

# CLYDESIDER

OUR COMMUNITY'S POSITIVE PRESS

ISSUE 16 SUMMER 2021

FREE



GROWING WELL



# Newspring Fires by Oli Higham

Glowing edges, puffing wisps of smoky plumage  
and flickering tongues screaming and whispering their fiery songs.  
News that burns with squeals of sinister joy.  
Look.  
Come see.  
The world is burning.  
It will all be consumed.  
The flora and fauna.  
The people and places.  
The animals and antiquities.  
The monuments and moments.  
All devoured by the infernos,  
fueled by petrol pooled in clickbait and tabloid headlines.  
Warmed and cajoled to flashpoint,  
to sparks and backdrafts.  
The CMYK kindling of editors and factcheckers,  
willfully turning a blind eye to truth and civil decency.  
Accidentally dropping ash from fat cigars  
and letting it rest, throbbing embers on crisp newsprint.  
A dry husk, sprung with potential, ready to burst and crackle in flame.  
Look.  
Come see.  
The world is burning to the ground.  
But I like to look out of windows  
and witness wildness in windswept panoramas,  
broader than sheets of columned stories.  
I draw back curtains and  
smile at unexpected beauty.  
In the gorgeousness of weather battered faces.  
Those who have faced storms with dancing feet  
and whistled joyful songs through gales and hail showers.  
Who have refused to let gloom cloak them,  
shirking the weight of fear and dread on their shoulders  
and strip, bare chested, beating their hearts and laughing infectiously.  
Acts of resistance in playful nods and warm hellos to strangers.  
Those who have used newspapers as campfire ignitions  
rather than maps to guide their thoughts and steps.  
Gathered around twigs and branches and ashen paper flecks  
and gaze into each other's glowing eyes, pregnant with words of life.  
Recite poetry like conversations between old friends  
and tell stories of the world out there  
and all the hope that reverberates below the soil  
when we dig among the dirt  
and our fingertips touch the earth.  
Where we leave safety and other people's write-ups,  
their editorials and reviews and long form essays  
and devour the wonders of the world ourselves.  
Look.  
Come see.

Issue 16 Poetry Comp Winner

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# WELCOME TO CLYDESIDER

As this issue heads to the printer we have been invited to share Clydesider's journey with members of West Dunbartonshire's Resilience Hub.

This got me thinking about the resilience that exists in the grassroots of our community, and is reflected in many of the stories we have the pleasure of sharing.

At one of our recent Clydesider Community Catch Up sessions, we were talking about mental health and Emily Fraser, a volunteer contributor, suggested if we see people struggling we should reach in to help, rather than wait for them to reach out.

I feel this is what so many in our community have been doing throughout the pandemic.

Individuals and organisations across West Dunbartonshire dug deep, extending a hand to help friends, neighbours and total strangers survive.



Photo by Paul Murdoch



Photo by Mark Woodliff

And something else I have noticed about resilience - it seems to be contagious!

The more we hear about it, see it in action or find it within ourselves, the more it seems to inspire.

So I'm delighted this issue is jam-packed with stories of resilience.

There are people such as Cath Meikle, Robert King and Scott Walker who found personal resilience in their artistic creativity and others like Ann Pryce and Sarah Ann Dillon who discovered it in the simplest of life's pleasures.

Then there are folk like Cath Howard, Janice Ross, Paul McGuinness and Emily Fraser who are building resilience not only in themselves but also in their communities and their peers.

And that community resilience is also reflected in the work of the many local charities and groups featured in our Sponsored Editorial sections throughout the magazine. Enjoy!

**Amanda Eleftheriades-Sherry, Editor**



# Martin Docherty-Hughes

Your MP for West Dunbartonshire (SNP)

## CONSTITUENT ADVICE SURGERIES



### Here to help you

Throughout the Coronavirus outbreak my constituency team and I have been working hard to provide advice and support to people across Clydebank, Dumbarton and the Vale of Leven.

In order to be as accessible as possible I'm holding weekly virtual advice surgeries for my constituents. Every Thursday I'm available via phone or video call - please get in touch if you'd like to arrange an appointment.

Thanks,

Martin Docherty-Hughes MP

### Contact information

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**Facebook:** @martindochertySNP  
**Twitter:** @MartinJDocherty



Surgery dates may be subject to change depending on public holidays or parliamentary commitments.  
Due to high demand appointment slots of 15 mins are allocated on a first come first served basis.

# COMMUNITY GROWTH

Words by Amanda Eleftheriades  
Photos by Charlie Sherry



Dried teabags, crushed eggshells and three tonnes of horse manure are not often seen as essential ingredients for cultivating community involvement.

But for Cath Howard and her fellow volunteers at Bonhill Community Garden they are proving invaluable in growing both organic veg and community interest.

Inspired by the 2016 West Dunbartonshire Growfest, Cath and her daughter, Sarah-Jayne McGlashan, identified the disused red blaes playpark as a perfect spot for some raised beds and by 2018 had secured £10,000 initial funding from West Dunbartonshire Council's Your Community fund.

Since then, the group has built 20 raised beds filled them with organic veg and fruit trees, planted over 400 woodland saplings, signed a 15 year land asset transfer lease from West Dunbartonshire Council and just secured £86,000 funding from the EB Scotland Landfill Trust. Along the way learning about growing methods which are healthy for both people and planet.

Cath explained: "We've looked at permaculture, no-dig growing, organic growth and composting. We want to keep it as

close to the natural habitat as possible.

"At the moment there is no toilet, shelter or running water up there, the land is contaminated and we're not connected to the grid.

"Everything is like a barrier we've learned to overcome. It's made us value the area so much more.

"At the beginning we thought, what do we do to get water and electricity; now we love being off-grid and we're thinking let's get this sorted so we don't leave any carbon footprint."

Volunteer, Rita Howard, recalled how in their first year they had to carry every drop of water on to the site by hand.

"We would fill my car with bottles of water and bring them up here to water the plants."

Now they have large water storage containers on site with the local fire service topping them up when needed.

Pre-Covid, 20 volunteers tended the raised beds and grew basic ingredients for a pot of soup plus summer favourites like peas, lettuce, strawberries and tomatoes - all organic and all free for anyone in the community.

Last year the group also planted a variety of winter crops and started their spring growing season early, thanks to buckets of donated horse manure used to heat their cold frames.

“ *We will make it like a wee oasis and keep the balance of growing the vegetables and making it a social space.* ”

One of their planned purchases is a polytunnel to extend the growing season and provide a training space as community learning is something the group is passionate about encouraging.



Cath added: "When my kids were growing up it was a great buzzing community but now it's very fractured and there's not much happening. This was all about trying to bring people together and get that feeling of community back.

"Our wee slogan was 'growing community and crops together', that's how we started."

The Landfill Trust grant will assist their aim on both practical and aesthetic levels, funding an on-site amenities hall big enough for meetings, and covering the cost of a compost toilet, storage areas, more raised beds, fruit trees, shrubs, ornamental plants and foot-friendly pathways designed for people with walking difficulties.

The first accessibility paths were completed last month and for Rita it means she can fully enjoy the growing space again.

She said: "I hadn't been able to get into the garden, but now the paths are in I can get round in my wheelchair, no problem and the disabled beds are wonderful.

"When everyone is working in here, there's a quietness about the place.

"You're up here with that view of the Ben and Loch Lomond behind and it just helps your mind relax."



Fellow volunteers John Meehan and Mark McGlashan agreed.

John said: "I have mental health and it helps me relax being in here."

And Mark added: "You just come in here and unwind - it's therapeutic.

"I've never done much gardening before. My grandad was doing his garden into his 90s, he would have loved this. I learned from my Pops and from my mum and now come and learn stuff from John and the others.

"This is like a blank canvas, we haven't used half of it so far, I've so many ideas."

For Cath this is what the garden is all about - creating a place for anyone in the community. She added: "Our main focus has been on growing vegetables and feeding people but now we want to make it a bit more attractive while maintaining the growing standards.





"This money will allow us to make it like a wee oasis and keep the balance of growing the vegetables and making it a social space.

"It's not everybody who loves gardening, but it's not the whole point.

"We want to entice people in so they can share their stories and skills, learning from each other."

The group has exciting plans for community cooking sessions, creative workshops and green learning with local schools and nurseries, but for now a community BBQ is also high on their 'To Do' list.

After a tough year, with a handful of volunteers taking solo shifts to keep the garden

ticking over, they can't wait to grow their space together again.

Cath added: "The interest increased last year because a lot more people were out walking their dogs and we forged a lot of new friendships. People are returning to see how the garden is doing and when we're opening.

"Everyone is just wanting that BBQ, having that burger - there needs to be room for everything, we're not going to save the planet on our own."

[Check the Bonhill Community Garden Facebook page for details on how to volunteer and get involved.](#)



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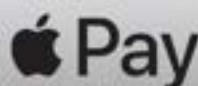
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Often underplayed is the role of Trustees who work in the background of any charity, ensuring the organisation's staff are supported to achieve its vision and mission.

Occasionally we hear from high profile celebrities who may have ambassadorial roles in charities. Unlike Trustees they tend not to get involved in the day-to-day running of their chosen charities, instead using their fame to promote causes close to their hearts.

Stepping Stones is in an unusual position in Scotland. We are one of the few user-led organisations in our country that continue to provide services to a high degree. We are proud of the fact we have been user-led for the 30 years we have been supporting local people.

However, having lived experience of mental health problems is not a prerequisite for our Trustees.

So, why do Trustees get involved in Stepping Stones?

Bankie, Craig Edward has been a Trustee for almost two years. He got involved after losing his mother in 2018. As he was his mum's carer, it was understandable he felt pressure on his mental health.

Craig explained: "Supporting a mental health charity was my way of giving back."

Originally from East Lothian but now retired and living in Old Kilpatrick, Alison Punton spent her working life in social work and community based organisations.

She originally got involved in Stepping Stones - partly through personal contacts and partly because of the good reputation of the charity.

Alison feels that "it is as important to look after your mental health as much as your physical health." She also strongly advocates that people who use services should be involved in the running of the organisations that support them.

It's not all work and nose to the grind. Sure, there are regular meetings and decisions to be made, but Craig said he loves "reading the reports and seeing the real difference our incredible staff and volunteers make to people's lives."

Alison enjoys continuing to develop her knowledge and skills and peer support of the Trustees group. Both feel being a Trustee is very rewarding and a real opportunity to contribute ideas to help improve our services.

At Stepping Stones we recognise everyone has skills that can be utilised in some way to support other people.



If you are interested in finding out more about becoming one of our unsung heroes, we would love to hear from you. Just call us on 0141 9412929, or send an email to [john.white@stepstones.org.uk](mailto:john.white@stepstones.org.uk).



# ART OVER ADVERSITY

by Angela Clark



A free art class has provided a new lease of life for a retired nurse struggling with sight loss and an incurable brain disorder.

Cath Meikle was diagnosed with Huntington's disease in 2017, months later she became blind in her left eye and lost part of her sight in her right eye.

The hereditary illness left her with multiple health issues and everyday things, such as driving, became a challenge.

And it was not a time in her life when she expected to discover a new creative talent.

It began whilst visiting her son and grandchildren in Brazil. She received a message from Van Gash art studio in Alexandria saying they were offering free art classes, so she signed up and arranged to attend when she got home.

She said: "I come from a family of creatives. My big brother, he was an artist. My big sister draws and writes, as does my wee sister. I always thought I was more practical because I was a nurse and that was where my talents lie."

Cath attended the free art class and

with the help and support of tutor Sarah Jayne, her confidence grew, which then encouraged her to enrol in online art classes.

She now has her own Facebook page, recently launched a new website and is producing amazing work.

She believes the restrictions to her sight are helping her creativity. "The fact that I can't see as well as I used to means my definition between light and dark is much easier than it was, I'm sure that is giving me the ability to draw when I could never draw before.

*“ I have things to do. I'm just feeling so good at the moment and it's lovely. ”*

"It takes me awhile but I just love doing the animals, they just seem to come to me. One of the things is when I'm painting sometimes I can only paint for two minutes at a time because the movement comes on really bad. I have to stop and rest as I can't keep still."



To help with the symptoms of Huntington's disease, which include involuntary movements, Cath explored various natural treatments such as reiki, eating a good diet and regular exercise and she is feeling the benefits.

She said: "I've not had lots of movements for months, so I'll carry on with holistic treatments until I don't get any benefit from them.

"The hospital wants to give me medicine that will kill my brain and I don't feel I'm ready to kill it just yet. It's still expanding and I have things to do. I'm just feeling so good at the moment and it's lovely."

Cath is determined to live life to the full and has set herself a monthly bucket list of doing something new each month.

So far with the help and support of her family she has been to Brazil to visit her son and grandchildren, travelled to Iceland with her daughter, visited a volcano, climbed Mount Etna and next on her list is a trip to Staffa to see one of the largest whirlpools in the world.

She remains positive about the future even pushing to the back of her mind her children may also have Huntington's.

She said: "I look at every day as a fresh day and for the joy in every day because it is there, and I give thanks."

**To view Cath's work visit her Facebook page Cath-Art-Ic or visit her website <https://catherinemeikle.wixsite.com/my-site>**



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# MORAL CODES AND MARTIAL ARTS

by Angela Clark

Beating people up, throwing your opponent to the floor, holding them in an air choke; a sport only suitable for boys - these are a few common misconceptions about Judo.

It is instead a martial art with a set of moral codes to help transform a person into a better version of themselves.

Paul McGuinness has been teaching Judo for over 20 years. He explained: "Judo is quite an unique sport where you are fighting but you're learning a lot about yourself which can spread into the rest of your life, how you conduct yourself.

"Moral code was invented by a wee guy called Jigoro Kano and came from ancient Jui Jitsu, which is battlefield fighting in Japan. What he did was take all the dangerous stuff out of it and make it more educational.

"Judo is all about what you can give back to society, it's not just about what you get from it."

And that's exactly what Paul wants to achieve in his Titan Judo Dojo 54 at the bottom of Kilbowie Road in Clydebank.

After a decade of teaching in the former Playdrome, then Clydebank Leisure Centre he found it difficult to create a community hub with constant cancellations for other events taking place over his classes.

Now with his own premises he hopes to encourage other local clubs to use the facilities during the day when he isn't teaching and create a safe space in the evening where the kids can come to do their homework before Judo or just have a place to take time out to help their mental well-being.

He said: "Now we have this place, we're masters of our own timetable and can try to build a bit of community within the club, that's the main goal.

"I am also trying to help children and adults improve their physical health and wellbeing.

"A lot of kids come into Judo these days with very poor movement and coordination skills.

"Play nowadays is more structured or it's all phones and X-boxes. Kids don't have that rough and tumble any more. Everything is quite isolated and sterile.





"I think as long as kids are involved in sport or are active, that's what I'm really looking for to help keep them fit and healthy."

Paul first hit the tatami (mat) when he was eight years old after his mum took him to Judo classes in Clydebank Hub CE Centre.

Describing himself as overweight and suffering from asthma at the time, he tried various activities to improve his health.

However Judo was the one he enjoyed most and his coach Duncan Hewitson, whom he passionately described as "a great educator," is the reason he went on to coach.

Paul said: "I started helping my coach when I was a teenager. When I reflect back I probably got involved because of the way Duncan coached.

"A lot of the guys who came from our club are still involved in Judo and still coach. Duncan now comes along to Dojo to help, he also brings his grandkids to the classes."

Cindy Little started taking her two boys to Paul's classes after her eldest had no confidence and was having problems at school. Attending the classes helped develop both boys' physical and mental well-being.

She said: "The coaches are really patient and kind with the children, but they also give them good rules and build their confidence loads.

"It worked really well and helped my eldest son feel more confident and he knows how to defend himself now.

"My younger son Aaron always had stiff joints, now he's quite flexible and has more stamina. They both absolutely love it and are really sad if they miss a class."

Aiden has been attending Paul's Judo classes for the past two years in the Dojo 54 Academy. In that time he learned self respect and how to conduct himself, as a result his mental and physical health have improved greatly.

He said: "I think more positively about myself and I'm more confident about speaking up for myself. The classes also help my coordination, I can do physical things easier than before I started, like press ups and squats."

**The club run a number of classes for all ages. For details contact Paul McGuinness 07970519768 or visit [www.titanjudo.org](http://www.titanjudo.org) for more information.**

# CLYDESIDER COMPETITIONS

**PHOTO  
COMPETITION  
SUBJECT - SUMMER**

**POETRY  
COMPETITION  
SUBJECT - COMMUNITY**

**PRIZE - £25**

**CLOSING DATE - AUGUST 20TH 2021**

**Email entries to: [clydesidercomp@gmail.com](mailto:clydesidercomp@gmail.com)**

**Rules:** One entry per person for each competition, entrants must live, work or be part of a group in West Dunbartonshire; all entries must be your own, by entering you give Clydesider permission to publish your work in print or online - this in no way infringes your copyright.



# BUILDING NEIGHBOURHOOD NETWORKS



**SPONSORED EDITORIAL**

Since 2001 we have supported vulnerable adults, many with learning disabilities, physical disabilities and mental health issues to live an active, healthy life, safely, within their own homes and be fully involved within their local communities.

Our members are active in our networks learning essential life skills, becoming more independent whilst spending more time with friends and becoming less reliant on paid support.

## **The Difference We Make**

Members of Neighbourhood Networks get the flexibility and responsive support to meet their own personal care needs.

Each individual is supported to establish a life in which they are safe and more independent.

Members have opportunities to experience a real sense of belonging and involvement. They are far less isolated and lonely as they develop their confidence and self-esteem.

Members learn new skills such as independent travel, cooking, life skills, budgeting and much more including volunteering and employment skills.

actively co-operate with each other for mutual advantage.

Our Network Members are all individuals and have very individual needs and wants.

Some of our Network Members have a learning disability; some a physical disability; some have mental health issues; and some just feel lonely and isolated from other people.



## **Who Can Benefit?**

Neighbourhood Networks emphasise the importance of providing preventative models of support and opportunities for mutual support, to vulnerable people who might receive little or no support and run the risk of entering significant but nonetheless avoidable crisis in their lives.

It has its roots firmly in the notion of the renewal or revival of neighbourhoods and the wider community as places where people don't just share the same streets but

**If you would like to become a Network member or even just want to know if there is a Network in your area then give us a call.**

**Tel: 0141 440 1005**

**Email: [info@neighbourhoodnetworks.org](mailto:info@neighbourhoodnetworks.org)**

# A GREEN RECOVERY



SPONSORED EDITORIAL

A local charity is helping to find new homes for unwanted household items while also helping to tackle climate change.

The Covid19 crisis made the Isaro Community Initiative realise a lot of items heading for landfill could be reused by others in our community.

They collect unwanted bikes in any condition, if the bikes need repair, they offer bike repair services and once repaired they find them new owners who will make good use of them.

Rose Sehakizinka, Isaro Project Coordinator, said: "Our goal is to go

Isaro saw the demand for such items soaring during the Covid19 lockdown as shops closed, people lost their jobs leaving many more families in financial hardship and no longer able to afford new items.



They collected lots of clothing, furniture and bikes from people who no longer needed them and passed them on to new owners.

For some families even free goods were too expensive as they needed transport to collect and transport them.

So Isaro applied for funding to purchase an electric van which they use to pick up unwanted items and take them to their new homes - free of charge.

## Your Action Can Save the Earth - Get involved

Isaro continues to collect clothes, toys, shoes, furniture, bikes etc and deliver them straight to the door of the new owners without any additional costs.

green and save the climate by ensuring that people understand the impact of carbon and how it damages the environment.

"We promote the use of bikes as bikes not only reduce carbon emissions to zero, but because they also promote good health as they are a great source of exercise."

Isaro remain active within the community as the organisation continue to deliver Climate Conversation workshops for adults and young people and provide advice on Home Energy saving and Eco-driving.

**If you have unwanted items in need of a new home or if there is something you need for your home you can share it to Isaro's Reuse & Swap Facebook page or send them a message or call 0141 237 2620.**



# ROCKVALE REBOUND CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS

A local talking newspaper for the blind is in need of new volunteers.

The charity provides free recordings of local papers to blind and partially sighted people.

One of our team has volunteered to record articles from Clydesider magazine so our positive news stories can be included. But there are other stories in need of voices and the charity needs more help to provide this vital information service.

Douglas Gilroy, chairperson of Rockvale Rebound, said: "We urgently need a pool of volunteers who may be able to offer one or two hours per month to assist with a range of tasks.

"Reasonable expenses may be reimbursed, relevant training will be given and volunteers will ordinarily participate with others or as part of a team."

**For more information or to express an interest contact Douglas Gilroy on 01389 763091/07823501115 or email [dgilroy53@gmail.com](mailto:dgilroy53@gmail.com)**

# READER RECOMMENDATIONS

## TOP READS

- Girl, Woman, Other - Bernadine Everisto
- The Handmaid's tale- Margaret Atwood
- Dark Places - Gillian Flynn
- The Long Walk - Stephen King
- Green Girl - Kate Zambreno
- No one Belongs here more than you- stories by Miranda July
- A Wild Sheep Chase - Haruki Murakami
- I'll be Gone in the dark - Michelle McNamara
- Surprisingly Down to Earth and Very Funny - Limmy
- Wild -Cheryl Strayed
- The Sanitorium - Sarah Pearse
- The Other Half of Augusta Hope - Joanna Glen
- American Dirt - Jeanine Cummins



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# COMMUNICATION IS KEY

## SPONSORED EDITORIAL

We're 'Moments of Freedom', a group of Syrian women who have resettled to live in Clydebank.

We get together as women to make connections, share our skills and be ourselves.

We also work to help New Scots families feel meaningfully included in the community. This means building community connections, but Covid-19 hasn't made this easy.

sessions for communities and groups in Clydebank and beyond. We want to create spaces for people to come together for welcoming conversations.

These sessions are about sharing what it means to be New Scots and Muslim women while learning from others about their experiences.

Communication is key to understanding each other and makes coming together so much easier.

"There are so many ways for us to challenge - we do it with co-operation and empathy every step of the way."

Before the online sessions launch, we want to hear



"It's been a tough year, but we feel still meeting through lockdown - with home schooling and children at home - has been a huge achievement for our group."

Things at a community level were changing so quickly, it was difficult to keep up. We worried this would impact on our integration, but we made new connections with local community initiatives by going along to the Clydesider Community Response Network.

It's helped us feel we are still moving forward by making new links. For us, overcoming these obstacles and building our resilience is part of everyday life - it's who we are!

Now we're creating Cultural Sharing

from people who might want to take part.

It will be helpful to know what formats are most accessible, and what everyone is most interested to learn about.

What would you like to know about our cultural experiences? What do you want to share about your local area?

You can help by filling in our survey at: [www.otbds.org/cultural-understanding-sessions](http://www.otbds.org/cultural-understanding-sessions)

Or by scanning this QR code:



**Learn more at our new website [www.momentsoffreedom.org](http://www.momentsoffreedom.org). We can't wait to launch these sessions to share our learning and build more local connections!**



# SCOTTISH MENTAL HEALTH ARTS FESTIVAL

West Dunbartonshire featured in the Scottish Mental Health Arts Festival for the very first time this year - thanks to help from Clydesider Creative.

We collaborated with various local community organisations to ensure West Dunbartonshire was represented in the national festival programme and shared their content on our social media.

Our Creative Cafe From Your Couch was tied

in with both SMHAF and Mental Health Awareness week - check back on our social media between May 11 - 13 for the full three day programme packed with stories, resources and creativity.

We also hosted an Open Mic night - our first live virtual event - as part of SMHAF. The evening was a resounding success with some writers sharing their work with an audience for the very first time.

As a follow-up from this event the organisers of the Balloch House Hotel Open Mic night will host their events via Zoom on the first Monday of the month, starting in June.

**To attend the Balloch Open Mic, either as a participant or audience member, email [Mary Irvine - alexwriters1@gmail.com](mailto:MaryIrvinealexwriters1@gmail.com) for details and link.**



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# CLYDEBANK CAN



clydebank  
can

SPONSORED EDITORIAL

Clydebank Can is a community-based project that aims to bring to life the canal and bandstand area of Three Queen's Square in Clydebank by bringing more arts and leisure activities into the area for local people to enjoy.

This gives everyone more opportunity to take part in events and activities which improve health and wellbeing, and increase social and economic activity in the area.

The project recently provided free taster sessions for local young people that enabled them to try their hand at canoeing, kayaking and paddle boarding.

Drumchapel and Clydebank Kayaking Club were on hand to share their knowledge around the water activities and the importance of water etiquette and safety.

Young people have also taken advantage of the free cycle rides provided by Y Sort It and free music lessons with Awestruck Academy.

Working in partnership with Inclusive Images, a free 8-week online photography course was made available to local residents of Clydebank and Dalmuir.



The Clydebank Can on Camera project had participants out and about in the Clydebank and Dalmuir areas taking some fantastic pictures of the local area.

The images captured were fantastic and ranged from traditional landscape and landmark images to the more abstract. The project was highly successful and captured the "people's" Clydebank.



In March and April Clydebank Can and Clydebank Housing Association worked together with Rig Arts to deliver a series of online Art and Craft sessions for people living within the Clydebank area.

These sessions provided participants the opportunity to learn new art skills in an informal atmosphere at home, which didn't inhibit their creativity in the pieces of art work created.

The project has planned more activities for the summer, these include the already successful free canoeing, kayaking and paddle boarding, more music lessons and outdoor activities.

For more information on the project please visit the Clydebank Can website which has a directory of over 200 local clubs, organisations, services and activities - all just a walk away from your home or delivered online for people in Clydebank.

Follow us on Facebook and visit [www.clydebankcan.com/whats-on](http://www.clydebankcan.com/whats-on) to find out more.





# PEACE IN PAINTING

by Jenny Watson

We all express ourselves in different ways, some through actions, some through the spoken word, others through the written word.

Scott Walker, aka Wingnut Walker, chooses to put paint on canvas to express the world around him. And what a colourful, detailed, intricate world it is!

Talking with Scott via our digital devices, I get a real flavour that his art often depicts real life.

In the small square of the screen, I see mostly colour, from the bright summer hues of his t-shirt to the array of shades and tints on his paintings in the background.

"I'm inspired by real life events, things that happened to me or things I see or hear," he explained.

"There is a lot of humour in the stuff I do. My work is interpretations of what I've seen, poems or songs I've heard.

"The piece usually starts with a small idea or a simple image and I think 'I could add that or add that' and then it's gone from one simple thing to 75 things in the painting, which is the way I like to work."

Having moved to West Dunbartonshire months before the pandemic struck, Scott was inspired and thankful for the beauty on his doorstep.

“ Six years ago, I took voluntary redundancy and decided to become a full-time artist. ”

Life wasn't always so peaceful for him, in fact for many years he struggled with emotional and physical issues until he was referred to a neurologist.

"I always had tics growing up and when I get stressed, they get worse," he explained.

"They can become quite painful. Within minutes of meeting the neurologist she told me I had Tourette's.

"It was a strange feeling because I felt it explained most of my life, why I have trouble



concentrating and get frustrated when I couldn't do things properly.

"At school I couldn't do anything but art because of my difficulty with focussing.

"Art has been therapy for me all these years.

"Drawing and painting helped the tics slow down and stop because I was doing something I was enjoying.

"It was great to finally find out why I am the way I am."

Scott has been creating art since he was a young boy at school and attended Art School in Bath where he completed his degree.

After finishing his studies, Scott wanted to take a different path in life and successfully applied for a role within a volunteer organisation who sent him to Glasgow in 1990.

The role was working in a residential homeless project and was only supposed to last one year but this quickly became a paid post and Scott worked in the sector for 27 years.

During that time he continued to do a little bit of art here and there when he could, even showing work in a few galleries.

He decided a change was needed in his life and it was time to slow down and focus more on his art.



“Six years ago, I took voluntary redundancy and decided to become a full-time artist.

“I had been selling stuff online for about five years, doing bits and pieces but I just thought I’d give it a try and my wife supported that decision. The last few years it’s just taken off.”

Scott’s style is definitely unique, as he takes his very active imagination and brings it to life on paper.

Hours could easily be spent just getting lost in each piece of work and seeing where it would take your own mind.

This is probably why the past year has been his most successful to date.

“I’ve had more commissions over the last 18 months than the previous five or six years and I think that’s down to lockdown.

“I try to adapt the requests and keep them within my style, I think that’s why the clients come to me in the first place because they already like how I work.”

**Wingnut Walker’s work can be enjoyed on Facebook at Wingnut Walker Art**



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# PHOTO COMPETITION



WINNING ENTRY - GOING HOME BY LYNN CUTHBERT



RUNNER-UP BY CAROLYN HUTCHISON



RUNNER-UP BY SCOTT WALKER



# NATURAL BEAUTY

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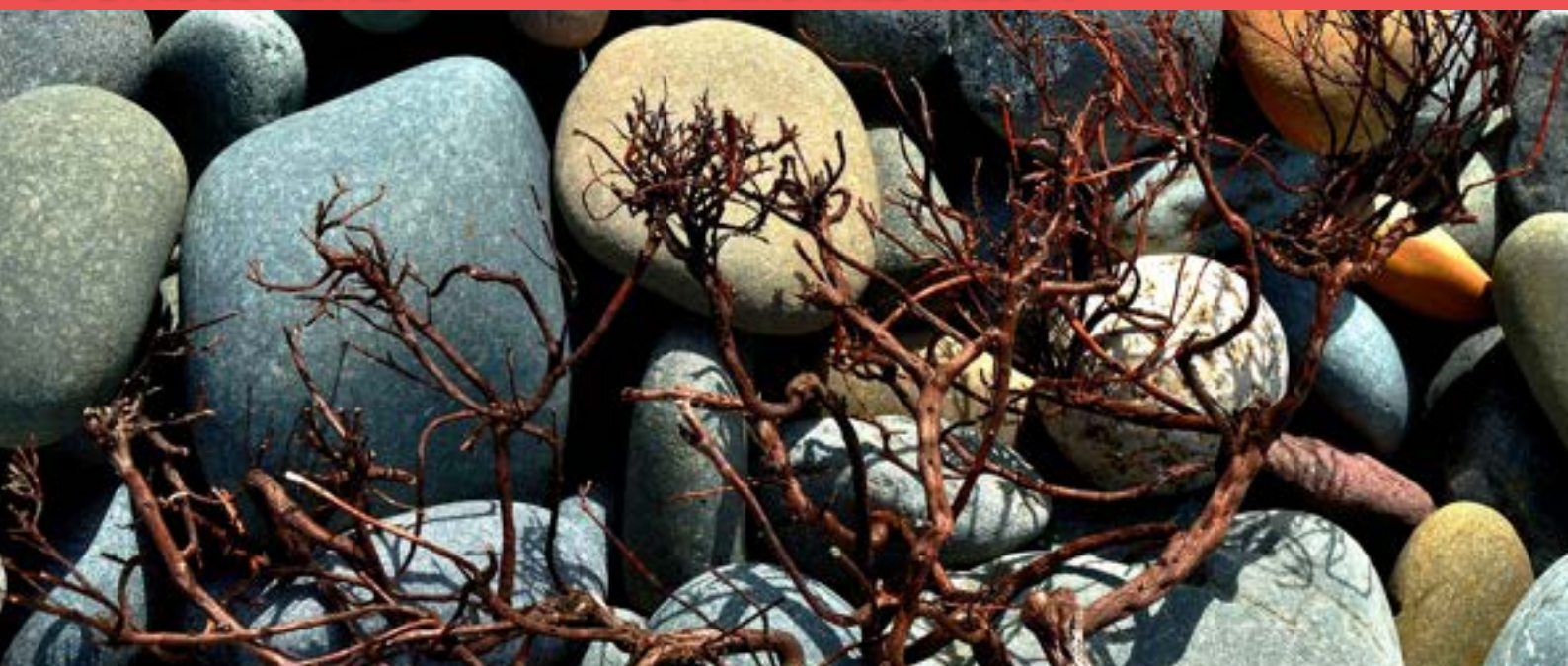
BY LYNDSEY GATES



BY STEPHEN WATT



BY MICHAEL WILSON



BY MELANIE TAUSCHER



# PEER SUPPORT & ME

Words & Photos by Emily Fraser



Something brilliant happens when a person who has spent a long time fearing, or hearing, that they are different, inadequate, or a problem, discovers that all their inner struggles are not only normal and deserving of acceptance, but also give them the power to help somebody else, just by being there and being themselves.

Most of us are a source of informal peer support for another person without even knowing it. Depending on the situation, anybody in our lives can offer us peer support through real listening, empathy, sharing and encouragement.

Peer support is not a new concept; but what is new, is the way that these skills are valued, harnessed, and employed to great effect in mental health recovery.

In March 2018, my anxiety and depression were out of control. I developed a strong desire to kill myself, because I felt absolutely worthless, hopeless, and like my own mind was hell-bent on ruining my life, so I just wanted the emotional pain to stop.

Luckily, I summoned up the courage to make a self-referral to Stepping Stones, my local mental health charity, after years of taking antidepressants and avoiding my doctor's advice to try counselling to deal with past traumas underlying my symptoms.

I didn't want to talk to a 'stranger' about my problems, but I had to do something.

My wonderful cognitive behavioural therapist, whose methods have changed my life, combined her professional training with her own lived experience, to reassure me and to illustrate what she was saying. I think the principles of peer support and professional support can work in harmony.

Stepping Stones' Reflect and Connect social group was also suggested, and I decided to do it while I waited for my CBT, but I am still attending regularly today and my gratitude for that wee group is hard to put into words.

*“...because of, not in spite of our mental health problems, we are capable of so much.”*

I think we share an unspoken camaraderie. There's no pressure to share mental health details, but we all know that everyone in the room has faced similar challenges, even the support workers facilitating the group.

No matter how bad a week I've had, this is my supportive space where I can be myself, I don't have to hide anything or 'act normal'. And if I do need to talk, the group is there for me, unconditionally.



'Real life' isn't always like that, but it should be, and it will be, when more of us get involved with peer support.

In the last three years, the peer support ethos of empowering people in recovery has helped me accomplish a lot.

With two other Stepping Stones peers, I've completed the Scottish Recovery Network's Peer2Peer training, helped to plan and run a local mental health event called The Big Chat, and participated in regular discussions with Stepping Stones about ways they could expand the peer support function.

Separately, I've run my own Facebook support group and local well-being radio show during lockdown.

Covid-19 - the virus itself, and this year of chaos - has been disastrous for our collective mental health, but peer support has been a safety-net for many of us.

When I found out the Scottish Recovery Network was running a pilot online Peer2Peer course in late 2020, I knew it would be the perfect next step for me, but it exceeded my expectations.

This wasn't just training, it was immersive. We laughed, cried, and learned together as 17 'experts by experience', and it confirmed that because of, not in spite of our mental health problems, we are capable of so much.

Peer support feels like a loving acceptance, a comforting vulnerability, and a sense of hope, that you are never a problem, you can live a meaningful life, and you are never alone. It's not about re-inventing the wheel - it's more like remembering the importance of walking.

I am indebted to Stepping Stones and the Scottish Recovery Network, and I am determined to pay it forward.



**Emily's article was first published by the Scottish Recovery Network and an audio version of her story is now available on their Anchor podcast channel.**



# ACTIVE TRAVEL BOOST FOR THE VALE

by Amanda Eleftheriades

The value of cycle ways, footpaths and beautiful open spaces right on our doorsteps have become more than evident over the past year.

But for some the great outdoors can be difficult to access.

Volunteers with the Vale of Leven Trust recognised this was a challenge for many in their community.

In 2018 they started work on a community asset transfer of the old Police box near Bonhill Bridge – the aim to turn it into an Active Travel Hub for the community.

In May they celebrated a three-year funding boost of £125,000 from the National Lottery Community fund which will help make their dreams a reality.

Janice Ross, Trust chairperson, explained: "The Active Travel Hub is something we've been working on for two and a half years. It's really exciting seeing it coming together.

"Last year the asset transfer went through but there are issues with the building which we will be working on.

"We put the application into the Lottery so we can get something up and running this summer as we come out of lockdown it is needed now more than ever."

The group will be purchasing electric bikes and recruiting two part-time staff to run regular healthy walking groups and cycling groups.

Janice added: "The funding allows us to rent temporary premises for the bikes while we sort out the building at Bonhill Bridge.

"We have interest from Live Active and from GPs and mental health services.

"The electric bikes and health walking groups will make it easier for people to enjoy the outdoors and we will also be training up volunteers to help run the groups."

The Trust is also keen to recruit volunteers who are passionate about the Vale to their Steering Committee.

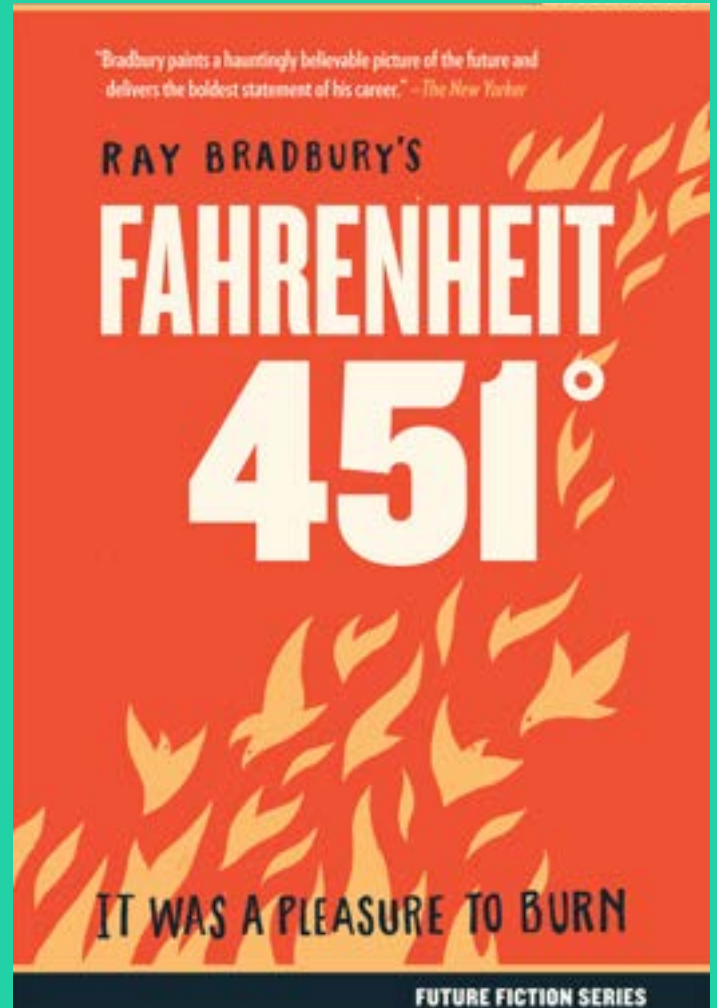
Janice explained: "If there are people interested in being involved we'd love to hear from them, we're particularly keen to hear from women and people of colour.

"You don't need to be an experienced walker or cyclist to get involved, just interested in our community.

"There are lots of different skills we could use – digital marketing, accountancy, business skills – they would all be really invaluable to us."

**To get involved with the Vale Trust's Active Travel Hub or find out more email [valeofleventrust@outlook.com](mailto:valeofleventrust@outlook.com) or text or leave a message on 07570227712.**

# READER RECOMMENDATIONS



## Fahrenheit 451 by Ray Bradbury Review by Belle Sorrell

This strikingly prophetic novel offers a glimpse into a dystopian world which shuns Shakespeare, bans the Bible and renounces reading of all kind.

A world with wall-sized screens transmitting ceaseless soap opera, abrupt advertisements and empty entertainment which are consumed religiously by the vacuous populace.

With many contemptible and some equally honourable characters Bradbury illustrates the devastating outcome collective silence has on society.

When words that dare to challenge the majority are left unspoken they allow culture to be hijacked. They allow all who cherish it to be persecuted by a blind sea of ignorance and illiteracy.

Despite the protagonist, Montag, inciting brutal violence to become enlightened, his vehemence to reclaim freedom can be highly esteemed. He is a flicker of optimism for the longevity of literature, albeit in the outskirts of mankind.

# JOIN THE BEN VIEW BLETHER SPONSORED EDITORIAL



## BEN VIEW RESOURCE CENTRE

Working for a better community in West Dunbartonshire

Ben View is a community centre based in Dumbarton, that offers support services to some of the most vulnerable within our community.

Our services include a youth programme, personal care for older people in the community, befriending service for older isolated people and a daily lunch and activity club for those 60+.

In the past year the global pandemic presented a massive challenge, especially for those already vulnerable and disconnected in society. Our staff and volunteers found another level of strength and compassion to ensure we could continue all our services throughout this time.

To continue engaging with all our members we adapted how we delivered what we've doing for many years! Our youth programme changed to an online event which suited this age group very well, many already had the resources required and those who didn't were given support.

Our personal care service continued to be carried out in people's homes. This was a lifeline for many, in most cases this was the only connection they had face to face. Our great team of care workers went above and beyond supporting members with collection of shopping and prescriptions, not normally part of what we do.

The befriending service changed to telephone sessions which allowed our volunteers to monitor wellbeing and ensure people we supported had all the essential supplies.

Our lunch club adapted to a home delivery service 'The Doorstep Lunch and Blether Service' which was hugely successful and brought lots of comfort and joy to both those receiving the service and our volunteers. This project was funded through Aviva Community funding and fundraising from the local community who have continued to be welcome supporters of all our services!

As we now begin to open up the lunch service we will be meeting for the first time in 15 months as a group. For the first few weeks this will take place at the Malt & Myre, where we will enjoy a delicious meal followed by tea and coffee.

These are exciting times for us and the sense of anticipation from both members and volunteers is inspiring. We can't wait to be together again, having a laugh and a good blether and putting the world to rights!



“ *The doorstep service was a life line to so many over the last 14 months, we can't wait to see everyone face to face again and we hope more people will come along and join us.* ”

**If you are aged 60 + then come along and join us, we would love to meet you and offer our support as we all begin to live life to the full again. Please call Leona on 01389 733030 for further information.**



# ZOOMING DOWN MEMORY LANE

By Belle Sorrell

Vale of Leven Academy recently launched a Sporting Memories Virtual Club in partnership with the Sporting Memories Foundation Scotland.

Nathan Williamson, Abbi Pilkington and Lucy Oliver are sixth year students who volunteered to organise and run the club - the first of its kind in the UK.

These intergenerational sessions connect younger and older people through sport.



**Why did you join the Sporting Memories Club?**

**Nathan:** I want to have a future within sporting and coaching. I was interested in the opportunity to experience leading a group.

**Abbi:** I'm going into nursing so the club helps me develop a caring perspective with others.

**Lucy:** I am also going into a caring role so it's beneficial to learn about working with older people.

**What have you gained from the Sporting Memories Club?**

**N:** It has given me a better sense of organisation through having regular meetings on Thursdays and completing dementia training and Zoom training.

**L:** It's a good way to build your confidence and I found the dementia training quite beneficial.

**How has the Sporting Memories Club helped you throughout lockdown?**

**N:** It has made lockdown a lot easier. It gave me something to look forward to throughout the weeks, especially when we were in full lockdown at the start of the year.

**A:** Being able to meet up with the group, have a laugh and hear how everyone was doing was really helpful.

**L:** The club gave me something to look forward to and was a great way to meet new people.

**What is the best aspect of the Sporting Memories Club?**

**N:** It's such a friendly environment. When you join there's no need to prove yourself, you're just welcomed into it. And if you come along you're in for a very good laugh.

**A:** The fact that you can have a laugh and it's not serious. There's a good atmosphere.

The Sporting Memories Virtual Club runs on Thursdays from 5pm to 6pm. To join or find out more contact Maurice Donohue on 07393 284406 or email [maurice@thesmf.co.uk](mailto:maurice@thesmf.co.uk)

## READER RECOMMENDATIONS

### TOP PODCASTS

- Women's Prize for Fiction
- BBC Earth (snippets of parts you don't hear in the TV show)
- David Tennant
- How to Fail
- The Opportunist
- Stuff you should know
- Dear Sugar
- The Thing about Pam
- Criminal
- Heavyweight
- Mystery Show
- Reply All (the internet)

# MOBILITY SUPPORT FOR SHOPPERS



# SPONSORED EDITORIAL

Clyde Shopmobility is a member led Disabled People's Organisation and Registered Charity.

The Charity's aim is to reduce social isolation and to promote equality of access for all.

We provide motorised scooters, powered and manual wheelchairs and other mobility aids to help our members get around Clydebank Shopping Centre. We also hire these for longer term use.

A sighted guide service is available for people with a visual impairment. A sighted guide is a trained aide who accompanies someone who is visually impaired and assists them to get out and about in the community.

You don't have to be registered disabled to use our service. Anyone can borrow a scooter or wheelchair if you have difficulty getting around, for example, if you have limited mobility caused by disability, age, temporary illness or accident.

We offer a meet and greet service where we will drop a scooter or wheelchair round to your car or meet you at a taxi rank or bus stop and collect it from you when you've finished.

We have a wide variety of equipment:

- Small or medium mobility scooters
- Manual and powered wheelchairs
- Rollators
- Sighted guides

We are always looking for enthusiastic people who are interested in helping the Charity, either volunteering with us in the project or on our Board of Directors

In addition, we also run social and educational groups for members and non-members alike: our weekly Knitting and Natter Group is extremely popular as are our Photography and Walking Groups. We will shortly be starting a Menopause Awareness & Support Group and a Men's Interest Group. Everyone is welcome!



**If you would like to join or just to find out more information:-**

Phone us on 0141 952 7795,  
Email [info@clydeshopmobility.org](mailto:info@clydeshopmobility.org)  
Facebook: Clyde Shopmobility

**Or drop in to see us in the Shopping Centre at 30 Sylvania Way G81 2TL  
Monday to Friday 9am - 5pm, Saturday 10am - 5pm**





In uncertain times, it's reassuring to know vital public services are still available to offer help.

Joe McCormack, CEO at West Dunbartonshire Citizens Advice Bureau, explained how the CAB service evolved since lockdown was introduced in March 2020.

"Although our doors were closed, we continued to operate throughout the lockdowns.

"In the period from 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021, we helped just under 3,500 clients to deal with more than 21,000 issues.

"By very quickly re-organising we were able to provide much needed advice in relation to Covid-19, furlough schemes, employment rights, Universal Credit and on debt payments.

"We continued to offer a telephone advice service and to respond to enquiries made via our web page, our Facebook page and by email.

"We were also able to arrange in-office appointments for some of the most vulnerable people whom we felt needed to speak to someone face-to-face."

Joe is pleased to confirm that volunteer advisers, who had to step back last year, commenced re-training

a few months ago and plans for the gradual drift back to in-office work are now well underway.

Joe explained the changes made to enable WDCAB to move towards the new normal. "Social distancing has forced all of us to review our premises and consider how we keep people safe during the COVID-19 pandemic - unfortunately having larger interview rooms means fewer rooms in number.

"We will have to limit access to in-office face-to-face appointments to those clients we feel are most in need.

"In all other cases we will look to divert people to telephone appointments and video conferencing or advice via email."

The challenge we all face now is to provide a public service - whilst minimising the risk to staff, volunteers and service users - to as many people as possible.

We hope that these new methods of contacting WDCAB will prove effective for people concerned about what happens now we're moving out of lockdown.

We know many people are worried about how they'll pay the bills, whether their jobs are safe and what help they can get. WDCAB advisers are committed to helping.

### **CAB can be contacted via:**

- WDCAB website ([www.wdcab.co.uk](http://www.wdcab.co.uk)) - including LiveChat
- Facebook - @WDCAB
- Freephone 0800 484 0136 (lines are very busy at the present time - please bear with us)

# GROWN IN NATURE

Words & Artwork by Ann Pryce

Nature is important for my well-being. It always has been.

I got thinking about how it played a part in my childhood and was astonished at just how big a part it played.

We lived in Govan Drive, opposite us was the Academy Sports Park, a swimming pool is there now.

Mr Spier would come with his tractor and cut the grass. We would collect the cut grass and form it into an outline of a house - two or three bedrooms was luxury.

We were surrounded by long grasses. I could never whistle using a piece of grass but loved hearing others do it.

Daisy chains were a joy to make. I thought these little flowers were magical, as they closed their petals at night, and turned pink.

Buttercups held under the chin told us if we liked butter. Pink and white clover grew in abundance, we'd spend hours searching for a four leaf one. Soorocks, or sorrel, tasted bitter but quenched our thirst.

White bindweed grew up fences, and we played a game, 'Mary Queen of Scots got her head chopped off', where we popped the flower head off by squeezing its base.

Rosebay willowherb was a lovely tall flower, growing in derelict places, or where a fire had been. It grew in profusion behind our tenements where the Tin Kirk used to be. So did nettles and dock leaves.

Woods were full of bluebells. We collected acorns and conkers in autumn. We made helicopters from sycamore keys. We were told not to pick dandelions as they were 'pee the beds', but we did and told the time by blowing the seeds or made wishes on them.

Wild raspberries and brambles grew at the bottom of Argyll Park, along the edge of the railway. We ate our fill of them. We also nicked gooseberries and peapods from the allotments at the side of Tullichewan. The



Plantation.

Mayflower or cuckoo flower grew in abundance in the 'hospital park' where the cattle show was held. The burn flowed through the Christie Park, and we collected frog spawn from the edges.

We collected pine cones from tall Douglas Firs at the side of the road.

Thistles and sticky willies, herb Robert, shepherd's purse, and red campion all grew in profusion.

Rhododendrons, or Rosiedendrums as we called them, were a highlight of the year. They grew in every colour from the gates of Balloch Park all the way up to the castle. A sight to behold. Red squirrels could be seen jumping around beneath them. Crows nested in the hundreds in the trees.

Yes, nature played a huge part in my childhood, and thankfully still does.



# HEALING HANDS

Words by Angela Clark

Photos by Jessica Murray (age 10)

St Stephen's Primary School pupil



Low mood, anxiety and sleepless nights, the list of menopausal symptoms seems never-ending for me. I know it varies from woman to woman.

In my first year of the change, known as perimenopause, I refused to take prescribed drugs offered by my doctor. I wanted to do it drug free, I'm sure I'm not alone in thinking this.

So, for a number of pre-pandemic weeks I loaned myself out and put alternative holistic therapies to the test. These included aromatherapy, reflexology and reiki. I'm hoping a natural approach to symptoms will help me cope better as my body goes through this transition.

After a consultation with Helen McHugh, a local qualified therapist, my first session began with a reflexology massage. Reflexology is a type of massage where the pressure is applied to the feet using specific finger and thumb massage techniques.

The theory behind it is that our feet are connected to our internal organs and body systems, it supposedly stimulates energy and releases tensions in areas causing pain or illness.

Before treatment began Helen and I selected

suitable oils in relation to my needs. They were a combination of basil and lime which help mental alertness and focus. She applied the oils to her hands first, then gently massaged and applied pressure to my feet.

I have always loved having my feet massaged and pampered so this was a delightful experience and I definitely felt more positive, content and happier about myself when this session was finished.

On my return the following week I received an aromatherapy massage which focuses on the full body. However in this session we took things slowly and worked only on the neck, back and shoulders.

This type of massage reduces stress, provides pain relief, increases relaxation and can reduce the symptoms of depression, it is also known to soothe sore joints.

Once again with support and guidance from Helen, we selected suitable oils. This time it was a blend of orange, lavender and frankincense. These oils are known to help create an atmosphere of happiness and inner peace. Once I had decided on the oils Helen placed her hands, covered in oil, on my back and began the treatment.

Her strong boney little fingers reached all my nooks and crannies releasing aches and pains that had stolen my ability to focus. The aromas from the oils were strong and delightful.

After the massage was finished it felt like someone had slowed my world down to a snail's pace, I was certainly more relaxed and not as anxious.

My final week of treatment had arrived and this time I chose reiki. This is a method of energy healing. The therapist uses her hands and hovers them above your body and is guided to the areas that need healing. This can be in the physical, emotional and spiritual

areas of your life.

Oils used were rose and geranium, this combination helps promote emotional stability stimulating healing from wounds and enhances mood. I absolutely love these oils and this was definitely my favourite treatment. You really do need to have an open mind with reiki as it is all about unblocking negative energy.

I was unaware of how much negative energies had an effect on my personal well-being until I experienced this treatment. I got pretty emotional and had some strange visions. My hearing felt clearer, as did

my sight. I felt as if my body and mind had gone through some sort of strange healing process, it was wonderful.

I would definitely suggest trying a number of different treatments and visits with a qualified therapist to see what works best for you.

The sessions have helped me with anxiety, emotional and physical pain and encouraged me to continue with treatments that provide self care.

**If you would like to find out more about alternative therapies email therapist Helen McHugh [hmchugh114@aol.com](mailto:hmchugh114@aol.com)**



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# THROUGH A LENS DARKLY

Words by Amanda Eleftheriades

Photos by Robert H King



There can be few folk who embark on a career in graphic design and photography as they begin to lose their sight – but Clydebank creative Robert H. King is one such inspiring individual.

Robert, who currently works as a librarian in Dalmuir Library, started his creative career setting up his own record label in the 1980s.

Growing up in Clydebank in the Sixties and Seventies there was little opportunity to learn about art, design or photography but he was attracted to the music industry by the record sleeve covers which tempted him to part with his money.

“My visual education was record sleeves – it was the photography and design of them, back then in libraries you would never see design books it just wasn’t that accessible.

“So it was getting into records, travelling into Glasgow to buy them. Because you hadn’t heard a lot of the music you tended to buy things based on the aesthetics of a record sleeve in the shop window and hope the music was good, that was what got me interested in design.

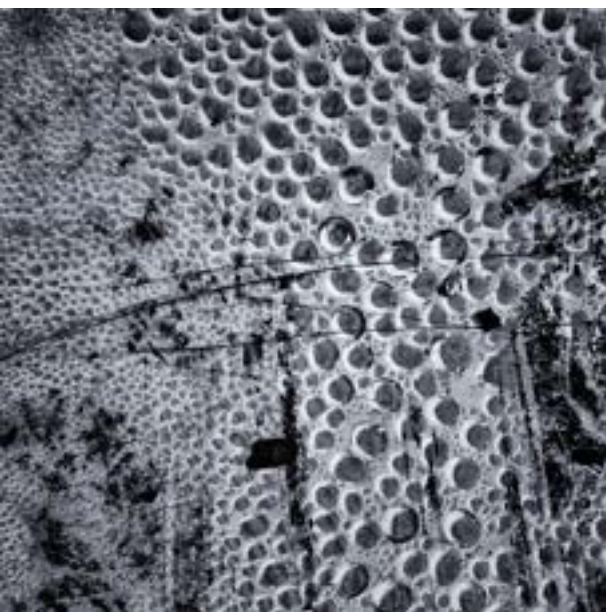
“When I started the record label it was easier and cheaper for me to do the graphics and design myself.

“*I tried to get into photography myself but it was really difficult using cameras with my sight issues and a darkroom was well and truly out of the window,*”

“It was all very low-fi and on a shoe-string, it was just self-taught and grew over the years.”

Robert was born with problems with his sight which gradually got worse until he ended up completely blind for a number of years and had to wind up his music business.

“It changed everything for me. I had a couple of years trying to adapt to losing my sight and then after surgery I got enough sight back to try to do something else so I went to college to try and find a new creative outlet.



“It was all multi-media stuff I was doing – designing interactive CD-Roms and websites.”

Robert also published a magazine and it was a chance encounter with another publisher which led to a job as graphic designer for Street Level art gallery in Glasgow.

Here he met photographers and digital artists who inspired him to continue learning new creative techniques.

“I was teaching myself as I went along. Part of my job at Street Level was preparing artwork for print and exhibition so you get to see how people put stuff together, a lot of people left a permanent impression on what I was trying to do.

“I tried to get into photography myself but it was really difficult using cameras with my sight issues and a darkroom was well and truly out of the window, I couldn’t do that at all.

“Then in 2012 my wife bought me an iPhone and that was it – within a couple of days of taking photographs I was really blown away by what I could do with it and some of the results, it really turned everything around.”

From that revolutionary discovery Robert went on to buy an iPad to edit his work on a bigger screen and within a couple of months had submitted his first piece of art to West Dunbartonshire Council’s Clydeside Open art show - it sold in the first 15 minutes of the opening night.

“It was a big image of the Titan Crane I had composed, more like a digital painting. That just got me hooked.”



Robert has since exhibited in all Clydeside Open art shows as well as having artwork displayed in various galleries across Scotland and as far afield as Palo Alto, California.

In 2014 his solo exhibition ‘Seeing the Unseen’ at the Backdoor Gallery in Dalmuir was the first art show in Scotland showcasing images taken solely on a mobile device.

As well as his own artwork Robert runs photographic workshops in mindful photography, fine art flower photography and creative self portraiture.

These focus his creativity on details that many of us miss, such as a fallen leaf on top of a bus shelter.

In recent months Robert’s vision started to deteriorate again, but after a difficult year he now has a new creative outlet for his visual challenges.

He explained: “I’m completely blind in one eye, all I’ve got is light. I had surgery on it and my lens is now floating about in that eye, so I have double vision of light and shadow. In my right eye I have about 40% damaged vision which has issues as well.

“I think the pandemic took its toll on a lot of creative people, it’s hard finding the energy and motivation, but things are picking up now.



"I started a new series of work which is a visual representation of what my sight is like and posted it to various online art forums."

He posted it to the Grayson Perry Art Club group on Facebook and was pleasantly surprised with the positive feedback.

"People have been commenting this is how their mother sees and are blown away that someone can put it into art and after seeing my images they've gone away and bought the app I use.

"To do it through adversity and inspire someone else because you have managed to do it yourself, that's a huge buzz.

"Being more vocal about having sight issues and doing art is all about representation and inclusion.

"There shouldn't be a barrier for anyone doing anything - whether it's physical health or mental health everyone should have access to be able to do these things, so I'm more than happy to answer people's questions and talk about it and discuss it."

Robert will be raising the importance of inclusion and accessibility in a new BBC documentary *Blind Ambition* which he features in later in the year.

**You can see more of Robert's artwork on Instagram @rhkingart**



## Recovery

I never thought I'd see the day  
Where I don't have to pretend  
Where I only hold on to Hope  
A hope that never ends

I never thought I'd see the day  
Where I smile more then frown  
Isn't it amazing  
How life can turn around

I never thought I'd see the day  
Where I finally feel free  
To live the life I want  
And just focus on being me

I never thought I'd see the day  
I'd stop writing goodbye letters  
But I finally realised  
My life matters

I never thought I'd see the day  
Where I finally belong  
That I'd grow as a person  
And finally feel strong

A journey to recovery  
That's what this is  
Finally in a place  
Where I'm happy to live

One day at a time  
And at my own pace  
I have learned  
That life is no race

**By Michaela Burns**

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Closing date July 9 2021

Interviews July 16 2021



# RELIABLE RESOURCES

## Local & national helpline numbers and information sources

### LOCAL NUMBERS

**Food For Thought** - 01389 743908.  
Emergency food aid referral line.

**West Dunbartonshire Community Foodshare** 01389 764135 - emergency food aid delivery

**Old Kilpatrick Food Parcels** - 07368496836

**Dumbarton District Women's Aid** - 01389 751036

**WDC 'No Homes for Domestic Abuse'** - 01389 738510

**Clydebank Women's Aid** - 0141 952 8118

**Dumbarton Area Council on Alcohol (DACA)** - 01389 731456 or 0141 952 0881

**WD Citizens Advice Bureau** - information on benefits, welfare rights, employment rights and general well-being  
Freephone - 0800 4840136  
Alexandria - 01389 752727  
Clydebank - 0141 435 7590  
Dumbarton - 01389 744690

**Independent Resource Centre**- benefits advice 0141 951 4040

**WD Housing & Homeless** 01389 738282 or Freephone 0800 197 1004 (option 5)

**Clydebank Community Addiction Team** - 0141 562 2311

**Dumbarton Joint Hospital** - 01389 812018

**Stepping Stones** - 0141 941 2929 - mental health charity providing telephone support

**Big Disability Group** - 0141 237 4560  
thebigdisabilitygroup@gmail.com and on Facebook - support and information to people living with disabilities

**WDC Additional Support** - text 'help' to 07800 002582 or visit [www.west-dunbarton.gov.uk/coronavirus/additional-support](http://www.west-dunbarton.gov.uk/coronavirus/additional-support)

### NATIONAL HELPLINES & WEBSITES

**NHS 24** - 111 for urgent health advice if GP or dentist is closed [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

**NHS Inform Scotland** - 0800 22 44 88 - General advice line

**Breathing Space Scotland** - 0800 83 85 87 [www.breathingspace.scot](http://www.breathingspace.scot) Mental Health helpline

**Age Scotland** - 0800 12 44 222 - advice, help or simply a friendly voice of support [www.ageuk.org.uk/scotland](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/scotland)

**Chest, Heart & Stroke Scotland Nurses Advice Line** - 0808 801 0899. Text: NURSE to 66777. Specialist nurses answering questions, provide advice, and information to anyone with a chest or heart problem.

**Scotland's Domestic Abuse & Forced Marriage Helpline** - 0800 027 1234. Available 24/7 [www.sdafmh.org.uk](http://www.sdafmh.org.uk)

**Rape Crisis Helpline** - 0808 801 0302 or TEXT: 07537 410027

**Samaritans Helpline** - 116 123 anytime or email [jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org) (response time 24hrs)

**Alcoholics Anonymous** - national helpline 0800 917 7650 [www.alcoholicsanonymous.org.uk](http://www.alcoholicsanonymous.org.uk)

**Gov.uk** - Government guidance on all aspects related to impact from COVID-19 [www.gov.uk/coronavirus](http://www.gov.uk/coronavirus)

**World Health Organisation** - [www.who.int](http://www.who.int)

**Young Scot** - Information and advice for young people [www.young.scot/campaigns/national/coronavirus](http://www.young.scot/campaigns/national/coronavirus)

**Parent Club** [www.parentclub.scot](http://www.parentclub.scot)

**Togetherall** - online mental health support 24/7 for anyone in WD aged 16 - 24



# LOCKDOWN THROUGH

Members attending Stepping Stones mental health charity have been taking part in a virtual photo voice project run by local social enterprise Inclusive Images. They shared their lockdown experiences in words and images.



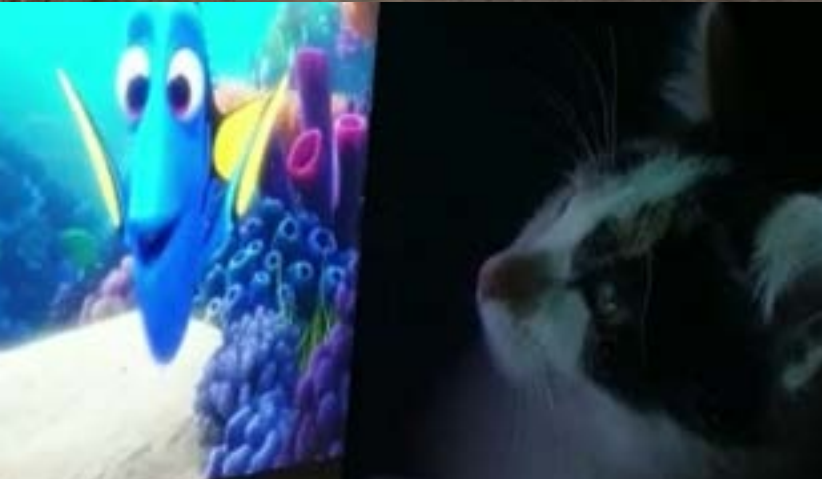
“ I hope we can all get back to some sort of normality soon. It would be great to see more of my family and friends. ”

**Steven**



“ My emotional threshold has changed - November I found a very tough month, insides juddering for weeks. Even having to think about post-lockdown has me anxious. ”

**Brian**



“ Lockdown for me has been a roller coaster of emotions. Initially I felt completely cut off from friends and family and an overwhelming feeling of loneliness, but as time went on I realised it meant I had lots of time for me. I've just been able to focus on myself - and yes I still have really bad anxiety and sometimes depression but I have the ability now to pull myself through the really tough times. Hopefully this positive outlook I've gained will continue once lockdown is lifted. ”

”

**Rachel**





# THE LENS - ONE YEAR ON ———

“ Never in my wildest dreams would I have expected to have all my decisions and choices removed by such a savage virus. I remember when we first started hearing about it in other countries and having wee jokes about it but my God, never ever thought things would get this bad. I can't wait to reconnect with my choir which I absolutely love and fills my heart with so much joy. Time to SING LIKE NO ONE'S LISTENING. ”

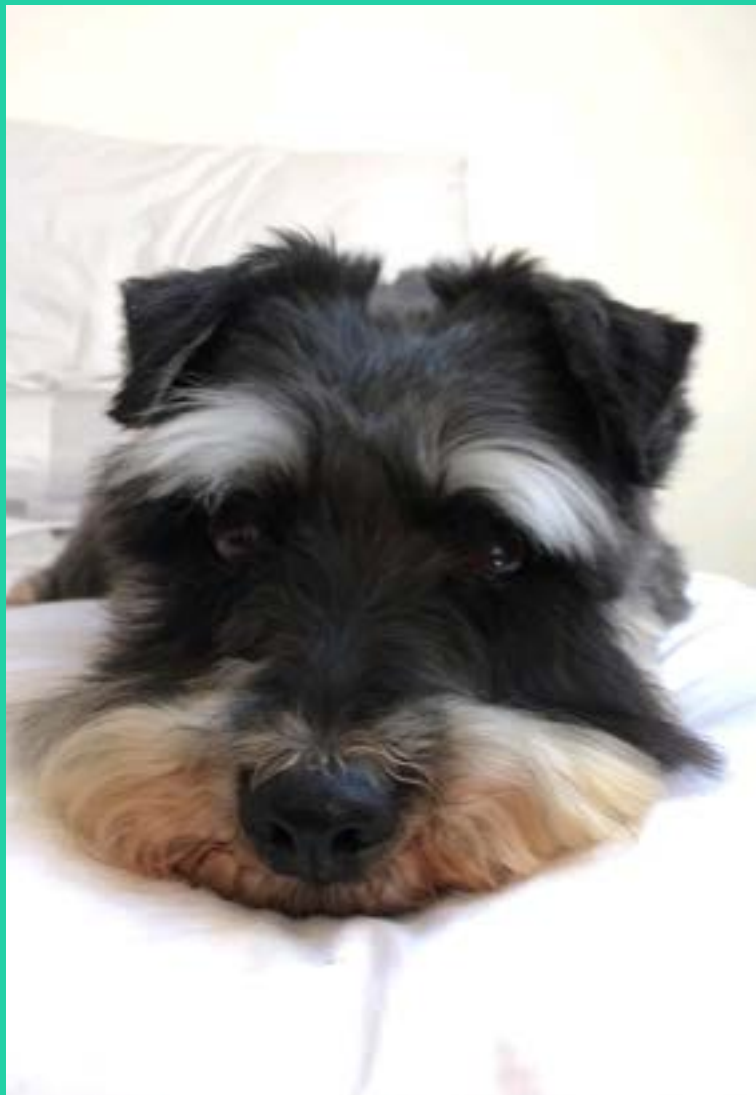
**Elaine**

“ Didn't realise how much I'd miss just jumping in the car and heading over to see my daughter and grandkids or taking a run to Helensburgh, to sit at the front with a bag of chips or just taking a stroll round the shops for a wee browse. It started to feel like I was in jail. ”

**Joyce**

“ My son, daughter and my friend had Covid 19, I was worried sick about them. Also spent my 60th birthday on my own. Facetime and Zoom have been a great comfort, this group and connections have a been a great tonic. ”

**Anne**





# A BOOK AND TWO TINS OF FOOD

Words & Photos by Sarah Ann Dillon

**The time: a Saturday at the beginning of lockdown.**

**The place: my kitchen.**

I have always been a great lover of books and read every day. Something. A novel, a magazine article, a poem, the back of the cornflakes packet.

I am also a great lover of food and eat every day - well, we have to don't we?

So, there I was in my kitchen, forced to Stay At Home, with more time than usual on my hands, when my two loves combined.

From my large collection of books I picked out a cookery book called '4 Ingredients'. It is written by two Australian women, Kim McCosker and Rachael Bermingham.

These ladies, two very busy mothers with little time to cook, were frustrated by cookery tomes and recipes with too many difficult to find and expensive ingredients.

So, they wrote their own book. With easy recipes and each dish having only up to four ingredients.

This is where the two tins of food come in.

One of their recipes was simply to combine a tin of salmon (bones and skin removed) with a tin of asparagus soup, finished off with a swirl of cream on top.

I had the required tins and I adapted the recipe very slightly, omitting the cream because my soup was in fact cream of asparagus. I added a rocket garnish because I love rocket and could eat it by the bagful (another plus - it's

a green and very healthy for you).

Producing this plate of colourful and tasty food led me later in the day to repeat the process.

Egg Frittata with Feta Cheese. On the side, lightly cooked red pepper, red onion and mushroom, drizzled with balsamic vinegar and garnished with fresh parsley.



For those of you who are counting, yes, I know that's more than four ingredients. But we can cheat and not count the balsamic or the parsley.

Now you need to know that before lockdown I was never that person who posted pictures online, much less pictures of what I'd had for my dinner.

But here I was Saturday evening March 28, 2020 and I posted my first foodie photo. And this was something I continued to do during lockdown.



I talked to friends about food, and they have shared their favourite recipes and food photos with me.

Another fact you need to know about me is I have been plagued throughout my life with periods of poor mental health: panic attacks, anxiety and depression.

On really bad days the last thing I wanted to do was cook myself a meal.

But if all you have to do is open two cans of food, combine the contents, heat them up and add a sprig of parsley it all seems so much easier.

I am also a creative person. I love colour.

By accident, I had put some bright red tomatoes with some cheese, green olives and oatcakes on a white plate with a red border.

Did you notice we're back to the 4 ingredients again? And no cooking involved.

When I posted that photo online a friend commented on how well the food was presented and how the plate colour complemented the food colours.



This is another important aspect of enjoying your food. If it looks nice you really want to eat it.

I have even taken up a related hobby of colouring in online. There are a lot of paint by numbers apps to choose from which I also told people about.

Having others to talk to and to share my creativity with has helped my mental health enormously.

Before I asked a local mental health charity, Stepping Stones, for help I was a bit isolated; reluctant to admit to having problems with my mental health.

Meeting and getting to know people in social groups there, allowed me to become more open, to make new friends and have people to share my passions with.

I just hope they don't mind too much being bombarded with photos of books and of food. There is so much creativity in our group it won't be too long before they get their own back!







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SCAN ME

# CLYDESIDER CREDITS

A big thank you to our fantastic team of volunteer contributors, even in these trying times you have stepped up to the plate and helped produce this powerful testament to lockdown life in West Dunbartonshire - you are a real joy to work with.

We would also like to thank our advertisers, supporting subscribers and funders. Your support has helped us continue to shine a light on the inspirational stories and creative talents in our communities.

An additional vote of thanks goes out to all the community organisations who are helping with the distribution, making sure the magazine reaches those least likely to read our stories online.

## ABOUT CLYDESIDER

Clydesider Creative Ltd is a not-for-profit social enterprise based in West Dunbartonshire. The Clydesider community magazine promotes the positives our area has to offer in terms of people, place, scenery and history and showcases the creative talents, ideas and experiences of local people.

We are also busy online with regular video interviews, a fortnightly Clydesider Zoom Catch Up for our contributors and creatives, the monthly Community Response Network and our quarterly virtual Creative Cafe From Your Couch. Follow us on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram for details or drop us an email if you would like to get involved in any way.

Despite the difficult circumstances we are always keen to hear from people who would like to get involved and contribute to Clydesider - if you are interested in volunteering please email [theclydesider@gmail.com](mailto:theclydesider@gmail.com)

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- Industrial Injuries Disablement Payment
- Carer's Allowance
- Personal Independence Payment
- Constant Attendance Allowance
- Severe Disablement Allowance
- Disability Living Allowance
- Tax Credits (Child Tax Credits & Working Tax Credits)
- Pension Guarantee Credit
- Child Benefit (Depending on Income)
- Income Related Employment Support Allowance (ESA)
- Universal Credit
- Income-Based Jobseekers Allowance (ISA)
- War Pensions Mobility Support

## Second Measure Needed

- Underfloor insulation
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- Room in the Roof Insulation\*
- Internal Wall Insulation\*\*

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\*According to Which magazine based on a 3 bed semi detached with 2 adults and 2 children.



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