thoroughbred horses. The genes of every thoroughbred horse alive today can be traced back to these three. There were wonderful stories attached to the horses, the Byerley Turk for example was ridden by Captain Byerley of the Sixth Dragoon Guards at the Battle of the Boyne. I then looked to see if the matrilineal line could also be traced and not unexpectedly



the mares were harder to trace, their names largely unrecorded. I came across the legend of the Foundation mares and they sparked this poem. The poem is also a meditation on what it is to be female and mother's relationships with their children and our desire to protect them from all harm.

Like many people I have been haunted by the disappearance of Lisa Dorrian. I have two daughters myself and I found the details almost unbearable. When Lisa's mother Patricia died without ever finding out where her daughter was buried I felt I wanted to say something about the unendurable pain she must have felt as a mother and this **Elegy for Patricia Dorrian** is the result.

## **What events have you been involved in the past and do you have any upcoming events or publications that we would be interested in hearing about?**

I've always been interested in supporting new voices, so I'm always pleased to be able to work with people on workshops of one to one. I do quite a lot of mentoring of poets working towards a first collection and I teach for the Crescent Arts Centre, the Irish Writers Centre and the Community Arts Partnership as well as writing groups. I also really enjoy providing creative writing workshops in health care settings and have done a lot of work in this area over the years.

I've judged a number of poetry competitions including the Seamus Heaney New Writing Award. It's a challenging role as you are always aware of how much effort has gone into the writing of the poems and I take it very seriously.

Last year in conjunction with the Belfast Book Festival I set up the *Mairtin Crawford Award* for poets who have not yet published a first collection. This competition allows the submission of a series of poems, which means that the judges can get a feel for a body of work, not just an individual poem. Mairtin was a wonderful supporter of new writing and this award is to honour his memory and to support talented poets. I will be running a workshop during April at the Crescent Arts Centre to look at how best to present manuscripts for this.

On a more personal note, I am currently working in collaboration with visual artist Paddy Lennon from Wexford. The project, *Blood Horses*, builds on the horse poems I mentioned earlier. We will be producing a book of images and poems and there will also be an exhibition of the work, firstly as part of the Cuirt Festival in Galway and at the Aspects Festival in Bangor in September. I also have a new collection coming out with Doire Press in spring of next year, though I haven't settled on a title for it yet!

Follow Moyra on: <http://moyradonaldson.blogspot.co.uk/>

## **A Quare Few Things**

Over a lifetime, the gods  
make many things of you.

I have been a hart, hunted  
through the darkening woods.  
I was the vanishing point too;  
and the heart pierced by arrows,  
chambers breached and flooded.

One terrible winter, I was an Iris.  
Oh do not assume that bulbs  
remember spring and flowering.

I've sat down at a table laid  
with the corpse of my child  
and been expected to eat.

And I have soared of course,  
seen how the world is spread  
wide for those who fly. I have  
killed with beak and talons  
to fill the little gaping throats.

I have asked for the chariot's reins  
and set my whole world blazing.

I have been fox and snake and bear.  
I have been stone and waterfall.  
I have been loved too much and not enough.  
I have been split open by the first green shoot.  
I have been folded neat and safe inside my shell.  
I have been both grit and pearl.  
I have been the earth's gold veins,  
the aching rift between the continents.

Best was the time of herd, of being  
not one alone, feeling the ripple that moved  
breath-connected through us; the power  
of knowing when to run - before the blow is struck  
or the teeth sunk – and when to go back to grazing.

**by Moyra Donaldson**



## Mare

I am not an obedient or dutiful woman  
I never come when I'm called  
when I'm hungry I eat  
when I'm thirsty I drink

but I'm thinking of the herd of horses  
kept from water for three days  
then released; the stampede  
to the river to be slaked at last.

I'm thinking of those five mares  
who when The Prophet sounded  
the battle horn, the call to war  
turned back despite their thirst.

These are the Foundation mares  
the daughters of the wind  
that bred the twelve Royal mares  
that bred the winners, their genes

splicing with the three stallions –  
faithfulness mingling with pride  
duty with self-determination, perfect  
combination for passing the post first.

\*

I have dwelt in the small universe  
of the womb before the world,

felt the power of the womb to expel  
into the first sorrow and the first joy,

the abandonment of being: being.  
I have been the universe for you.

The circle of the belly, the world,  
the life, the mystery of love.

Have you ever heard the soft sound  
of a mare whickering to her foal?

What whip will be laid to its back,  
what race will it win or lose?

\*

Scanned in foal, month after month  
her belly became heavier, swollen  
until her teats began to fill  
and drip with milk; but as more time  
went by and no foal came, we saw it was  
a phantom that she'd grown, replacing  
the clustered beginnings she'd lost long ago.

When most afraid for you, daughter, I think  
of her lost embryo. I'd take you back into myself,  
every cell, each chromosome. I'd have you back,  
before birth, before conception, all your future  
still ahead. I'd hold you as an imagined thing, safe.

**by Moyra Donaldson**

## **Elegy for Patricia Dorrian**

To have your daughter taken  
and not know where to find her,  
not even the bones of her, body  
that you carried in your body,  
the bones that belong to you,  
her sweet baby bones.

There was searching in sea tides,  
boots of cars, sheughs and ditches,  
in holes in the ground, in closed faces.  
Could the body of a girl be folded  
into an oil drum, sealed and dumped  
as if rubbish; the most appalling of places  
and in your imagination worse even -  
but not worse than not knowing.

You wouldn't let them forget her:  
you begged for one man with a conscience -  
none were to be found. From posters in shops,  
on telegraph poles, newspaper articles  
each new anniversary, year after ever forever,  
your daughter still smiling at the gone world.

**by Moyra Donaldson**

## Photography and Haiku by Lynda Tavakoli



**The Mohammed Al Ameen Mosque, Muscat, Oman**

### **Harbouring the light**

The moment we met  
I knew that God and Allah  
shared a single light

### **Biography:**

*Lynda Tavakoli facilitates an adult creative writing class in Lisburn, Northern Ireland, where she lives for most of the year. Her poetry and prose have been broadcast on both BBC Radio Ulster and RTE Sunday Miscellany and she has been selected as The Irish Times Hennessy poet of the month for her poems about dementia, a recurring theme in much of her poetry. Most recently her poems have been translated into Farsi while other poems and photographic images have seen publication in Bahrain. She is presently in Oman where she is working on her debut poetry collection which she hopes to publish later on this year.*

## **Poetry by Paul McCarrick**

### **Biography:**

*Paul McCarrick's poetry has featured in Boyne Berries, Skylight 47, wordlegs and The Stinging Fly and was placed 3rd in the 2015 Over The Edge New Writer Competition. His novel, Happy-Cry with my Brilliant Life, was long-listed for the 2014 Irish Writers Centre's Novel Fair Competition.*



## FAQs of the Poetic Association of Ireland

Before I start on this less travelled road  
I was just wondering do I have to do a theory test?  
Or any test? Like, for the license?  
Or is it that the test is that *this* is the test?  
Are there penalty points?  
Do I not be allowed to be doing  
the weird placement of words anymore?  
Or something like a really bad metaphor?  
And what's all this about forms?  
I can't handle much more between the P60  
and P45s coming out in the post and getting lost  
quickly after that but in the same thought  
I really can't help but feel a villanelle isn't exactly  
the nicest sounding thing to be providing to anybody  
What about a rhyming pyramid scheme?  
They worked previously.  
Do I really have to do meters?  
It's just I prefer miles. Now would be a time to ask  
how many bad jokes can I make  
before I'm thrun' out?  
Now can I make up words and  
use the language of my people?  
Or of 90s pop group M People?  
MOVIN' ON UP, WE'RE MOVIN' ON OUT!  
At this juncture, can I use pop culture  
or is it just 'culture' culture from here on in?  
Is there a definition of culture so I can begin  
to get a hold of this, so to speak?  
Also, is Irish necessary for any aspect of it?  
Or would it be as useful as learning  
tá an-athas orm an corn sin a ghlacadh  
ar son contae na hIarmhí!!!  
And will I get my ban for a lifetime  
if I sit at a bench scribbling  
in my notebook and a friend  
asks what am I doing here  
and I say

I am writing a letter of complaint  
for things not being written down in the first instance  
or maybe that too much was written in the second.

**by Paul McCarrick**

## **Poetry by Shelley Tracey**

### **Biography:**

*Shelley Tracey, a South African writer and creative writing facilitator, lives in Northern Ireland. Her first poetry collection, *Elements of Distance*, was published in 2017. Shelley was Artist in the Community (Arts Council NI) in 2015. Her poems, stories and articles about creativity are published in a range of journals.*





## **Listening**

A seagull rises, skying.

A thrush drops from a branch  
in simple flightness.

Doves like silver vessels  
sailing over grass.

Trees rippling the daybreak  
closer to home.

The first white tulip  
listening for morning.

**by Shelley Tracey**

## **Poetry by P.W. Bridgman**

### **Biography:**

*P.W. Bridgman writes from Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. He has earned graduate and postgraduate degrees in psychology and a degree in law as well. His poems and short fiction and have been published in The Antigonish Review, Grain, The Honest Ulsterman, Ars Medica, The Glasgow Review of Books, The Moth Magazine, Poetry Salzburg Review, Litro Magazine (UK), Litro Magazine (NY), Praxis, Pif Magazine, Ascent Aspirations, The New Orphic Review, Easy Street, London Grip, A New Ulster, Section 8 Magazine, Mulberry Fork Review, Aerodrome and other literary periodicals and e-zines. Bridgman's writing has also appeared in anthologies published in Canada, Ireland, England and Scotland, and his first book—a selection of short stories entitled Standing at an Angle to My Age—was published in 2013. You may learn more about P.W. Bridgman by visiting his website at <[www.pwbridgman.ca](http://www.pwbridgman.ca)>.*



## **Not the Way a Bullet Leaves a Gun**

Ruth leaves Jim the way a hand leaves a glove,  
with five gentle thumb-and-forefinger tugs from right to left.  
Each of the fingers comes partly free,  
then the thumb:  
each tug a little more confident,  
each causing the gentle, leathern grip of wedlock  
to relax a touch more until, at last,  
it comes full away  
with a sound  
like a sigh.

She leaves him the way a ferry leaves a dock:  
with four short soundings of the ship's whistle,  
spaced months apart  
(their import unmistakable to anyone but him),  
followed by a long one  
(the one that signals imminent departure).  
Her hull begins to shudder,  
engines churn inside it,  
water boils up in the widening  
space between them,  
between loading ramp and dock.  
Going nowhere and everywhere, she waves.  
He waves back.

She does not leave him the way he had always feared,  
the way a bullet leaves a gun (all trajectory and target,  
with a bang and a puff of smoke,  
gone in a trice and forever buried,  
deep in another's heart).  
At least not that.

At least not that.

**By P.W. Bridgman**

## **Don't Touch That Dame**

*POT 2W0: September 1960*

On my deathbed my thoughts shall return  
to eight-year-old Gloria Dye.

Red-faced, rough-skinned, tousle-headed, scrappy,  
perplexed by unkindness, tormented by eczema,  
resolutely rejecting of pity.

Strong yet vulnerable. Enigmatic, so very enigmatic.  
On my deathbed I shall wonder:  
whatever became...

On the schoolyard they said: "Don't touch that dame  
or you'll die." "We can't touch her or else we'll die,"  
they said.

Not my words. From me, no words at all—  
kind or unkind, helpful or hurtful, comforting or cruel—  
were spoken to, or for the benefit of, or to the detriment of,  
Gloria Dye.

On my deathbed I shall remember tears withheld,  
her fierce beauty. I shall be galled by my own  
faltering silence.

I shall take not even hollow comfort from knowing  
that I showed her no active unkindness.

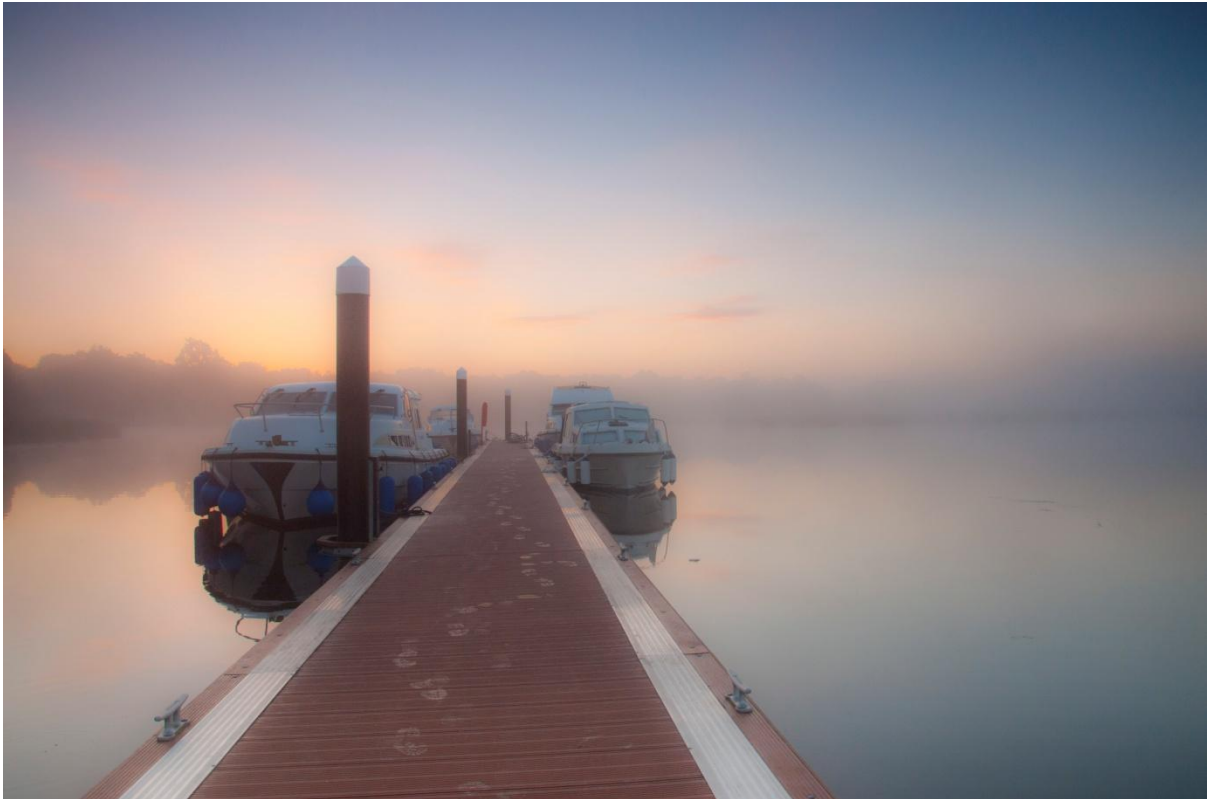
No *active* unkindness.

On my deathbed I shall plead for forgiveness,  
not from God but from Gloria Dye.

On my deathbed I shall yearn to reach out  
and touch that dame.

**by P.W. Bridgman**

## **Photography by Brian McCourt**



### **First Light Lough Erne**

**First Light Lough Erne** depicts an early morning start to catch the first light and, as it happened mist, while on a boating holiday in Fermanagh

### **Biography:**

*Brian is a graphic designer by trade but is a keen amateur photographer who loves trying to capture images of all kinds of subjects - landscape and music concert images are a favourite of his.*

## **Flash Fiction by Liz Falkingham**

### **Biography:**

*Liz Falkingham Temple is based in East Yorkshire, England. Her work has appeared in MoonPark Review, Ellipsis Zine, Firefly Magazine and DNA Magazine, and was shortlisted for the Bath Flash Fiction Award 2017. She tweets as @JournoSizF*



## **This Dance, And Every Other**

Their Daddy brought home a tutu, though God knows none of them were dancers and where he got it was a mystery, as most all of his time was taken with the farm. It had stiff net skirts that frilled out round the leotard like gills on a fancy lizard and was the colour of piglets just born.

Shona was the oldest at seven, so got first wear. Except it wouldn't go on, her legs didn't fit and she hopped on the spot and felt big and foolish and that was the first time but wouldn't be the last.

"You've put both legs down one hole, you fat head," her Daddy said, and she pulled it off to try again but by then it was her sister's turn, and all the while 'fat head' tiptoed inside her mind with its dirty, sticky feet. Thirty years later, when the therapist asked when did you first feel fat, and when was the first time you made yourself sick, Shona could follow the footprints those two words had made.

Funny, how a foot in each hole first time might have changed things, and how long you could dance to the same damn tune.

**by Liz Falkingham**



## **Poetry by Ginny Saunders**

### **Biography:**

*Ginny lives in Wiltshire amongst the white horses and writes poetry and prose influenced by natural history. She was formerly a molecular biologist and is currently working on a novel set in the Natural History Museum. In 2017, Ginny was Poet-in-Residence for St George's Gardens during London's Open Garden Squares Weekend.*



## **Pioneers**

A new dry stone wall is rare  
in these days of quick-fit fences.  
The eruption creeps as if from a fissure,  
bright and blistering like magma,  
sterile as moon rock.  
Ants, spiders and beetles  
find a way to its hollow heart. Ferny  
fronds settle in the shade at its damp base.  
Southerly, a Mediterranean protectorate  
is born and blossoms. In this trickle down  
community, gritty debris, cobwebs,  
autumn leaves, last season's skins,  
and, the jewel of the wall,  
excrement, will, if there are days enough,  
transform into valleys of rich  
soil and slowly, in lichen- time,  
pioneer plants; mosses, worts, and flax  
will pick their side. In years to come  
the wall will show lost ramblers  
which direction is north  
and the way to civilisation.

**by Ginny Saunders**

## **Poetry by David Atkinson**

### **Biography:**

*David Atkinson, Belfast born poet whose work has been published in magazines and journals nationally and internationally.*

*He has published two collections of poetry, Thomas (2005) and Black Eyed Peace (2014), which includes the Pushcart nominated poem "Hunting for the Aurora".*

*He was long-listed for the Seamus Heaney Award for New Writing 2017.*



## **Stonewalling**

I never want to be a brick;  
six sides, twelve edges,  
eight corners, and whilst coming  
in different sizes, they are,  
in essence, all the same;  
clay and water, compression and heat,  
laid end to end, top to tail,  
whole houses built on their heads.

I want to be Mourne granite, Antrim basalt,  
plucked from a field and carefully placed  
with other stones of all shapes and sizes,  
held together by our differences,  
proud to be part of a wall the wind  
whistles through, rather than around.

**by David Atkinson**

## **Poetry by Caroline Johnstone**

### **Biography:**

*Caroline is originally from Northern Ireland, now living in Ayrshire. She writes mainly on philosophical, political and life experience themes. She has been published in The Galway Review, Positively Scottish, The Scottish Book Trust, Belfast Life, the Burningwood Literary Journal, the New Voices Press, HCE Review, in the Proost and The Snapdragon Journals and the Federation of Writers (Scotland) anthology. She was also shortlisted for Tales in the Forest and was highly commended by People Not Borders. She helps with the social media for Women Aloud NI and is on the Poets Advisory Group for the Scottish Poetry Library.*



## **Leftfield Memories**

My lips are salted with  
Dromona butter flakes  
On just baked soda farls,  
Or pooled in tiny lakes  
Of drumlinned champ.

My nose is cold from digging up  
First Comber spuds, in frosts that echoed  
With the famished hearts  
Of those who dug and counted costs  
Of blight and exile.

My lips are red from stolen fruit,  
Blackcurrants hung in clusters,  
That should have gone to Cairn's shop  
So gran might sometimes mind to muster  
Nerve and food, not beer.

My nose remembers stewed Bell's tea  
With sugared barmbrack, apple tart  
Delights of hidden coins and ring;  
A cup in every house, to ease in  
Hallowe'en, and Irish wakes.

These left-field memories trip me up,  
These tastes and smells I thought I'd put to bed.  
For home is nearer than I think  
When scenes deep nested in my head  
Come home to roost.

**by Caroline Johnstone**

## **Flash Fiction by Colin Dardis**

### **Biography:**

Colin Dardis is one of Eyewear Publishing's Best New British and Irish Poets 2016, and recently an ACES '15-16 recipient from Arts Council of Northern Ireland. His work has been published widely throughout Ireland, the UK and USA. A collection with Eyewear is forthcoming in 2018. Colin also co-runs Poetry NI and is the online editor for Lagan Press.  
[www.colindardispoet.co.uk](http://www.colindardispoet.co.uk)





## **No Retrieval**

There's an old floppy disk lying beside some CDs of mine. It's been gathering dust like an old mountain rock that explorers have forgotten about, becoming erased from all the maps of adventurers and nomads. A relic of another time. I'm curious to see what is on it, and so place it into my laptop. It's been so long since I've had to utilise a floppy disk, I doubt my computer can remember how to scan one.

It starts chugging like a train engine having a fit, desperately rifling through its memory banks for information on how to deal with this foreign object. The sounds are not good: my laptop is choking on three and a half inches of plastic. It refuses to open.

This line of inquiry goes no further. It's an unread book with pages stuck together, a radio programme heard through blown speakers. Whatever information is lost, the bits and bytes lie dead to investigation. Technology fails, just like human recollection, an empty soda fountain leaving you holding a glass with a sorry slice of lemon shrivelling in the afternoon sun, your mouth puckered in anticipation.

**by Colin Dardis**

# Featured Artist: Colin H Davidson

**We had the privilege of chatting with Northern Irish artist Colin H Davidson about his haunting and hugely impressive paintings of Harland and Wolff and the shipyard workers.**



**Shelter under Section -Oils on Canvas**

**Colin, tell us a bit about yourself. When, where and how did you discover your talent for painting and art?**

I was born in Donaghadee in 1961, throughout my primary and high school years I was always interested and involved in art and craft studies. I would have sketched a lot in my teenage years but it wasn't until 1982 when I was 21 that I received a set of oil paints as a Christmas gift from my Mother along with a few painting lessons with Doris Rainey in Groomsport. These lessons were cut short as income was low, so I started to develop in my own time and way. Mainly painting coastal scenes or sailing ships in high seas.

## **Tell us a little bit about the subject matter of your paintings. How and why do you choose your specific subjects and scenes?**

My subject matter was influenced by my working years in H & W shipyard. The inspiration came from my wife Libby in 2007, when she suggested painting something relating to the Harland and Wolff cranes. My immediate reaction was “who wants big yellow cranes hanging on their walls?”...how wrong was I?

This started a whole new chapter in my career as a part-time artist. I started working on shipyard men either going to or returning home from the yard. The more I painted the more the memories came flooding back. I was always mesmerised by the scale and diverse shapes that lay around this industrial landscape, different sections of ships keels or weldments waiting to be lifted into the dry dock by these huge cranes, so recently I’ve been painting these images from my memory.

## **What big events or exhibitions have you been part of in the past? Do you have any upcoming exhibitions or events that we would be interested in hearing about?**

I had my first solo exhibition in May 2009 in The Whalley Gallery, Holywood and a few group exhibitions in the same gallery. I’ve supported local charities in group exhibitions over the past 9 years, most recently in Black Canvas, Holywood for the Mary Peters Trust.

I suppose the pinnacle of my career as an artist so far was the commission from the Titanic Hotel Belfast in 2017. I was commissioned to paint 8 large pieces to hang in Drawing Office No. 2. On receiving this commission from Titanic Hotel Belfast I feel very humbled and grateful to have my work hang in the very place I once worked.

## **Colin, where do you see yourself in 10 years time?**

That’s a difficult one to answer without sounding too cliché, being blessed with good health to paint more of the same but maybe on a much larger scale.



Colin paints his ship- yard scenes in oils.



Colin's studio, with some of his recent paintings.



**Night Shift** -Oils on Canvas



## Biography: Colin H Davidson

Born 1961, raised in Donaghadee, Co. Down.

Davidson, a previous employee of Harland & Wolff served his 4 year apprenticeship as a mechanical engineer, starting in Sept. 1977 to 1981 then a further 9 years working in different departments leaving the company in 1990 to join Bombardier.

Throughout his time spent in the shipyard he had an additional interest in art.

From approximately 1982 he and a few other employees started to share the same interest, lunchtimes and tea-breaks would have been used to talk about what was on their easels or chatting about what other artists that may have influenced them.

Sketching or painting different views of the Titanic from books he studied in 1986/7 was a particular favourite of the artist.

Mainly a self-taught artist he was always overwhelmed with the diverse shapes and mega structures that the shipyard had to offer, large superstructures, ships sections, ships engines the size of houses and transportation vehicles, all of which have stuck in his memory.

It wasn't until 2007/8 that his wife had mentioned about using these images from his memory to create an industrial view of his days working in H & W.

Apprehensive as to what he would first paint, he decided to create an image that encapsulated hundreds of shipyard men walking home featuring Samson and Goliath in the background entitled "Waiting for M'Da".

Since then he has been commissioned to paint similar views and continues to support local galleries. It was only in November 2016 at the age of 55 he made the decision to leave his role as a Tool Design Engineer for Bombardier to work full-time as an artist.

Davidson's work now hangs in small private collections throughout the UK and Ireland, USA, Canada, Hong Kong and Australia.



**Colin and his wife Libby**

Follow Colin on Facebook and Instagram:

<https://www.facebook.com/colinh.davidson>

<https://www.instagram.com/colinhdavidsonart/?hl=en>

## **Poetry by Jackie Lynam**

### **Biography:**

*Jackie lives and works in Dublin. She has been quietly writing for a few years but has only recently turned her pen to poetry as a way of expressing all the thoughts swirling around in her 44 year old brain! **Traces** is Jackie's first published poem.*



## **Traces**

The inaugural stains of womanhood  
Imprinted on a holiday home cushion  
Re-awakens those mornings  
I rushed to cleanse all traces  
So no one would glimpse my shame.  
Rinsing out sheets in bathroom sinks  
From charcoal to crimson to blush then clear.  
But today although I scrub with intent  
Their shape and texture remain steadfast  
Mirror images of the footprints on the beach this morning  
That navigated my new year's stroll  
Reflecting on all who traced this path  
And those still to come.  
Countless women who silently expel,  
furtively destroying the evidence.  
Indoctrinated from the beginning  
Natural bodily function - owner discretion required.

**by Jackie Lynam**



## **Poetry by Ross Thompson**

### **Biography:**

*Ross Thompson is a writer from Bangor, County Down. Most recently, he was shortlisted for the Seamus Heaney New Writing Award, placed joint runner-up in the Mairtin Crawford Award, and read 'The Slipping Forecast' on the BBC for The Arts Show. He was also commissioned by NI Screen to write a poetic sequence for the Coast To Coast project.*



## **The Tonic, 1982**

Vivid dreams of red brick, glowing snowcrete,  
lambent glass and gold-panelled art deco  
borrowed from Monte Carlo casinos,  
are repurposed on a suburban street,

welcoming me with a grandiose sweep  
of carved marble steps and hoarding boasting  
*The Empire Strikes Back*. Once through the marquee:  
a spree of newfangled gizmos roasting

nuts, sweet stall, chittering ticket kiosks,  
Compton organ with the teeth of a shark,  
cigarettes, fruit ices, girls in pillbox  
hats, romance, usherettes piercing the dark

with switchless torches, spooling quicksilver  
to a red velvet chair; the premier  
spot in-between Gatling gun projector  
and candescent screen, where a lumière

beam of blue, white and green, gilds the whole room,  
turning silhouettes aureate, eclipsed,  
then solar with trombones at full volume.  
The film begins. I am at once transfixed.

It cannot last. The lure of video  
holds folk hostage. The Tonic, devalued,  
closed down, gutted by fire, a cameo  
of the town's past, and I am gutted too.

**by Ross Thompson**

## **Flash Fiction by Rob Walton**

### **Biography:**

*Rob Walton is from Scunthorpe, and lives in North Shields. He writes flash fictions and short stories, and poetry for children and adults. He often performs his work and he collated the New Hartley Memorial Pathway text.*



## **Araucaria araucana**

Michaela was the first of my friends to put me in a pinfall on the triangle of grass opposite the church and the first to dribble spit into my face. Michaela was the first of us to climb the monkey-puzzle tree. She was the first to know its Latin name and she was the first to grow hairs on the back of her hands. She was the first to read this book called *Nothing* and she was the first to try to get us to think for ourselves. She was the first to rip off her yellow Muhammad Ali *Float Like A Butterfly, Sting Like A Bee* t-shirt and red jeans. She was the first to say she didn't need clothes where she was going. She was the first to say the school holidays could last forever if you wanted them to, and she was the first to swing from the tree to the roof of her house. She was the first to stop sounding like a human and she was the first to throw slates down and screech at the top of her voice. She was the first of us to leave the gang, never to be seen again.

**by Rob Walton**

## **Poetry by Iain Campbell**

### **Biography:**

*Iain Campbell is grew up in Holywood, before heading to Edinburgh to study Structural Engineering. His poetry is inspired by his love of the landscape, the sea and sailing; his poems are almost always a tale of someone he has met, or of journeys he has undertaken. He is an avid rugby fan and wrote the poem voice-over for Ulster Rugby's 2016 promo video, "The 16th Man" which featured on the big screen throughout that season. He has been a regular entrant in the Aspects Festival Bangor Poetry Competition, achieving recognition as both runner up and highly commended.*



### **Today we counted daffodils**

The high tide gently lapped the foot of the estate wall  
as you crunched across the blackened kelp,  
wave tossed, crushed and rotting.

Three little steps in your pink water boots, to match my stride,  
yet you waded the trickled stream while I sought a stepping stone  
between the wild irises and the splash of their muddy pools.

And later, when you tired, you rode high upon my shoulders  
as we rounded the finger of the point,  
past new sown fields of wheat and barley  
on narrowed causeways through the salt marshes,  
or on twisted, tumbled, stony paths,  
by bramble buds and broken bracken.

Today the sun sailed across a cotton wool sky,  
while the southern breeze jostled the whin,  
and tugged at the lazy moorings on the bay  
before patting us gently on the back  
to whisper that spring was here once more.  
And so we paused upon the common to count the daffodils.

**by Iain Campbell**

## **Poetry by Stephanie Conn**

### **Biography:**

*A former primary school teacher and graduate of the MA programme at the Seamus Heaney Centre, Stephanie won the Yeovil Poetry Prize, Funeral Service NI prize and the inaugural Seamus Heaney Award for New Writing.*

*Stephanie's work has been shortlisted, highly commended and placed in a range of competitions including the Patrick Kavanagh Award, Doire Press Poetry Chapbook Competition, Mslexia Poetry Pamphlet Competition, Red Line Poetry Competition, Fool for Poetry Chapbook Competition, Dromineer Poetry Competition and Tools for Solidarity Poetry Competition. She is a former Poetry Ireland Introductions poet and facilitates writing workshops for adults and children.*

*Her first collection, 'The Woman on the Other Side' is published by Doire Press and was shortlisted for the Shine/Strong Award for best first collection. Her pamphlet 'Copeland's Daughter' won the Poetry Business Pamphlet Competition and is published by Smith/Doorstep. Her next collection is due to be published in May 2018.*



## Through the Forest

How was it she first came to me  
on the shortest day of the year  
wrapped in furs and layers of silk,  
lost and wandering in the snow,  
somewhere between childhood  
and womanhood?

She said  
the night was clear of cloud,  
that she followed clustered stars  
to my door. She lied, and named  
the constellations in the northern sky  
as I unwrapped her like a gift.

Unwrapped her like a gift,  
in front of an open fire, to turn  
the pale skin pink. I let her sip  
at Brandy for the warmth  
and took doubt as certainty  
in the flickering dark

as fire  
sprites burnt a fierce imprint  
into her eyes and loosened  
her jaw, changed her to  
a shadow ghoul, as moonlight  
crept across the floorboards.

Light crept across the floorboards  
long after she was gone and I wondered  
if I had been wrong to take her in  
or unwrap her as my own on a cold night  
knowing the question had lingered  
on her cracked lips,

haunted her  
since the dawn of that lengthening  
year that stretched her out of shape  
and back again. When she disappeared  
on the morning of the longest day,  
into the forest, it was in silence.

**by Stephanie Conn**



## **Flash Fiction by J. L. McCavana**

### **Biography:**

*J.L. McCavana lives in County Antrim. He is studying Creative Writing and English Literature as a mature student. He is in no hurry.*



## **Earl Grey**

The world outside had disappeared. There was nothing. Nothing.

Ricky turned his head from the window and closed his eyes. The coach continued on its way, headlights dissolving the darkness that had disappeared the Scottish countryside.

He could see again the bar, and his pint of Harp responding to the boat's movement over the water. Harp! He never drunk Harp. He'd barely left the shore and was already getting nostalgic, romanticising a pint of Harp. Jesus, it was a wonder he hadn't wept over his packet of Tayto Cheese and Onion. Tayto Cheese and Onion! You can't get Tayto Cheese and Onion, Paul had said. What kind of backward fucking country was he heading to?

He could hear too, the rough, sweet music of the accents in the bar; a ceilidh of cousins from both sides of the pond. In time the images faded, the soundtrack dimmed and he drifted off into a fitful sleep.

He woke for Carlisle's yellowy emptiness; for Manchester's multiplicity of erections. And in Crewe Services Paul bought a pot of Earl Grey tea, for two. Ricky inhaled the fragrance, tasted the citrusy strangeness, and smiled.

Paul nodded. 'London man! Ricky, you're gonna love it.'

**by J. L. McCavana**

## **Poetry by Ruairí de Barra**

### **Biography:**

*The author Ruairí de Barra hails from the wilds of Tawneyshane, Co. Mayo and now resides in Cobh, Co. Cork.*

*A dedicated sailor with over two decades of service with an tSeirbhís Chabhlaigh & Óglaigh na hÉireann including service overseas on international humanitarian operations in the Mediterranean.*

*He writes professionally as an accredited Irish Defence Forces military journalist and is a regular contributor to 'An Cosantóir', the Irish Defence Forces magazine. His May 2017 article "Rebuilding Somalia – The Sea is their future" was nominated for the European Military Press Association 'Best Article Awards 2017'.*

*His work has also been published in the 'Emergency Services Ireland' and 'Contact' the Australian Defence Forces magazine.*

*He writes creatively under the nom de plume Karol Barry on his WordPress (www.karolbarry.com)*

*His creative work has featured with Tinteán, the online magazine of the Australian Irish Heritage Network and in 'A New Ulster Magazine'.*

*He is a former nominee for 'Mayo Person of the Year 2016' for his work in the Mediterranean and he is the current Cathaoirleach, Muintir Mhaigh Eo Corcaigh.*



## **Empty**

If only the innocent could be kept afloat by faith,  
until the rescuers come walking on the waves,  
to carry the children to the cradle of their mother,  
not let them tumble in the surf,  
greeting the morning with their backs,  
silent and stiff the red shirt on the tiny frame.

A plague on the most twisted ideologies,  
that poverty is the wrath of God upon the unworthy,  
destiny a blissful eternity for wanton slaughter,  
that charity is still valid when you have to bow,  
tithe this mansion prophet for your redemption,  
change your name to accept a bowl of soup.

Washing the feet of a four year old,  
with water warmed by the omnipotent sun overhead,  
her flawless ebony skin burnt white,  
stripped by the chemical burn from the bilge,  
her mother thanking you relentlessly,  
in three languages invoking empty prayers.

I have seen no God in the ocean,  
no belief in a deity almighty,  
which allows such cruelty to exist,  
capricious torturer demanding worship,  
while the poor try to live off dogma,  
when bread or lifejackets would be better.

**by Ruairí de Barra**

## **Poetry by Ellie Rose McKee**

### **Biography:**

*Ellie has been writing poetry and short stories since primary school and been blogging for ten-plus years. She has had a number of individual works published alongside others in anthologies and journals, has self-published some collections of poetry and short stories herself, and is currently seeking representation for her debut novel.*



## **Grown**

You become an adult  
not the day you first have sex,  
start smoking, drinking,  
or doing other debauchers things

But the day you no longer need to hide  
the cigarettes in your drawer  
or the vodka under your bed

When, suddenly, the world is not  
shocked by you, or your actions  
and you start to wonder  
if that was your motivation all along

**by Ellie Rose McKee**

## **Flash Fiction by Alva Holland**

### **Biography:**

*Alva is an Irish writer from Dublin. First published by Ireland's Own Winning Writers Annual 2015. Three times a winner of Ad Hoc Fiction's flash competition, her stories feature in The People's Friend, Ellipsis Zine, Train Lit Mag, Brilliant Flash Fiction, The Cabinet of Heed and Jellyfish Review.*

*Twitter: @Alva1206*



## **It's a Start**

I don't remember the wobbly steps but there are pictures to prove it.  
The words on the page finally made sense.  
I thought his hands would always hold the back of the bicycle, until that day.  
I was too young to realise that fathers died.  
Your lips were the strangest thing ever to touch mine.  
I didn't have a nightdress with me, so I thought we couldn't do it.  
I was sure the plane wouldn't stay up there for the duration of the flight.  
Eleven years after we started trying, you came.  
They were all looking at me as I spoke.  
The certificate had my name on it.  
An unexpected kiss.  
A dolphin's nose on the sole of my foot.  
I thought that mountain descent would be my final act.  
You're going to die. I can do nothing about it.  
Not sure if I am ready for the last first.

**by Alva Holland**



## **Poetry by Kenneth Pobo**

### **Biography:**

*Kenneth Pobo had a book out from Circling Rivers in 2017 called **Loplop in a Red City**.  
Forthcoming from Grey Borders Press is his chapbook called **Dust And Chrysanthemums**.*



### **First Thing in the Morning Wandawoowoo**

The clock busy in its sandbox  
of numbers. For now,  
I stroll in the garden--  
stems have had quite a night  
stuffing buds.

If I'm tardy, I miss the morning  
glories, gone by noon.  
The flag pole,  
seventy shimmery lakes.

Let me introduce you  
to a Lucky Ducky dahlia,  
fierce yellow. Pebbles  
will blab anything to her--  
I'm learning how to listen.

**by Kenneth Pobo**

## **Poetry by Tim Dwyer**

### **Biography:**

*Tim Dwyer's chapbook is Smithy Of Our Longings: Poems From The Irish Diaspora (Belfast: Lapwing Publications, 2015). His poems have appeared in Cyphers, the stinging fly, Southword, Honest Ulsterman, among other journals. Born in Brooklyn, parents from Galway, currently in Connecticut, he will be living in Bangor in 2019.*



## **The First Death**

Easter Monday, 1916

Do we know his name?  
A quiet day at the Castle-  
Easter Week and the Races,  
lovely weather at noon.  
Shock and fear  
when the armed rebels  
reached the Cork Hill gate.

He raised his hand  
as if a palm  
could stop a bullet.  
Was he raising a family?  
His wish may have been  
for a republic as well.

Constable James O'Brien,  
Kilfergus, County Limerick.

**by Tim Dwyer**

## Photography by Seth Crook



### **The arches striding o'er the new-born stream**

Taken at Loch Tay, Kenmore Bridge. The title quote refers to the bridge and is taken from a poem by Robert Burns that is written...by his own hand into the plaster, above the fireplace, in an inn that is a few feet away in the direction in which the car is heading.

### **Biography:**

*Seth Crook lives on Mull and can see Ireland from where he lives (on a clear day). His poems have appeared in such places as The SHOP, The Moth, Causeway (the Journal of Irish/Scottish Writing). Most recently in the Rialto, Magma, Envoi. His photos have most recently appeared in Riggwelter.*

## Painting by Marie-Therese Davis



### **A Wintery Day at Brompton**

**A Wintery Day at Brompton** is the result of Davis's current hobby of sea-swimming. An exploration of a winter's morning in acrylics, it's the first time Davis has recorded 'Brompton' aka Smelt Mill Bay on the coastal path. Acrylics on canvas.

### **Biography:**

*Bangor based visual artist, musician & poet Marie-Thérèse Davis, has been contributing to the arts in N.Ireland since the 1980s. A member of Boom Studios Bangor, (and former member of Queen Street Studios, Belfast) Davis has exhibited regularly throughout the UK, Ireland, Europe and the USA. Davis has been the recipient of the Sir James Kilfedder Award (N. Down B.C), the Sir Tyrone Guthrie residency (Lisburn Council), the Arts Council of N.I. Travel Award, the Individual Artist Award (AAND) and has participated in several residencies including the Centre for Art & Nature in the Catalan Pyrenees. Davis's most recent musical collaboration with photographic artist Lise McGreevy, poet Jim Johnston, film maker Paul Whittaker, led to 'A Celtic Voyage: Farewell to Mary Davis' an instrumental suite composed for the Abandoned Not Forgotten Project Phase 2.*

# **SPECIAL FEATURE**

## **THE FORTY WORDS COMPETITION**

We as human beings, are full of words; stories; messages; tales; facts; things that are definitely not facts; and things that we want, no, that we *must* express. Sometimes it appears that we are made more of words than any other matter. Thinking of it in this way, asking a world of wordsmiths to send through their best poetry and fiction in forty words or less, suddenly appears an impossible feat.

Forty words leave no room for introduction; for connectives; for elaboration and definitely leave no room for self- indulgence. Actually, forty words don't leave much room at all.

What you will read here are smart, manipulative writers who used the challenge to prove that regardless of the words allotted to them, that they *would* get their message across, clearly, succinctly and without fuss. Many of these pieces brought with them the shock factor, a humorous bite or an unexpected conclusion.

You will find yourself reading these bite sized narratives again and again.

.



## **FORTY WORDS Fiction Winner**

### **Sherry Morris**

#### **Reckoning Day**

She tiptoes 'round his temper, mindful of the blows.

It's fragile glass; her fault his fists crash, taking them over the edge.

She sobs, sniffs. Deserves better than this.

When he asks, 'Why's Tuesday circled?' she smiles.

'Red Letter Day.'

#### **Biography:**

*Originally from Missouri, the US heartland, Sherry writes monologues, short stories and flash fiction which have won prizes, placed on shortlists and been performed in London and Scotland. After nearly twenty years in London, Sherry moved to a farm in the Scottish Highlands where she goes for walks, watches clouds and dreams up stories. Her published stories can be found on [www.uksherka.com](http://www.uksherka.com) or follow her @Uksherka.*



#### **Editors' note:**

**Reckoning Day** had a very clever and impactful conclusion. Within such short space, Sherry manages to align the reader with the victim, making them part of her conspiracy and revenge.



## **FORTY WORDS Fiction Runner-up**

### **Ed Broom**

#### **Every Penny Warms the Sea**

Stupid man got the idea from some newsreel, said Nana.

Midday, he'd gee up the crowd on the pier – "Don't forget the diver!" – then pedal his pushbike off the end. Those coins bought this ring.

That was your Grandad, Pearl.

#### **Biography:**

*Ed Broom works in IT but tells his children he's a lighthouse keeper. He lives in Ipswich and tracks down crinkle-crankle walls.*



#### **Editors' note:**

**Every Penny Warms the Sea** is a love story in miniature, tainted with nostalgia, making the reader long to know more about the antics of the Grandad.

## **FORTY WORDS Fiction Highly Commended**

### **John Holland**

#### **Iodine**

"Can Iodine treat anything, Grandma?" I asked as she dabbed the graze on my knee.

"No," she said. "Not cancer, for instance. Otherwise Grandad would still be with us."

She paused. "So thank goodness for that."

And we both laughed.

#### **Biography:**

*John Holland is a short fiction author from Stroud in Gloucestershire, and the organiser of the twice yearly event Stroud Short Stories. His website is [www.johnhollandwrites.com](http://www.johnhollandwrites.com)*

## **FORTY WORDS Fiction Highly Commended**

### **Lynda Kirby**

#### **Wishing**

Then, Mama forgot how to walk. I pushed my arms under her shoulders and lifted until her feet stood on mine. She held me, and with my hands clasped around her back, we danced. She never forgot how to love.

#### **Biography:**

*Lynda has short stories and poetry published in various and online literary magazines in 2016/2017 and aired on radio. A story is included in the anthology Tales Irish published this year. Stories were nominated for Best Short Stories 2017 and longlisted in Strands International Short Story competition. She writes murder mystery novels set in Thailand where she lived for six years before settling in Co. Meath, Ireland. She has written three novels and has a novella called Autumn Burning on Amazon. She is writing her fourth mystery novel, set in Thailand, with a paranormal element, as well as continuing to write flash fiction and poetry.*

## **FORTY WORDS Fiction Commended**

### **Eilise Norris**

#### **Three days, no sightings**

Become a hunted animal, frozen by the clipping doors, lungs packed down like vacuum bags until they're all gone. You're alone.

Shared houses are affordably close. Clamouring kitchens. Looming hellos.

Breathe, forage (quickly) and escape back to your room.

#### **Biography:**

*Eilise Norris writes poetry, flash fiction and short stories from above a pub in Oxfordshire, UK. Since 2017, she has work in The Cabinet of Heed, Blink-Ink, Ellipsis Zine 'One' and Paragraph Planet, with forthcoming pieces in Clementine Unbound and Reflex Fiction.*

## **FORTY WORDS Fiction Commended**

### **Martin Parker**

#### **Fabulous**

HARE TO RACE TORTOISE, announced the Athens Racetrack's poster.

"No point covering that," thought the Sports Reporter of the Parthenon Times.

**"TORTOISE SENSATION!"** blared all but one of the following day's papers.

"You're fired, Aesop," said his Editor.

#### **Biography:**

*Martin Parker is a widely published light verse enthusiast who, in 2008, founded the quarterly webzine Lighten Up Online. His new book, I THINK I THOUGHT, is a gentle workout of 102 poems for cheerfully ageing laughter lines. A welcome gift in place of the habitual socks, diaries and potplants it is available via all good bookshops and Amazon. More details as well as extracts from it can be seen at [www.martinparker-verse.co.uk](http://www.martinparker-verse.co.uk)*

## **FORTY WORDS Fiction Commended**

### **David Atkinson**

#### **My Father Cut My Hair Until I Was Fifteen**

I asked him to cut my hair like Brian May. I showed him a picture to avoid any confusion. He wasn't sure. He said he could cut it like the other fella. It took me years to grow the moustache.

#### **Biography:**

*David Atkinson, Belfast born poet whose work has been published in magazines and journals nationally and internationally.*

*He has published two collections of poetry, Thomas (2005) and Black Eyed Peace (2014), which includes the Pushcart nominated poem "Hunting for the Aurora". He was long-listed for the Seamus Heaney Award for New Writing 2017*

## **FORTY WORDS Fiction Commended**

### **J.L. McCavana**

#### **Target Practice**

The ball bounced back to the boy. He controlled it and kicked it straight into the face of the gunman. Again the ball returned to the boy, and again the face of the man on the wall received the blow.

#### **Biography:**

*J.L. McCavana lives in County Antrim. He is studying Creative Writing and English Literature as a mature student. He is in no hurry.*

## **FORTY WORDS Fiction Commended**

### **Ingrid Jendrzewski**

#### **Hyperbolic Geometry**

She is a hexagon; equilateral, convex. He is a triangle; isosceles, sharp. She admires his simplicity, but not his edges. After marriage, she finds herself intersected, inscribed. She tries to maintain symmetry, but eventually deconstructs into a straight, breathless line.

#### **Biography:**

*Ingrid Jendrzewski likes writing, reading, cryptic crosswords and the game of go. She is the editor in chief of FlashBack Fiction and a flash fiction editor at JMWW. You can find her online at [www.ingridj.com](http://www.ingridj.com) and she tweets @LunchOnTuesday.*

## **FORTY WORDS Fiction Commended**

### **Marilyn Timms**

#### **First Frost**

Her window is bewitched. Tiny fingers trace wintry tapestry -dahlias, ferns, snowflakes - innocent heat unpicking all she would save. The ice-rink linoleum, mysterious in the mermaid light of day, beckons. Cradled by beauty, immune to cold, she dances.

#### **Biography:**

*Marilyn Timms is a writer and artist living in Gloucestershire. She has performed her short stories and poems at the Cheltenham Literature Festival and Cheltenham Poetry Festival. Her poetry ranges through time and place and has been described by Alison Brackenbury as 'a collection of brave and unexpected adventures, with intoxicating, sometimes threatening colours ... poems of war are particularly sharp and well-informed. Her writing explodes with energy.' Her collection, Poppy Juice, will be launched at the 2018 Cheltenham Poetry Festival.*

## **FORTY WORDS Poetry Winner**

### **David Brazil**

#### **Snails**

For a while as a boy I collected snails  
the rocks round my primary school  
teemed with them, fat, crusted stones,  
plucked and carried home.

To stare at each other in silence  
Before pulling back into our shells.

#### **Biography:**

*Originally from Stafford in England David has lived and worked in Northern Ireland for twenty five years. He has been the winner of the Belfast Book Festival poetry slam, the Red Pill slam, the Bangor literature festival slam and the Belfast Heat of the All-Ireland slam giving him a place in the All-Ireland finals. David's work has been published in a number of local journals and anthologies and in 2015 he was long-listed for the Seamus Heaney award for New Writing. David's chapbook, 'I Am Not A Poet (and other poems)' was released in ay 2015 by Pen Points Press.*



**Editors' note:** **Snails** encapsulates the writer's childhood memories and contains them within the very shells he writes about. The ambiguity of the last lines brings you back to read this poem again and again.

## **FORTY WORDS Poetry Runner-up**

**Nick Allen**

salt

you offer a fire  
warmed potato

its heart roasted  
and softened through

paper brown skin  
brittle where singed

and pour a tiny pyramid  
of salt into my palm

### **Biography:**

*Nick's poetry has appeared in various magazines and anthologies - most recently, the Poetry Salzburg Review, Verse Matters, 100 Poets for Change and Un/Forced: a collection of writing from Rhubarb. His first pamphlet, the necessary line, was published by Half Moon Books of Otley, in October. Nick helps to organise the open mic evening, Rhubarb at the Triangle in Shipley, the last Wednesday of each month. He was a sub-editor with the on-line poetry magazine Algebra of Owls.*



**Editors' note:** On the surface **salt** appeared to be about a simple experience, but upon return you discover how very clever this little poem really is.

## **FORTY WORDS Poetry Highly Commended**

### **Peter Adair**

#### **Open Chapel**

Our sea-airy chapel  
sleeps with the saints.  
The sky dips its fingers  
in holy wounds.  
Hidden in a pine  
that snores through hymns  
a robin preaches  
*All flesh is grass*  
to rows of benches  
sinking in the sand.

#### **Biography:**

*Peter Adair won the 2015 Translink Poetry Competition and the 2016 Funeral Services of Northern Ireland Poetry Competition. His poems after appeared in The Honest Ulsterman, The Galway Review, Lagan Online and other journals. He is a 12NOW (New Original Writer) with Lagan Press. He lives in Bangor, Co Down.*

## **FORTY WORDS Highly Commended**

### **Richard Hough**

#### **Ambiguity**

*sorry I love you*  
scribbled on a bouquet's card;  
she glares at the words  
wondering if he regrets  
his mistakes or his passions

#### **Biography:**

*Richard has been writing for many years though he only recently turned to poetry. He lives and works in Hampshire and with all the spare time he doesn't have, he is attempting to write a novel.*



## **FORTY WORDS Poetry Commended**

### **Diane Jackman**

#### **A comparison of cows**

Aberdeen Angus

neat, compact, black-suited,  
serious faces, beady eyes,  
Presbyterians, aware of their fate.

English Longhorn

old gals out on the lash,  
variegated, scruffy, horns  
going any whichway,  
but eyes soft, doe-like,  
up for a good time  
before they die.

**Biography:** *Diane's poetry has appeared in The Rialto, Outposts, Snakeskin, Story (Happenstance Press). Winner of Liverpool Poetry Festival, Deddington Festival and Norfolk Prize in Café Writers' competition Other works include the libretto for "Pinocchio" for the Kings' Singers/LSO, seven children's books, translated into several languages, children's stories and choral lyrics. She has just completed Lessons from the Orchard, poems exploring her childhood on a farm in the English Midlands, and is now working on water poems.*

## **FORTY WORDS Poetry Commended**

### **Angela Graham**

#### **View- Finder**

In the spaces between what you say  
You are eloquent  
And I hear you tell me  
That in your ocean  
You have perceived a rock,  
Distant, ill-outlined  
But yours  
And you will not turn back.

**Biography:** *Angela Graham is a tv and cinema producer (2 BAFTA Wales wins and 6 nominations; producer/co-writer of Foreign-Language Oscar-entrant feature 'Branwen'), a writer from Belfast currently working on a novel with the help of a grant from Arts Council of N Ireland.*

## **FORTY WORDS Poetry Commended**

### **Anne Casey**

#### **final offensive**

the nuclear weapon  
of the sexual predator  
*no-one will believe you*

**Biography:** *Originally from the west of Ireland, Anne Casey is a writer living in Sydney. Her poetry has been published internationally in newspapers, magazines, journals and books. Salmon Poetry published her poetry collection, where the lost things go in 2017. Anne won the Glen Phillips Novice Writer Award 2017; has been short-listed for prizes including Cúirt International Poetry Prize, Eyewear Books Poetry Prize, Bedford International Writing Competition and Bangor Annual Poetry Competition. She is co-editor of Other Terrain and Backstory literary journals (Swinburne University, Melbourne).*

## **FORTY WORDS Poetry Commended**

### **Aine McAllister**

#### **How to Take the Next Step**

*(El Camino del Norte)*

Walk into grey sea,  
peel reluctant bathing suit

off apologetic body.  
Vital with fear. Disarmed

by slip, by stroke of ocean;  
rounded shoulders rise.

Spread arms out;  
wings in water.

Chest to sky, face to heavens,  
laugh like wounded thing.

**Biography:** *Aine McAllister is a poet from Ireland, based in London. Her work is previously published in The Muse, The Cuirt Annual, West 47, Contemporary Poetry: An Anthology of Present Day Best Poems, Vol 4, on Amaryllis, and in Crossing Lines on [www.poetryonthelake.org](http://www.poetryonthelake.org). She was awarded the Raftery Prize for Poetry and her work has been commissioned, set to music and performed by various choirs.*

## **FORTY WORDS Poetry Commended**

### **Kevin Reid**

#### **Four Walls and an Absence of Livestock**

One hinged rusted gate  
offers a stiff welcome

Gives way to nettles  
thistles diseased elm

stones half buried  
over hidden bones

I haven't walked through death to get here  
I'm not sorry for living

**Biography:** *Kevin Reid lives between Scotland and other lands. His poetry has appeared in various journals such as, Ink Sweat and Tears, The Interpreter's House, Under The Radar, Seagate III, Scotia Extremis. A mini pamphlet Burdlife ([Tapsalteerie](#)) was published in 2017.*

## **FORTY WORDS Poetry Commended**

### **Patricia Bennett**

#### **Rewrite**

If only I could redraft  
some pages of my life  
to give them a second run.

I'd remove those wrong words

and highlight the names I'd loved.

**Biography:** *Trish began writing to clear her head of shenanigans. She currently writes poetry, short stories and memoir. Her creatures have found homes in A New Ulster, Galway Review, CAP Poetry in Motion, Ireland's Own, The Leitrim Guardian, Number Eleven, Fermanagh Writers Anthologies, Beautiful Dragons Collaborations. She has read her work on BBC Radio Ulster; working on her first anthology of poetry. She won the Leitrim Guardian 2018 & 2017 Literary Awards for poetry, shortlisted for the North West Words/Donegal Creameries 2017 Poetry Award; long listed for the "Over the Edge 'New Writer of the Year Award'" in 2013. She is a member of WANI. Find out more on 'Bennett's Babblings.'*

# **Submissions**

## **For Issue 2**

The deadline for submissions is midnight on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018.

Launching on: 30<sup>th</sup> April 2018

There is no theme for issue two. Just send us your best work.

Submit by email to [thebangorliteraryjournal@hotmail.com](mailto:thebangorliteraryjournal@hotmail.com)

You may submit up to two pieces in total (for example- one poem and one image)

All details can be found on our website:

<https://thebangorliteraryjournal.com/submissions/>

# **The Bangor Poetry Competition**

**Deadline for submissions: 5th May 2018. Theme- LOVE**

The Bangor Poetry Competition is different than most other poetry competitions. If you are shortlisted then you will be asked to hand-write your poem, sign it, illustrate it or embellish it and frame it. Your original piece will then be displayed as part of The Aspects Literary Festival (August- dates to be confirmed) at The Blackberry Path Art Studios, Bangor, Northern Ireland and the poems shall be voted on by the public over a period of three weeks.

All details are available on our website:

<https://thebangorliteraryjournal.com/the-bangor-poetry-competition/>

# Young Verses Poetry Competition

A free poetry competition for young people and students who currently live in Northern Ireland.

There are three categories:

Group 1- Age 6-10 years

Group 2- Age 11- 15 years

Group 3- Students aged 16-21 years

Each young person can enter one previously unpublished poem for free- no longer than 20 lines long. (not including the title) Poems can be in any style and on any theme.

Poems must be typed onto a Word Document and attached to the email. No name should be included on the Word document. In the body of the email, please state the poet's name/ age/ contact phone number/ email address.

Please send your submission to [thebangorliteraryjournal@hotmail.com](mailto:thebangorliteraryjournal@hotmail.com) and state in the heading of the email- YOUNG VERSES- (and the category 1, 2 or 3). The deadline for submissions is: midnight 15th April 2018.

First Prize in each category:

A framed certificate/ an opportunity to read your work/ publication in The Bangor Literary Journal/ a writing book and pen