

# *Varns*



Celebrating contemporary writing  
in Ulster-Scots & Scots

---

*Tak me doon tae the toon sae bonny  
Whaur the braes are green,  
an the lassies sonsi  
Oh will ye no tak me hame?*

Thanks to Mark Thompson for the cover image.

---

## *USCN Foreword*

In recent years we in Ulster have enviously watched as a seeming explosion of new writing in Scots appeared across the sheugh, which didn't appear to be happening as readily here as we thought it should. The Yarns project aims to provide an outlet for those who want to take their screivin further. Whether you're spending your time converting your favourite song lyrics into Ulster-Scots versions, or producing something new and original, Yarns is about providing an outlet for this creativity. We hope you enjoy what's here.

Some of the contributors contained within may be familiar names, but many of them are just starting out on their journey and this is the first time they'll have seen their name in print. We're also gye pleased that we've had contributions frae oor monie guid freens in Scotland – the connection between baith places is short geographically, but long historically and linguistically – and for us it is important that we hear the voices frae there forbye. Fur maist o us, we're closer tae Gallowa nor we are tae Galway.

We thank all those who have contributed, including some whose work hasn't made it into this final volume. We'd also like to place on record our thanks to the editorial panel who sifted through the entries tae bring thegither this final collection.

---

# Introduction.

## Frank Ferguson

There are few titles more apposite than *Yarns* for a collection of Ulster-Scots writing. We love a yarn. Our poets have written of the teapots that wore out as they bore witness to years of stories, tales and blethers in the homes in which they were situated. We bustle and crackle wi wurds in a leevin tradition that must aye be taakit and heard. Alangside this immediacy o a leevin tongue there is a grand awareness o a kinship wi hoo tha leid was scribed as a literature. This literary tradition which borrowed frae the Lowland Scottish Vernacular tradition, fused wi country rhyming and kailyard crack alongside other popular forms from Britain and Ireland to stand as one of the most significant, if underexplored indigenous strands of Ulster writing of the last three hundred years.

Also, as a concept of a gathering of many threeds, this volume also taaks o a wide variety of contributors, moods and genres. Some have approached their writing as speakers of Scots and Ulster-Scots, ithers as writers who are delving into the hamely tongue for experimental first-time literary usage. Whichever way the scribever may have come to develop their work fur tha page, the end results have been gratifying and encouraging to see. Assembled here is one of the most extensive collections of new work in Ulster-Scots to emerge in recent years in Northern Ireland wi a kindly nod tae freens in tha Republic and Scotland forbye. New authors are preented alangside weel established makars. It is a hairtsome sicht and ane that augurs weel fur future days.

In this buik, familiar literary loanens are dannert upon wi new insights an new pads are opened as new grun is mapped oot. There are writers from areas we would associate wi tha Ulster-Scotch and yins frae ither pairts far and wide. Whit might be maist hairtsome is that we haenae arrived at tha terminus o Ulster-Scotch scribevin but what we might hope without hyperbole is a new beginning. Many voices speak here, but we could also ask, where might they go next? There appears much to learn from the world of contemporary fiction and poetry and much play with language and form that is boldly articulated within these pages. This should therefore not be seen as the culmination of a gaitherin of talent, but a launching pad to tak tent o the possibilities that creative conversations might bring north and south and east and west. Perhaps most exciting of all the connections that are woven through this collection, is the causey that links Ulster-Scots and Scots writers. This bridgeway offers access for linguistic and literary cross-fertilisation for speakers and writers on

either side o the Narra Sea under the aegis of the Scots language in a particularly welcome reinvigoration of poetic colloquing that has been carried on fur centuries. We must remember though that we are not building a museum or a mausoleum for tha tongue, but a workshop and a playground fur oor makars tae big within.

We would hope that this collection is not the culmination of activity but a meeting point, a prelude. Evidence of so many committed to their work begs the question of how we might work towards fanning single poems to pamphlets and collections. There are challenges ahead for us to enhance and equip the community of writers and provide for them the means to work and publish and tae gie them tha audience they deserve. Nor should this be

seen as merely niche poetics or some secular form o tha Elect. Such creative verve, as displayed in this collection requires recognition, support and nurturing from tha mainstream. Fur too lang Ulster-Scots haes been perceived as a joke or a political counterfeit. Here we have evidence of a living language in full artistic expression. While Ullans may appear thran and carnaptious tae non speakers, in actuality we hae a tongue perfectly fitted to the language of the poet and writer, hankerin fur tae be listened tae.

The authors selected fur this buik are to be congratulated. Each brings an individual flair and genius tae their interpretation o tha guid Scots tongue. As editors we hae enjoyed their work immensely and we hope that the reader will appreciate tha talent that is gaihert here.

---

# Contributors

## **Brian Alexander**

Brian Alexander, married, father of two. Lecale born and bred, living in Dufferin. Grew up listening to Ulster-Scots on my father's side, reading Burns thanks to my mother's side with a bit of Aberdeenshire Doric thrown in due to some time working in that region too."

## **Robert Campbell**

Robert Campbell was raised East-Antrim. He is the author of *Lock Doon Poyams & Tales Frae the life o James Finlay Bruce*.

## **William Dickey**

William Dickey was born and raised in the Braid. His previous publications include *Timeslap*, about a rift in the space-time continuum that let a lock o bastes out of Davy Aircher's hill field, and the harrowing tale of a County Antrim totalitarian dystopia entitled *Ballymena United Three, Airstrip One*. His non-fiction work focuses on the sociological impact of the Ford Cortina (and ither oul motors).

## **Steve Dornan**

Steve Dornan is fae Cumber / Newtown in Coonty Doon. He bides in Stanehyve in north east Scotland. He's been quare an fand o tha Ulster-Scotch leid for a when o years, an his collection o poems "Tha Jaa Banes" is oot noo.

## **Roy Ferguson**

Hello, A'm Roy Ferguson, frae the airt o Rathfrilan in Coontie Doon. Proud Uslter Scot. Screiver, taaker o the Ullans an lover o Ulster Scots histrie an culture.

## **Darren Gibson**

Darren Gibson is an Ulster-Scots screever born an raised doon the Airds, in tha toonlan o' Ballyfrenis nearhaun Millisle.

The 'low country' or lower Ards has been a source of constant inspiration in Darren's writing. As a native Ulster-Scots speaker, he believes that the hamely tongue plays a vital role in understanding the identity of the Ulster-Scots people.

His past works include 'Fae tha pen o' an Aul Han' a newspaper column which ran for several years in the Belfast Newsletter. He was also a regular contributor to *Kist of Wurds* on Radio Ulster where more recently his documentary *WG and Me* was broadcast. Darren has written several screenplays in Ulster-Scots, including the

BBC's first Ulster-Scots language production, *Stumpy's Brae*. More recently Darren presented the highly acclaimed factual entertainment show *Afeared*. He is currently working on several shows for Television as well as a feature length film in Ulster-Scots.

## **Angela Graham**

Angela Graham is a film maker and writer from Belfast with Ulster-Scots roots in Antrim and Tyrone. Her short story collection, 'A City Burning' was published by Seren Books in 2020 the Edge Hill Short Story Prize 2021. Her poetry is published widely. [AngelaGraham.org](http://AngelaGraham.org) @angelagraham8 and long listed for

## **Dean Harkin**

Dean was raised on the banks of the Braid where he enjoys nothing more than spending a summer evening fishing for wild Brown Trout, a subject of several of his poems. Ulster Scots tradition was always a part of life growing up and this year past he has been learning the Lambeg drum.

## **William Henshaw**

William Henshaw is a Scots language poet, playwright, singer and musician. He is co-editor of *Lallans*, the magazine of the Scots Language Society. He is the founder of the folk group *The Bowhill Players*, who perform music celebrating Fife's Coal Mining culture. In 2018 he wrote *The Sair Road*, his Scots language account of the struggles of the Fife mining communities. He has won the *Callum MacDonald Memorial Award*, and the *McCash Scots Poetry Prize*. In 2021 *Grace Note* published two new collections of poetry: *Saul Vaigers* and *Earth Bound Companions*, in conjunction with artist *Les McConnell*. He is currently working on *Mhic Suibne Agley*, a Scots version of the Irish legend of *Sweeney*.

## **Richard Huddleson**

Boarn in Bilfawst, noo maggin' the Mediterrane. - Scriever, scholar, an' translatar.

## **Gaynor Kane**

Gaynor Kane is a poet from Belfast. She has two poetry pamphlets, and a full collection, from *Hedgehog Poetry Press*, they are *Circling the Sun*, *Memory Forest*, and *Venus in Pink Marble* (2018, 2019 and 2020 respectively). She is co-author, along with *Karen Mooney*, of *Penned In* a poetry pamphlet written in response to the pandemic (November 2020). Follow her on Twitter @gaynorkane or read more at [www.gaynorkane.com](http://www.gaynorkane.com)

## **Angeline King**

Angeline King is the *Writer in Residence* of *Ulster University* and is currently undertaking a PhD in *Creative Writing*. Angeline has written across a variety of genres, including novels, history and poetry. Her latest novel, *Dusty Bluebells*, is a family history mystery, partly written in *Ulster Scots*.

---

### **AG Lyttle**

AG Lyttle (Tony) was born in Bangor and brought up in Newtownards. He attended Regent House and graduated from Queens before marrying and moving to Surrey where he and his wife, Anita, raised dogs, cats, some fruit trees and three children – the latter giving them a fine crop of 10 grandchildren. Tony developed his love of the Ulster-Scots language through studying the writings of his great-grandfather, author of Betsy Gray, WG Lyttle, who also grew up in Newtownards. He was just 13 in 1857 when he watched Scrabo Tower being built – as revealed in The Storyteller, Tony's new biography of WG Lyttle, just published.

### **Anne McMaster**

An ex-farmer, playwright and poet, Anne lives on an old farm in mid-Ulster.

Her first collection Walking Off the Land, was published in June 2021.

Póames – poetry in Ulster-Scots – and Unexpected Item in the Bagging Area (Collected Poems) will both be published in 2022.

### **Stan McWilliams**

Stan is a Donegal-based writer, originally from Ballymena. A parent of three grown children, a farmer and wind farmer, his writing takes inspiration from a rural environment, his Antrim and Leitrim roots, and a wide range of life experiences across the globe.

Stan started creative writing in 2019 and has produced a series of short stories, a mixture of memoir, family related tales and fiction. His work has been published in the Leitrim Guardian, in Fingerpost, with a number of readings at a Tenx9 events. Drafts of the stories are in his regular blog <https://thecurlewscall.home.blog/> He is a member of the Derry writing group “This writing thing ...”.

### **Alan Millar**

Alan Millar, 55 years old, born and reared in the Laggan area of east Donegal, working as a journalist, writer and poet, in Ballymoney, Co Antrim. Been writing verse and prose in Ulster-Scots for a number of years. Winner of Scots Language Society's Hugh MacDiarmid Tassie, 2021.

Interests including open-water swimming, triathlons of the shorter sort, walking the Causeway coast and travel.

### **Robb Morrow**

I'm Robb Morrow, 22, from Poyntzpass; right on the border between Counties Armagh and Down. I'm a rower, local historian, and musician, currently working towards becoming a teacher. Thanks to my grandmother, I've been interested in Irish history all my life; and in Ireland's poetry and song. I have a passion for our heritage and being an Ulster-Scot is an integral part of my Irishness.

---

### **Stuart Paterson**

Stuart Paterson originally from Ayrshire & now living in Galloway, Stuart's spoken Scots since he could speak & now writes much of his poetry in his native language. BBC Scotland Poet in Residence 2017-18 & voted Scots Writer of the Year at the 2020 national Scots Leid Awards, he's gey chuffed tae be in Yarns & owre the Sheuch hearin yarns a when mair thir days.

### **Charlie 'Tha Poocher' Rannals**

Charlie Reynolds (alias Tha Poocher) born September 1944 in Benvardeen North Antrim I have always been interested in doing my best to preserve our own native tongue. For some years now I have been writing rhymes in Ulster Scots and articles for different newspapers etc. I do not claim to be an expert in languages as such but I enjoy speaking and writing in the language I learned at my mother's knee. I feel it is something as Ulster Scots that we should help pass on to the next generation as it is part of who we are.

### **Alan Robinson**

Alan Robinson is a dominie o' Inglis an Politicks in Abou Dhabi. Aifter haein learnt at Ballyclare High an aa Stranmillis College, he stratit scrievin in Scots these last two years.

### **Finola Scott**

Finola Scott's poems are on posters and tapestries and published widely, including in The Honest Ulsterman, New Writing Scotland and Lighthouse. A Makar of the Federation of Writers (Scotland), her pamphlet Much left unsaid is published by Red Squirrel Press.

### **Lauren Thompson**

Lauren Thompson - Lauren lives along the banks of the River Maine. She has grown up speaking Ulster Scots on a daily basis and has a strong sense of her heritage. This poem was inspired by the stories she grew up with, about her great-grandparents who lived in the house in question.

### **Lynn Valentine**

Lynn Valentine lives on the Black Isle in the Scottish Highlands. She is working towards her debut poetry collection which will be published by Cinnamon Press in April 2022, after winning their Literature Award. She has a Scots language pamphlet 'A Glimmer o Stars' out with Hedgehog Poetry Press, after winning their dialect competition. She was one of five North poets commissioned by the Scottish Poetry Library in 2020 as part of their Champions project. Lynn was awarded runner-up place in the Scots category of the Wigtown Poetry Prize in 2021.

---

**Matthew Warwick**

Mattha Warwick (yin o tha Warwicks o the Lang Rig) mebbe disnae ken muckle about scrievin guid poeams nor prose, but haes mine o hearin rail, braid Ulster-Scotch taak't tha richt wye by his granmither an granfether whan he wus nocht but a wean, bein raired nearhan Kells & Conyer in mid Antrim.

**George T Watt**

George T Watt bides in Arbroath an screives aamaist exclusive in Scots. He haes been published in Lallans, Gutter, Gallus an New Writng Scotland an haes been runner up in the McCash, Sangschaw an Wigtoun poesy competitions. He haes been featured in BBC Ulster's ae Kist o Wurds wi his Ulster Tryptich poems an is memmership secretar o the Scots Language Society/Scots Leid Associe.

---

*Brian Alexander***Nana's Orchard**

Ma mither passed awa durin' lock doon,  
An the send-aff wis no whit wis due,  
An a thocht as a greived an a greived as a thocht,  
Til a kenned jist fit a wad dae.

A'd plant a few trees in the gairden,  
An a wad dae it aw in her name,  
Some aipples an peirs, cherries an ploums,  
In the middle o the lawn at hame.

Noo, afore ye get carried awa,  
It's no like the sights o Armagh,  
But a'm telt aicht trees mak an orchard,  
Sae saxten'll staund for ma maw.

A suppose ye coud say the weans helped,  
An the wifie too in her way,  
But the Big Yin coud hae done a bit mair,  
By the nummer o stanes in the clay.

A willna git muckle the first year,  
But the neist shoud hae muckle mair fare,  
An mebbe get mesel a wee press,  
An there'll be juice eneuch to skare.

So a'll raise a glass tae ma mither,  
Tae whom nane can compare,  
An aiblins a'll syne raise anither,  
Tae check quality - jist tae be shuir.

---

# Robert Campbell

## Tha Deth oo Willie Neal

Til star licht waters aft he crept,  
Shada frae tha chestnut meet,  
Poachers draw'd doon tae tha burn,  
Tha age oo ticklers ait haed gaun,  
Wade tha waters bind tha net,  
Slip awa, an gie ain 'oor.  
Sleekit balliff slip alang,  
Clip tha line, ir gie aa fine  
Wishin frae tha hangmans raip,  
Noo til corner, practice art  
Shalla, slow an full oo stane,  
Mair fish thun reist an aal alane,  
Fae Willie Neal, oh Willie Neal,  
Fae Willie Neal, oh Willie Neal,  
Here tha plece thut Willie fell,  
Here tha plece thut Willie died.

Willie's bride she sprung frae beid,  
Waked frae sleep an horra felt,  
Childer ain their room did howl,  
Lang befaire tha body tauld  
Six wee weans an labour loast,  
Tast oo drink cud nir be loast,  
Kirk ait gie, an almner cum,  
Ail tha gifts wa nir eneuch,  
Shada frae tha chestnut crept,  
Owl swopped til fear awa,  
Niver heeded warnin gien  
Ainly saw gret salmon-o  
Fae Willie Neal, oh Willie Neal,  
Fae Willie Neal, oh Willie Neal,  
Here tha plece thut Willie fell,  
Here tha plece thut Willie died.

## Ladder

Cum till see me ladder gran,  
Tap ait stretch till hevin land  
lifts me fear abave tha thrang  
Tra valye A hae niver knowed

Thon ladder sut agin tha waal  
Sum folks hate A hae ait-aal  
Sae snaik alang wa hakin saw,  
An cut a rung awa frae me

Man wa jotter he did peer,  
Lak aip an doon ma ladder gran  
Scriven'd aip tha lucre owed  
Thein tax'd aa rung awa frae me

A blazered wean noo santer aip,  
Taak oo scuil frae which wus sent,  
A wild gran place an free fae-by  
Thein tuk oo rung fae han'in ain

Brigend cums wa promise gran  
Nivver laboured common land  
Vote me ain til kape ait safe  
Sa gie aa rung til yin sae braw

Naw sut ma fut ain buttom rung  
Coupt an brak wa weight oo me  
A'd spent sae lang ain ither thing  
Nir sut ma han till blees'd thing

Thon ladder naw ait hae'd nae form  
Fa split ain twain feel tae the grun  
Sae braked tha wuid till kindlin pill  
Nivver haed noo loost fae guid

---

Nae angels fut nir pillow stane,  
Thon fleetin thing nir truly seen  
Nir knowed tha heights ait gien till me  
Nir yince wus clim'd tae lafty perch!

Aal thon blurts peered doon ain ais.  
Knowed tha height fear mair than ais  
Tuk awa fae fear'd ais hay,  
Fae thon's aa place ye cannae hae.

---

## *William Dickey*

### **The Ulster Haiku**

DRAFT MINUTES OF THE LISNAKIRK INDEPENDENT NON-SUBSCRIBING  
RE-REFORMED SECESSIONIST PRESBYTERIAN LITERARY SOCIETY,  
15 JANUARY 2020

The meeting took place in Lisnakirk's recently opened Ulster Scots-French fusion restaurant, the Cordon D'Aff.

The minutes of the previous meeting were passed without amendment. The Chairman, Mr. Houston Thompson, thanked the restaurant on behalf of the members for the meal they'd pit oot and in particular their famous signature dessert, a Paris Bun sittin in a big bowle o Crème Anglaise. Mr. Campbell McWhirter wished to hae it recorded in the minutes of the present meeting that in his opinion, Vegetable Roll wusnae an acceptable main course vegan option. He also stated that, while he did not begrudge the ither members their pastry, he believed he could connect the miserable twa tayspoonfuls o fruit salad he'd been served in lieu to the Dunbhealbocht range of economy canned goods available at the local discount supermarket.

In his opening address, the Chairman wished to focus on the vexed subject of Ulster Scots poetry. He opined that it wus unlikely that we wud ivver see the Ulster Scots equivalent o the Rime of the Ancient Mariner, wi its hunner and 43 stanzas. Because, he said, Ulster Scots is a concise tongue in which the word prolix disnae exist. Mr. Johnston Patterson suggested that the Chairman was daein rightly tae illustrate a word he didnae recognize, and he hissel personally could, if invited, offer a good Ulster Scots rhyming slang term which conveyed exactly the same mainin.

This interruption notwithstanding, the Chairman proposed we a' had better things tae dae than sit an read, nivver mine scribe, something o that length. In fact, the Ulster Scots poet could mair than richtly convey the events and sensations of our world through the attenuated medium of the haiku. Wi the proviso that the 5-7-5 form of the original should be modified for the purpose in haun to a 5-7-5-3 or a 5-7-5-4, dependin.



---

The first experimental work that nicht was provided by Mr. Murdock Coulter, entitled Tyrone Story. He had been inspired by a big lang rin he had done on his pushbike.

*Left Toome, foun masel  
In Fintona an beyond:  
Felt like Buzz Lightyear,  
(So A did.)*

This piece was greeted with polite applause. Mr. Patterson wondered if it might be possible tae hae a meetin o the Society sometime where Mr. Coulter didnae need to remind a' present that he cud ride a pushbike. The Chairman felt that this was an unhelpful interjection, and took the opportunity to congratulate Mr. Coulter on his lang rin the previous month, starting in Fivemiletown, goin through Sixmilecross and takin a detour doon the Sevenmilestraight, before finishin at Duneight as a homage tae the 1997 hit by Steps. He said members o the Society needed tae be reminded o the need tae embrace ither types o culture. Mr. Patterson said that in his opinion, members o the Society needed tae be reminded tae stap showin aff.

Mr. Coulter excused hisselt at that point tae go tae the bathroom. Mr. Morrison Lyttle inquired if he wus away tae doonload something tae Strava. The Chairman called for order.

Mr. Kennedy Balmer's contribution followed, derived from a conversation he'd had with Samuel L Jackson whom he'd met at the Glenwherry Classic Tractor Show. He preempted his performance with a disclaimer that yer man wus gan ower a lot o oul bad language as usual:

*Thon actor knows his  
Oul tractors: the Yin Three Five  
Was wan sick MF,  
(So it wus.)*

Various members of the Society at this point murmured, sotto voce, that the atmosphere cud be cut wi a gully as they twigged that Mr Balmer was sittin fornenst Ms. Rebekah McGantry. They had been facin ither fer about three years and it had ended badly, due to a conflict of interest involving her profession as a tractor saleswumman.

There was a general consensus that Ms. McGantry was settin out tae pour a lock o' rid diesel on the situation wi her offering:

---

*Had eneuch, ditched him;  
Writ him, on work notepaper,  
A John Deere letter.  
(So A did.)*

Mr. Balmer expressed a wush tae congratulate her on her recent engagement and admire her ring, which seemed a fine example of what cud be din wi cubic zirconia. It wus well seen, he said, that her fiancé was a Young Earth Creationist, as there wus nae danger o ithers alleging that the stone oan her finger was formed ower 6,000 year ago.

Thankfully the Reverend Hutchison Witherspoon interrupted at this point to say his piece. He reminded the Society of his premillennial dispensationalist beliefs which had resulted in a very public fa'in oot with a local milk processor, whose ice cream he felt disrespected his theology.

His work was entitled:

*An unrepentant sinner oot fer a danner in the End Times wi his redeemed freens*

*Went intae the shap  
An bocht a Dale Farm Rapture;  
Came oot: left behin.  
(So he wus.)*

The Chairman complimented him on his submission, suggesting that as an allegorical work it was on a par with something John Bunyan mighta writ. He also at this point reminded Mr. Hamilton McCreevy, who being a NeoCalvinist was getting ready tae rare up on his hine legs an lair intae the clergyman, of the motion passed at the previous meeting that any debates on matters o eschatological doctrine were tae be ta'en outside.

However Mr. Coulter, who had returned from the facilities, availed of the opportunity to wade into a theological altercation himself. He asked to convey



---

through the medium of the haiku an unfortunate event the Sunday before last. Despite bein lit up like a Christmas tree, he had nearly been thrown aff his pushbike and intae the ditch by a motor cuttin across him as it left the Lisnakirk Independent Non-Subscribing Re-Reformed Secessionist Presbyterian Church after the evenin service.

*By rings shalt thou know  
Thy smiter and chariot:  
And their nummer, fower  
(So they were)*

The Reverend Witherspoon reminded Mr. Coulter of the parable of the talents, pointing out that mainie o his congregation were careful custodians of their wealth, and that as a result his was not the only Audi lavin the church that Sunday. He expressed surprise that given the claimed intensity of Mr. Coulter's battery lamp, he had not been able to note the number plate.

By now, various factions were preparing to thrapple ither and the restaurant proprietor had emerged to ask the group tae keep things down.

What was needed, said the Chairman, tae defuse the escalatin tensions was a topic to end with that a' cud agree on. And just in time, Mrs. Leah Maybin asked to express in verse how a' present had recently paid seven poun a heid tae see a very poor tribute ect in the Lisnakirk community centre:

*Wile disappointin  
His rendrin o Wagon Wheel  
Nathan Like Carter.  
(So it wusnae.)*

This was met with quiet satisfaction and the Society agreed that a productive evening had been had, paid the bill and dispersed.

---

## *Stephen Dornan*

### **Tha Sheugh**

Boys-a-dear an och-na-nee,  
Tha Sheugh's tha place tae be,  
Tae think upon tha folk that flitted  
Owre tha narra sea.

Fae there ye'll see tha same oul shores  
As they did, gleekin roon:  
Tha Rhins o Gallowaa, Mull o Kintyre,  
Fair Heid, tha Airds o Doon.

They say a brig was thonder bigged  
In tha lang syne by McCool;  
An Cruthin fled fae bleezin hames  
In skiffs brim-fou o dool.

An Patrick won owre an wrocht his wark  
Tha heathen's sauls tae save.  
An Colmcille set his curach richt  
Amang tha dunchin waves.

Fecht in Gallowglass lookin pruck  
Sailed wi swords in nieves;  
Dalriadans, Route folk, Bruces,  
Their ain ticht patterns weaved.

Reivers an Covenanters jooked owre  
Whan lookin a fly scoothole:  
Whan tha tricks o Kings, or heid yins' laas  
Were quare an ill tae thole.

---

Fae screich o dawn tae dailygaun  
Folk jooked fae there tae here:  
Tae hoke tha prittas, big tha ships,  
Or fill their heids wi lear.  
Boys-a-dear an och-na-nee,  
Tha Sheugh's tha place tae be,  
Tae think upon tha folk that flit  
Owre tha narra sea.

Gan east tae west, or west tae east,  
Aye it's just tha same,  
For whatever way we're gan, ma freen,  
Aye we're heading hame.

---

## *Roy Ferguson*

### **Sandy's Auld Tin Box**

"A cannae fine the blinkin' thing, A drapped it ain the flure",  
"An A've hunted roun' the whole dang place fir nearly half an hour!!"  
Me Da just shuk he's heid and said " A said take care ye eejit",  
"We'll hae tae hunt the Auld Tin Box an try tae fine yin like it!"  
Sae the auld tin box wis tuk oot frae behind the cupboard dure,  
Turned upside down, it's contents poured ain tae the garage flure.  
Then him an me an oor fella got doon tae hunt aroun,  
Tae try tae an fine a thingymabab frae whit wis ain the groun.  
Thon Auld Tin Box contained a mony faceted array,  
O' nuts and baults an monys a thing that maist wid throw away.  
There were washers, nails and screws and things and the odd auld rusty spring,  
Rubbish ye'd imagine, nae use fir onything.  
Bit Sandy pit them aa awa, he kep them safe ye soun.  
He pit them in thon Auld Tin Box that we'd tipped ain tae the groun.  
An we footered through whit lay there lookin' fir the thing we needed.  
An be joves a wheen o' minutes later on we hid succeeded.  
An the stuff wis gaithered aff the flur intae the box ye ken.  
Til the next time it wis needed an we railed it oot again.  
Thon Auld Box pulled us out of mony awkward situations.  
It's contents allas seemed tae hae knack tae find solutions.  
Whether it wis, nuts nor baults nor springs nor thingymababs.  
The Auld Box allas seemed tae hae a fix that did the jab.  
An it wisnae that the stuff in there wis special in it's way,  
It contained aa the debris, rubbish that wis threw away.  
Fir me Da wid allas see a use where ither people culdn't,  
Where ithers threw it in the bin, well me Da jist simply wudn't.  
The stuff he kept wis iverythin that ithers didnae want,  
An with it A'm convinced he cudda done a heart transplant.  
I seen him fix an awfa muckle wheen a broken things,  
Nae matter whit it needed, be it nuts nor baults nor springs.  
The things A larned, I niver realised it at the time,  
A wis young an no quite reddy yit tae properly divine.  
Tae value whit seemed worthless, tae niver give up hope,  
When things aren't going very weel or are ain a downward slope.  
Whin it appears all hope is gone, it's finally ain the rocks,  
A always mind the stuff in Sandy's Auld Tin Box.

---

## The Picsture

It started wae a phone call, me mither ain the line.  
She said “ Son, kin ye help me, when ye hae a bit o’ time?”  
“A’m needin a wee jab done, nae hurry, at yer leisure”  
“A’m wantin a wee nail abin the fireplace fir a picsture.”  
Say’s I” Nae bither ma, it’ll take a wheen o’ minutes”  
“A’m ain me way tae hae a look at what it needs tae dae it”  
So aff A heid tae hae a jook at whit A said A’d dae  
Sure A shud hae kenned it widnae be as simple as she’d said.  
Whin A got there, it turned oot a nail jist widnae do  
Thon picsture wid hae made a raft tae sail tae Timbaktu!!  
Sae noo A hid a hannlin, tae hing thon blinkin’ picsture,  
An get it up ain tae the waal, an no a cogly ficsture!!  
A’d hae tae bore hole abin the fireplace fir tae try,  
Tae pit a fixin ther tae houl thon picsture, an firbye,  
Tae pit in the middle o’ the place that it wis needed,  
A’d hae tae misure twice tae maak sure that A succeeded.  
Sae A pit me drill ain charge and found me tape tae let me measure,  
An foun a set o’ steps sae’s A cud reach up at me leisure.  
An up A got tae misure up the centre o’ the wall,  
A niver thocht that that wis the beginnin o it all!!  
Frae there A foun the centre fir the picsture tae be pit  
An climbed beck doon the steps tae get me drill complete wae bit  
An up again wae drill in haun tae start tae hing the picsture,  
An started the machine tae bore the hole there fir the ficsture.  
It went intae the plaster aboot half wae doon the drill bit,  
An there it pit a hole richt through the waterpipe it hit.  
Sae suddenly A’m hit aal roun me bake wae squirtin water,  
Which floostered me and made me cowp, an faal doon wae a clatter.  
As A collapsed an heided tae me meetin wae the flur,  
The drill flew frae me haun, an spun oot through the kitchen dur.  
An as it flew majesticly alang its merry way,  
It hut the pot o’ stew me ma wis maakin fir the tae.

Then o’course the stewpot landed wae rattle ain the grun,  
An the contents o’ the pot were aal splashed liberally aroon.  
Which wakened up the dug that lay upon it’d beid there sleepin’  
At which point he tuk aff across the kitchen flur a leapin’  
An made me mithers cat jump through the upper kitchen windae  
An rin oot through the gate aintae the street jist like a linty.  
An at that very moment, on the street that past me mithers,  
Wis a milk float ain it’s way deliverin milk tae aal the neighbours.  
An o’ course the fleein cat run oot and terrified the milkman,  
Which made him swerve across the road wae dangerous abandon.  
This altered coorse across the road upon that fateful day,  
Pit it across bread van that came doon the ither way.  
The driver o’ the van wis lef wae very little option,  
He swerved across the footpad and intae me mithers girden.  
It tuk oot a the gnomes an girden ornaments that sut,  
An reduced me mither’s roses intae 50 shades o’ mud.  
It’s journey through the girden wis brocht tae a sudden stap,  
Whin it hut the gavel wall firnenst the windae wae a slap.  
Thon impact shuk the waal sae hard it started tae faal o’er,  
Sae doon it went an wae it tuk the windae an the dur.  
Bit that wisnae the en o’ it, it tuk the ceiling tae  
An brusted a the water pipes and gas main there that lay.  
Resultin’ in a mighty bang, a muckle braw explosion,  
Which resulted in the hoose’s final ruinous destruction.  
Be this time a’ the neighbours hid gaithered in a line,  
An yin o’ them had used hes phone tae dial 999.  
An Ambulance an fire brigade an polis noo attended,  
Tae rescue me and mither as the tragedy hid ended.  
An rush us tae the hospital wae necessary haste,  
In plaster an in bandages the pair o’ us wiz placed.  
The hoose wiz noo in ruin and the pair us in strictures,  
An A’ because A tried me best tae hing thon blinkin’ picsture!!  
Bit the moral o’ this rammlin rhyme isnae whit ye mebbe gaither,  
A’m nae the boy tae tell ye no tae hing yer mither’s pictsture.  
Instead jis mine whin somebowdy is spinnin ye a story,  
It micht be nithin mair than ye wid hear ain Jackanory!!

---

## Darren Gibson

### Solace

Tae danner doon loast loanins  
Whaur time hings thick as stoor;  
An skellied een can aftimes glean  
Aa that cam afore.

Tae lay agin a waarm stane waa  
That croons a drumlins heid,  
Betwixt tha plan o God an man  
An free fae unco need.

Tae sklent tha breakers' fickle pad,  
As spate owertaks tha lan,  
And ower thair bak tae learn tae tak  
Solace frae tireless plan.

Tae turn yinst mair an mak fur hame  
Whane'er tha day iz gan –  
Oor peace new-made wi him 'at sayed  
Be still, an know I am.

---

## Angela Graham

### In 2019 An Ulstèrman Mines Apollo 11 1969

Ma feither caa'd Wee Tam's "Tha Muin"  
fur tha eyefu frae tha gutter o "thon Deil's Den",  
tha mair, tae a weefla, "Iniquity", a stern kirk-wurd,  
glamour't thaim coup't "Deil's Ain".  
Yit, canny, A luk't up tae Him, tha Lord  
That wrocht tha stars, tha muin.

But thon ither god, tha Yankee wan, riz then.  
A lairnt new words – "Trajectory", "Jettison"  
And I sloughed off my pleghmy, chagrining "ain" –

Fiftie year on, wisde-up, A'm bak tae yirth agane.

A revised version of a poem first published in The Bangor Literary Journal, Issue 9,  
August 2019 as 'Re-entry, Ulster'

---

## Waitin On Tha Whussle

36<sup>TH</sup> (ULSTER) DIVISION, 7.21 a.m., 1<sup>st</sup> July 1916

A'm liein here this while  
– yin o General Nugent's men –  
oot in nae-man's-lan gye an earlie  
that bit neardèr tae the Hun,  
tae be readie, an mair nor readie,  
fur whan tha whussle blaas.

A'm liein here this lang while,  
ma fizog in tha glar,  
tha barrage up aheid.  
Barrage,  
a saft, saft wurd  
fur a wile heavy thing.

Barrage, Barrage – lik whut ye'd say  
tae peacify an aillin baist,  
straikin its sheeglin hide,  
“Barrage, barrage, oul son,  
yer pain'll soon be bae ye.”

Barrage! Barrage! Barrage!  
a wrathsome nieve, poondin,  
duntèrin, poondin...  
    ... till tha delf leps frae tha boord  
    an crashes doon agane.  
    Agane, agane he'd dae it,  
    a man tae murdèr  
    onie bit o peace.  
    A'd lie, face doon, oot o his road,  
    ma hauns tae ma lugs  
    tae keep him oot o ma heid.  
    Ma faither...

Aa tha wrathsome faithers o tha worl  
ir here this day,  
blattèrin thair weans  
in yin great stramash.  
We ir sae smaa unnèr this sky o shells,

---

tha grun aneath iz swallaed up bae soon  
an we its spuins! Thon scraich  
wull split ma heid!

Struck deaf...!  
Nae soon? Tha  
guns hae  
stapt.

Yin mìnìt for tae tak a braithe...

Yin mìnìt fur tae see, sae clear,  
sae clear, thon lang-deid man,  
his nieve aye clinchit  
but, sae clear jest noo,  
a luk o pain  
flictèrin owre his face...

Yin mìnìt mair  
an A'll be on ma feet  
fur God an Ulstèr an tha Croon...

Ma Faither God, ye didnae spare yer son.  
Inunnèr hammer blaas Ye leed him.  
Still an aa he sayed, “Intae Yer hans...”

Ma sperrit... can A trust Ye wi it?  
An wi ma feither's...?  
... fu Barrage, r tha sake o thon yin nekkeed luk o sorra,  
eneuch tae mak ma hairt gae oot tae him

an thair's tha whussle  
an tha wurd  
that haes me up  
an fort  
intae yer hauns...

---

## Extract from 'THOARN', a novel-in-progress by Angela Graham

### Back Story

Set in rural Northern Ireland in 2016/17. A stranger, a Mr Connolly, a well-off young widower from Belfast, has unexpectedly bought the newly empty rectory and its land beside Patterson Caulfield's dairy farm. The Caulfields had expected to be the new owners, given a long-established gentleman's agreement with the Church of Ireland. Eighteen months beforehand, Patterson's older son, Alan died in an accident on this land, in the Thorn Field. An outbreak of Bovine TB is pressurizing the Caulfields' Scannard Farm and Patterson's wife has done the unthinkable and left him. Will she split the farm by going for a divorce? And Alan's widow, Becky seems to be intent on staying in the couple's new house on the farm, out of spite, it seems to Patterson.

"Time A paid Mr Connolly a wee visit, nighburlylike," Patterson Caulfield said. "A spied some o thaim badgers in tha Thoarn Fiel. He needs warned about his fences an wals. An he hasnae done ocht wi thon fiels. Cud be he wud be wullin tae gie us tha mindin o thaim. Fer a price."

"He'll niver faa fer that," said Victor.

Patterson shrugged. He loaded a fork with sausage and considered it. "Whut fowk thīnk wile dear theday? Chaip as chips themorra." He munched the sausage. "Ye hae tae fin tha yin thīng that maks aa tha difference." Victor looked puzzled. "Ach, thīnk o gaein tae mairket. A rowth o sumthin sells chaip; a wheen sells dear." Victor was at a loss. "Ye'r nat thair yit? Lukkit. Whut hae we that Connolly bes eftèr?"

"A cannae say, Da."

"Ach, come on!"

"Sure, whut hae we but kye an fiels an hens?"

Patterson put down his knife and fork. "Victor. Call you tae mine whut thon estate agent sayed."

Victor cast back and came up with, "Peace an quiet?"

Patterson nodded emphatically and tapped his raised thumb, saying, "Yin!" Raising his fore finger he said, "Noo, yin, twa... Whut aa dae we share wi Connolly?"

"Boondaries," said Victor. "Hedges. Fences. Ach, Da! Wattèr?" He was getting frustrated. "Airspace?"

With uncharacteristic patience Patterson merely nodded.

"Thinkin outside tha box, we ir, son. Sae, twa: boondaries an aa that gaes ower thaim." Seeing incomprehension, Patterson sat back. "He haes bin here hoo lang, Victor?"

"Three weeks?"

"Three

weeks. Noo, aff ye'r fur gettin rid o sumthin that haes itsel rootit whaur it shudnae be

, dae ye houl bak till it's takin its aise an haes itsel seedit iveriewhaur? Naw. Ye tak a guid luk whaur tha ruits o it are runnin an ye gie it a wee shiggle here an wee tug thair an ye slak the grun aroon it an, whan tha moment's richt, sure, it comes awa in yer haun aisy.

"An whut's tae upruit Connolly?"

"Here's a boadie that haes lost his wife an upped his ain roots an planted hissel whaur he kens naebodie. An naebodie kens him. Tha man cud be up tae onythin. Cud be. He hasnae daen ocht wrang yit, a coorse."

"A coorse. Sae ...?"

"Sae, keep yer ees an lugs apen, Victor. Frenlylike.

See whut comes tae haun. Sumthin will. Naebodie kens Connolly yit, sae who better tae tell thaim nor us, his nighbers." Patterson took a gulp of tea and a mouthful of bacon. "Noo," he went on, "bak tae nummer twa. About thaim boondaries. Hae we ony wee weak spots alang tha line?"

"Ach, nat so's ye'd notice. Apart frae, mebbe... sein we were tae be getting tha rectory fiels A didnae fash mesel wi tha boondarie thair. A waes tae git tae't roon about noo."

"Lea it.

Nae wunnèr thaim brocks hae bin cavoortin in thair. Let's see aff Connolly's tha fairmer's freen. Ye were oan about airspace. D'ye nat see what aa he shares wi us? Are we nat at his mercy, a city slicker that knows naethin about fairmin?"

Victor nodded. Patterson cut and folded a slice of soda around a lump of bacon. As he chewed, Victor poured him more tea. "Are ye nat haein some yersel?" Patterson asked.

Victor shook his head. "Ye were on about peace an quiet. Whur dae they come in?"

"Ye're a busy young fairmer. Whiles an betimes ye hae tae work nichts an earlie moarnins an it isnae yer fault tha machinery's noisy an ye keep yer lichts on gin it's sae dairk. An then, God help ye, in yer hurry ye mak tha odd mistake, lik thon gravel or ..."

"Thon waesnae my ..." Victor began indignantly.

"... or ye spill a bit o' slurry here or there," Patterson went on.

"O, aye," said Victor, getting the point.

"But ye aye gie yer apology – afore it happens agane."

Victor frowned. "Yer man's nat goin tae shift ower a bit o noise or inconvenience."

Patterson, pleased with his line of reasoning, was almost playful. "Whut did A say about a slaknin here an a loosnin there? It gets sae ye'd rather shift nor stay. It's seldom tha wan thīng shifts a man," he added decidedly.

"Aye," Victor acknowledged. "An whut shifts a woman? Tell me that! Thon

---

Becky...”

Patterson lifted a hand. “She haes a sell-by date, tha same wumman. Hoo lang can she houll oot? She’s èfter bein in B’fast. High heels an fancy claes an fal-de-lals. Her da’s puttin her up tae thaim glaiks aboot oor Ian. But we cud loosen her a bit. We maun change tack wi Becky. She’s far too guid fer tha likes o Scannard.” He winked at Victor. “Waistit here. She shud hae a big job, wi a fancy flat an aa.”

“An a new husband?”

“Aye.”

“Da,” Victor said, uncertainly. “Ye wudnae want tae be pushin her too hard.”

“For why?”

Victor shifted uncomfortably. “A hadnae seen this afore but... just listnin tae ye talkin thair... she haes aa she’s eftèr on her durestep, aff she spies it.” Patterson stared at him blankly. “Thon Connolly. He haes whut she’s eftèr.”

There was silence, in which the gusting of rain against glass made itself heard. Both men were seeing themselves pincered by a union between these two, worsened if Scannard went into crisis and Becky’s family pressed on with any ambitions they might have on it. Father and son could see their planned expansion achieved but none of it in Caulfield hands. Patterson stood up suddenly, setting everything on the table jangling.

Here was a new difficulty. He could never bear to be balked. No solution came readily to mind. All the more hotly did he resent these people who blocked his way. Chief among them, Connolly. A man he had yet to meet.

Victor was alarmed. “Da, A didnae mean tae...”

Patterson silenced him with a gesture. He went to the window and gazed out on the thorn tree, the rectory roofs. He forced himself to play this forward, like a film, giving Becky this move and that one; Connolly’s possible responses. Whatever way he looked at it, it was bad, except for one thing.

“She’d gie him nae peace till she got him bak tae tha city.” He turned slowly round to Victor. “An she wud be fer sellin Alan’s hoose, an tha rectory bak on tha mairket alang wi it.” He shook his head. “We hae a hard road afore us. Yin turnin eftèr anither alang tha way. Hard tae tell hoo things wull play oot.” Patterson came to the table and stood looking down at Victor who could not decipher the unusual expression on his father’s face, something determined yet vulnerable. Then, to his astonishment, he felt Patterson’s hand on his shoulder. “Tha main thiing,” he said, “is that the twa o us ir in this thegither.” He looked intently at Victor. “Faither an son. Ye ken whut’s in ma mine. Faither an son.” Victor felt the pressure of the grip increase till Patterson moved abruptly to his chair and set to on the remainder of the fry.

Victor sat on for a long moment, aware that something momentous had happened. He had been recognised in a new way. He was the son. Since Alan’s death he’d been the surviving son. But not till now the only son. The son and heir. His

---

father had never before included him to this extent or given such space to his insight. In that readiness, with its hint of neediness, Victor had glimpsed a ratchetting of the wheel that brings one generation a notch down and the next a step up. He felt an unaccustomed compassion for his father, mixed with admiration for him and a heady sense of possibility for himself. He knew no explicit statement of loyalty was needed yet he couldn’t help saying, “A’m wi ye, Da. Aa’ tha way. Aa’ tha way.” They had a strategy now and he would do his part.



---

## Dean Harkin

### Ghosts of tha Soorhill

When I danner along tha loannen at nicht,  
I hear the oul sangs and see tha oul sights,  
O days gan by in this pairt o tha toon,  
O tha music that played when tha sun went doon,

Fer tha fiddles they played an tha whistles they screeched,  
Drink nicht hae been taken but in tha memory it etched,  
Tha soonds that came fae tha oul Soorhill,  
The tunes that were played by oul Joe Mills.

---

## William Henshaw

### Forth Brig:

**Mhic Suibne contemplates suicide from the railings of the Forth Road Bridge.**

I hunker attour the palins o the brig  
bidan on a weirdly swaw  
tae tummel me erse balearie  
intil a month o muins.

Hauf ower, hauf ower  
a birlan vertiginous drap,  
feart, I flep, am sweirt and blate  
tae trust this tryst wi Fate.

Yet whaur's the pruif I'll dee?  
I'm buird-brained, fedder-baned,  
harns-unsained, wits-wuddit,  
fou-crackit as a rinnan yolk.

Afore I face Daith's herty skelp,  
brek up in atoms ablaw  
I'll swick and jouk the faa,  
flee somewhaur sauf and saft.

Haurd-faced, this concrete river  
that's fashed nane by ma switherins,  
that goves up, mense, a grey gate flawin  
doun the stank o time and space.

Fain am I for sweit scowff o obliviou,  
widdershin skailin, skitin  
doun the daurk grate whaur  
the green waagirse is grouwan!

Upby I am thirlt and confined,  
Here in the airy chaumers o the luift,

---

the heichmaist crouns o birks and lums,  
the strae-piss bedlams o the mind

Erstwhiles cursed - caunle, buik and bell,  
I hae faaed and drappit and faaed  
fae sanity's nest, a wallydraigle  
pursued by a hert-skaith I winnae tell.

Fae twistit terrors and grues,  
fae girnan bogles wi their mind-branks,  
fae the lourdsome seickness o the heid,  
that liquifies aa life-howp.

In the briary busses and jyles o thorns  
I live anely tae lowp skeirie as a speug,  
yivveran and rouse, derved, tentfou  
o ilka smaa reishlin i the hedgeraw.

I stecher in a jummelment,  
a yellyhouin hauflin bidin the hour  
till I am shot like a stag on the hill,  
harpooned like a whaul on a spear.

Vaigan the sky-roads in raggit duds,  
cawed laich, dementit, terror-stouned,  
shitten masel at a trummelin o a brainch,  
Ocht, Makkar and Saufior pray for ma saul...

---

**In Praise O Trees**  
**Composed by Mhic Suibne when he alighted at Blairadam Woods**

Ilk ane its ain letter  
screivit in green ink  
attour airy page.

Fowthsome Aik,  
boughty Summer King,  
strang-boukit, swack-limbed.

Aller weet til the cuit  
sauf as crannogs, undosinnit,  
Willnae skail a secret.

Ash, beilds the halie well  
Whaur the sacrit deer  
draps antlers.

Aspen,  
peeliwallie, trummelin  
like a daftman or a ghaist.

Birk, siller leddy,  
gracefou and bruckle  
yet haurd as horn.

Bourtrees,  
mither tree, musick tree,  
biggin tree, kistin tree.

Hawthorn, fouthsome  
wi flouerein starns,  
yett til the eldrich kinrick.

Hazel, feeds  
Wyce saumon  
In the nut strewn puil.

Holly, Winter King.  
crouned wi thorns,  
bluid-drap gems.

---

Larick  
tae hap a saul  
fae the evil ee.

Osier, Sauch, Willow:  
green hingin temples  
o the cantie watter gods.

In the hert o the Plane tree  
A deid saul snores -  
paice ettle tae it.

Pine wuid sweits a saining ile:  
a yowie scent  
curing doul and drear.

Rowan,  
the learie  
lichts Winter's lamp.

I bide i the Yew  
abythe yett o the Kirk:  
Naebodie herms me wi arrae or stick.

---

## *Richard Huddleson*

### **Is that even a language?**

Saxon, let yer seek, sore, an tired tung tak rest.  
Yer upreuter language cannae deal the best.  
On the tungs of royals an the Brus,  
this norn speik cuts loos.  
This is a language wi' no feare.  
Ullans comes craipin' up past yer oxter  
to quhispir a wee kickshaws in yer ear  
and then she'll skite away and disappear.  
Wi' no maister to appease,  
she's the wan that has ye on yer knees.

---

# Gaynor Kane

## Wynter

Wynter strides o'er hoary horizon, clammers  
the hillheid o' Craigantlet. A giant, happed-up  
in red troosers, white fur buits an gluves;

his cloak is snaw-blanket blu.  
Wyter's hair, eebrows an whuskers  
are icicles saftened wi snawflakes.

An annual blow-in, a carnapshus big brat,  
bringin a blizzard tae wreath the landscape,  
distance blurred by blind-drift. Farmers cum runnin,

still puttin on ther coats; they race  
tae pastures tae bring livestock  
tae safety o stable an byer.

Wynter watches, guldens out more snaw  
and steps across quarry, Cairngaver, Ballybarnes  
down tae Bradshaw's Brae. Sittin at Kiltonga

tae watch wild birds, he dips a finger in the pond-  
ice crystals form, spreads like shawl lace  
across the water, geese girn, honk an toot.

Trees and bushes tifted with spider's webs, turn  
In tae fancy palaces, pansies and cyclamen  
become frosted-glass ornaments.

Wynter watches walkers shiver, he catches  
in his mittens their hoar-frost breath clouds.  
They tak about him but dinnae ever tak tae him-

"Aye it's quare n cauld,  
wynter's fairly got a grip.  
I'm foundered!"

---

## Where's ma Ulster Scots?

I'm frem the lowlands: Carrowdore, Ballyhay, Doorey's Hill  
and then the Newtown, up the Booton, Scraba stone  
and Strangford Lough and yet these words ar hard ta write.

Why's my tongue tied? Is my Ulster Scots just a figure  
o speech? Will ye hae a cup a tae in you haund?  
The stramash o ma forefithers-English, English, Scots,  
Ulster, Scots, Ulster Scots, Ulster.

The melting pots of shipbuilders, farmers, shipbuilders,  
carpenters, shipbuilders, masons; free. Free speech  
in the Queens tongue, no the hamely tongue.  
Tongue tied, but I've a quare haundfel o words tae set free.

---

# Angeline King

## Nan and Dan

Ye keek yer upturtn neb throu the letterbox, sniff the smotherin scent o wee buns and gulder, 'Naaaan!'

Ye wait.

The birds are peckin at the bird box, the mizzle is seepin frae the roses and the concrete steps are skinklin like marble.

A face wi boss cheeks appears at the windae. It's no the hale o yer Aunt Nan. But she opens the deur, pits in her teeth, gies ye a smile an ye're rich.

It's Tuesday. The twin tubs are sweelin their hips — yin for waashin, yin for rinsin. And the buns are oot o the oven and Aunt Nan has eyes on the bak o her heid.

Tchick, tchick! A chap on the han.

She's oot o sicht, sae ye open the fridge and gorb milk frae the carton an ye spit and ye squirm. Yeuch! Butter Milk.

A tirl o the tap an ye jeuk yer heid unner and spit oot the soor-like liquid as yer eyes oag up tae the windae tae see her back binkit ower the coal bunker, white bloomers skirtin an inch aneath her flourie dress. Ye sleek tae the larder an hoke oot the sweet tin. Dolly mixtures tickle yer tongue. Brandy balls kittle yer coots. An she smiles, an ye ken that she kens an she points tae the buns that are cool eneuch tae eat, an ye're rich.

The sun is oot and ye hilter-skilter tae the yard — a lang, skinny yard wi piri cockalories an Long Johns swaverin in the breeze. And there's Uncle Dan — thumbs heukit intae his braces — hunkerin doon on breeze blocks bridged wi a wuiden plank. Ye need a wee-wee, sae ye lowp ower the baks tae the watter-closet in the yard and pull the lang heavy chain an ye feel rich.

The tape recorder is unner the China cabinet wi the porcelain shoe. It's Mary Nelson frae doon the road an her voice is Brown Lemonade. Fizzlin an fleetin up the Waterloo Road. Nan sings alang. Can ye hear her? Larlarlar?

An she's taakin aboot the oul days. 'Saes she tae me,' she saes to me as the phone rings an then she's the Queen, 'Hellow, Nan Hewitt speaking.' She's leanin on the China cabinet wi the porcelain shoe and she's keekin intae the mirror fixin a kink wi a comb. An then she's Nan again. 'Saes I tae her,' saes she tae me.



Dan Dan, the funny wee man. He haes a kist wi a clarinet an a kist wi a fiddle. What'll it be? Fiddly dee. He's aye on Radio is Dan Dan, the funny wee man.

An ye're rich when yer feet gae fiddly dee.

The cake stand poses wi red roses and gold-trimmed edges. A quardrille o cornt-beef pieces oan the bottom tier. A tap crooned wi butterfly buns.

'An, here dear, but it's quare guid simmer,' saes Nan, an the brisslin fire rairs up peach on pretty faces. Mrs Small, Mrs Perry and Mrs Wharry. Nae first names — only June, who sets the hair. An the setting lotion is pink, an ye smell it throu yer eyes when ye pour the tay.

'Isn't thon a quare cup o tay?' saes Aunt Nan.

'Och aye' saes Mrs Perry. "She's a great wean."

An ye smile frae yer belly tae yer lips.

---

# A G Lyttle

## Scraba Tooer

A mine weel the blue skies,  
Day-lang sinshine forbye,  
An us waens on the horse  
Pu'in cairtloads o hye.  
A can yit hear the burd's cries  
As late growed tha oor  
An the' flocked hame till roost  
Flyin past auld Scraba Tooer

Scraba Tooer, strang an square,  
Stanin proodly up thair  
On yer brae that slapes doon till tha shoore.  
Are tha whuns yit in bloom?  
On a late efternuin,  
Dis thair fragrance yit linger by oul Scraba Tooer?

In tha fiels hokin taters  
A wud wark tha day lang.  
Gazin doon ower Strengford,  
A wud sing this oul sang.  
An then trudgin hame later  
Throu sinshine or shoore  
A lukit yince mair  
Up till oul Scraba Tooer.

A mine weel a-waakin  
Up tha oul Scraba Brae  
Wi a lassie aside me  
Yin bricht simmer's day.  
A can yit hear hir taakin  
As A gied hir a floore,  
An stole yin sweet kiss  
Unner oul Scraba Tooer.

---

Mony yeirs hae A spen't  
In wann'rin awa  
Far ower the ocean -  
Muckle kintries A saw.  
But of a that A've kent  
Yin place, best fur shair,  
Is yit Coonty Doon,  
Up by oul Scraba Tooer.

Scraba Tooer, strang an square,  
Stanin proodly up thair  
On yer brae that slapes doon till tha shoore.  
Are tha whuns yit in bloom?  
On a late efternuin,  
Dis thair fragrance yit linger by oul Scraba Tooer?

---

## Anne McMaster

### Notes o'simmertim

It's bonnie thing tae watch wee burds  
feed thimsels in tha bak en' o' tha yeir.  
They drap frae tha brench,  
quïck an' quait an' bricht -  
lik th'notes o'simmertim falin' noo.  
They pik a seed an' soar tae safetie,  
carryin' colour tae th'sky.  
They bis shedda noo  
agin tha shoartnin' day.  
These wee notes o'tha saison.  
Tha' las' sang.

### Thenks

Tha' oul kets s'it quait agin tha' byre -  
in a moarnin ritual thet leaves them readie fir tha day.  
These are the tuthery bastes -  
seeds o' tha bak en o tha year  
gethered thik an' wechtie on thair fur,  
cuts an' scars frae thair mony fechts at the sraich o day.  
Yin lug torn hauf awa.  
Another ket blin in yin ee -  
tae wile fir folk tae haundle  
whaniver tha rat bit bak.  
They hunt haird. Ketch tha' vermin.  
Keep tha fairm clear.  
Noo tha dairy is empie an' the bastes are gane.  
Bot tha kets bes houlin' on -  
a half muin o'hunters sittin' wile still.  
The fairmer hefts tha bucket up.  
Tips her ower.  
Fills thir bowle.  
Gies thaim thenks as best he knows.  
Tha kets houl on a minit  
then juke their heids  
an' drink.

---

## Stan McWilliams

### The Ulster Revival

Researching the life of my Great Grandfather I came across The Ulster Revival. It began near Ballymena in 1857 and over the following two years reported one hundred thousand conversions, mostly across the north of Ireland. The more I read into this religious and social upheaval, the more I realised I had underestimated its influence on the lives of my father and his family, and indeed on my own. One hundred and fifty years after the event an upbringing in the Presbyterian church still resonates with this revival. This monologue could be that of Robert McWilliams, my Great Grandfather born in 1822 and who died around 1906 and was married at the Connor church where The Revival began.

"In the year o 1858, aal that time ago, at a prayer meetin in Connor o a Saturday evenin, A saw the Licht, was saved by the Grace o God. A changed boadie A was, monie didnae believe it. At the stairt o that year the Maister a was workin tae said he'd gie me yin mair chance, tauld me if A went tae those meetins in Connor maybe they would turn me aroon, cause he cudnae. A tuk his word an a wheen o us went doon tae Connor yin brave Saturday efternoon in December. A year efter A was born again in Jesus, ma terrible sins aal washed awa.

On a wee farm o land near Glarryford there were nine o us born an reared, mair nor twa hours dander frae the toon. A wet patch o grun where the flood would aft come up tae the hoose dure. We were workin as shane as we were able, some goin tae the weavin, an aalways plenty o food on the table for young an auld. A guid Christian family we were. But A got yin scutch on the lug too monie frae Daaddy an cut oot for the toon on me ain, wi naethin but the claes A was standin in. A had a fierce temper then, an nae respect. But A felt A was weel able tae look efter masel, went tae Ballymena an took the first job A was offered. A was big an strang, onie work was aisy an A aalways had pennies rattlin in ma poocket.

A had nae interest in God or onie kirk, an A was shane dallyin wi Kathleen, a wee catholic girl, she wrocht in the kitchen up in the Castle. We were weel got up thegither, leevin as man an wife, in the wee room we had up there in Bridge Street. When A think on it noo, the Devil was blindin me tae ma ain sins.

When Kathleen left tae gae hame tae Moneyglass A sore missed ma family. Afore

---

lang A staired runnin efter the wee still, anyways A could find it. O a fair day there'd be nae work ava an likely nane the next either. Daaddy sent yins efter me, but they had no say ower me. A was committin sins then a dinnae want tae think about in this life, or the next. An then the Master put it up tae me and by the Grace o God A foond salvation in thon hoose in Connor.

In the Connor School Hoose A met the Reverend Moore an first converts wha were takin Bible study an prayin, aboot thirty o us aal thegither. They toul us tae read the Bible, see the truth o it oorsels, an pray that Jesus would save sinners like us frae Hell's eternal fires. It was like they were taakin jist tae me thon day, A felt ma hairt swell, beatin in ma chest, an a knowed A had come til the richt place. James, yin o the converts, said he would teach me hoo tae read. He showed me the words and gien me the understandin o it. A held the Holy Book in ma rugh hauns that nicht, a grown man tryin haird tae stap frae shakin.

A was soon able tae read a when o words, an in nae time ava A could read the first verses frae John Chapter Three. James stood me up at yin o the prayer meetins, A read a when o verses, wi aa tha folk listenin, tae me – a drunkard, a fornicator, a terrible sinner.

'Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, Verily, I say unto thee, cept a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom o God.'

Ma heid was spinnin when A sat doon, the crood murmurin "Praise the Lord", A'll never forget it tae ma dyin day.

When the Springtim came prayer meetins an bible studies were goin on aal day an nicht. In the school hoose, in the kirk, in folks' hooses, and sometimes in barns or outside. Those yins aalreadie saved were takin the meetins. They hadnae much learnin themsels but they aal knowed their Bible. The yins wi big strang voices did the best preachin, A think. Boys a dear, what nichts there were, sometimes A didnae get hame tae near dawn."

--0--

By harvest time A had seen monie faa doon, the preacher takin them up as new men an weemen, born again in Jesus. A saw a when o bad yins amang them forbye, A must say. Some had tae be carried awa wi nae much sense aboot them. A was houlin baak then, no takin ma final step, A suppose the Devil was still whisperin that A was aalricht, tae thole it a wee while langer.

---

Yin stormy nicht efter the harvest was in, an like ma first prayer meetin, I felt the Preacher lookin straicht at me. A staired tae sweat, ma claes itchin on me. A heard him say loudly an slowly,

"The Holy Spirit's talkin tae ye, an yersel alane! Jesus or the fires o Hell? Ye must decide! There's nae ither way. This could be your last chance. Ye micht never hear these words again."

His hauns came doon on the big Bible wi a slap.

"The Holy Spirit's chosen ye! Noo's your time!" an bowin his heid he finally says:

"Let us pray thegither, for the lost souls, that they micht come tae Jesus the nicht."

A chatter o voices filled the room.

"A'm a poor sinner. Save me. Save me" A hear mesel say. A feel a licht abain me, the heat is fierce.

"A'm a poor sinner! Save me Jesus! Save me!" A called oot.

Aroon me amid the babble A hear shouts o "Praise the Lord", "The Lord's workin." an ither voices A cannae fathom.

A'm on ma knees afore the preacher, wi ma heid an airms on the coul earth flure, his airms oot abain me like the Archangel Gabriel. Tears are flowin freely as I feel the licht o the Holy Spirit an see the waitin airms o Jesus. Somebody helps me tae ma feet. The Preacher wipes ma tears awa wi the flats o his hauns.

'Dae ye repent your worldly sins brither?'

'A do. A do.' A say, catchin ma breath.

'Will ye follae Jesus tae the enns o the earth?'

'A will, A belang tae Jesus.'

'Your iverie sin is washed awa by Jesus' blood. Robert, join us, the Saved, Happy in Jesus. By the grace o God ye've been touched by the work o the Holy Spirit.' He said an moved on tae ithers an A didnae hear him oniemair.

A think A'm greetin like a baby as hauns touched ma shoulder an ma heid, then it's James wi his airms aroon me.

'Welcome Robert, intae the fold where ye belang.'



About twenty o us were saved that nicht, an monie mair efter. We were fu o oor new lives, excited an fu o joy, readie tae praise God. Some took the prayer meetins but A wasnae cut oot for it. A helped oot an witnessed ma life's story an conversion as aften as A could.

A heerd that no aal the clergy were for The Revival, but nane preached agin it, in the Presbyterian kirks oniehoo. Some folk didnae like the strange happenins, the faintin and the like, but that was God an the Holy Spirit workin amang us. A heerd as weel that some o them spake oot agin the twarthy weemen preachers we had, an some even suggestin it was wrang tae raise the blaak man tae a higher station than God intended.

A was a Christian man efter that, ne'er backslidin. An A joined wi ma family again. When the Revival spread tae Ballymena there was a wile excitement, folks meetin iverieplace, even in the streets wi monie's a youngster amang them. Thoosans mair were born again in the Lord Jesus. The auld kirks couldnae houl them aal, an in '59 A helped build Ballymena's new West Church. An A was witnessin whenever A could at some o the hunners o meetins goin on at the time.

The Lord was good tae me an A was nivver short o a day's work again. A met a young Christian wumman, Eliza frae ma hameplace, an we were married in 1867. Although A was gettin on in years, by then we had four fine weans. God blessed oor union. They were raised in the strict Christian faith. Wi us, they kept the Sabbath day and went tae tha Sabbath school, an we aal read tha Guid Buik an prayed thegither gye an aften. Iverie yin o them growed up tae hae a trade, so they wouldnae end up a day labourer the likes o me. This toon valyes their trades, an honest work an effort, for it bis the will o God as weel.

A hope ye hear, an heed this story o an auld man, a loast sinner wha repented an earned the rewards o a life wi Jesus."

## Alan Millar

### Religion river

ocean sea river burn sheugh  
me  
saule capillaries veins arteries bouk

Religion river  
slow bumbee scud  
draas gowden bree  
twixt high paps an desert floor

Watter louns alang  
wi rootlets teemin  
leevin threeds  
kerried far

Gaethers triumphery  
bonnie leid ba's form  
clarried gree o ilka hue  
wee kirks o lear

Middlin an big  
skailt tha length throuither  
oddtimes menseless  
stooshie biggers

On tha gey scud throu  
oor ain vales Rosaleen,  
strang smeddum  
wile roguery

On tha lang lang  
skiff alang tae us  
ay at watters en  
creepin farrit

---

Oure bae our  
ower ilka shaulder  
echas frae tha deed,  
leid frae richt bak

aiblins closer, for nae schule  
nor shoal o folk  
nor single chiel  
gaes bak upstream

Memory bigs  
ilka taile an yarn  
folks an fishes  
toons an toonlans

Bonnie paps  
poke abeen clouds  
loost an foun in mins ee  
or spoke amang freens

Twixt them an me  
leevin, war an poyums  
kirks loved by monie  
at rowlin rivers en

Wrang flow bad flow  
shouldnae flow  
says disnae say  
dark Rosaleen nighbour

Oppression river  
sends girn boadies  
hard as saft privilege  
could make them

Nae saft taile for us  
nor name  
nor naethin, bigoted maistly  
kerries tha gree

---

Naw gowden bree  
bitter minded teuch vinegar  
bigs gey chapels  
sorra drooned

In ticht leid nieves  
Bladnockfoyle smiles  
yin river nae river hairts  
sees aa disnae see

Rogue pooshin heirskip  
Rosaleen equal  
I jaloose naw equal.  
Needs abeen.

---

### Tha lament o Wullie Whun wha loost his jeg

'A loost mae jeg, gurned Wullie Whun,  
sat fornenst tha narra slap.

'On mae heed bates doon tha sun,  
'am sic a state o scunnered sap;

'saft feathered erms are nae guid  
'for a scabby heeded warl,

'I wuz built for drawin bluid

'tae sleekit snash an snarl

'folk's skin ilk day.'

'Jeggin wee girls lik a Singer

'tha pedal tae tha fleer,

'intae tha bane o fermer's finger

'tae tha big lad sheds a tear;

'erms o spite an me tha mester

'a gashin whun's wee giftie,

'afore these days o saft disaster

'nae chat o hamely dainty

'wuz had ilk day.'

'Haule yer whisht,' lauched Phelim Feely,

his crabbit hawthoarn neighbour,

'sic tha keeche we heddie swallie,

'sic gurnin creeshy slabber;

'that yer jugs are poortith saft

'lays not a boadie fashed

'yer granny heard it first, an lauched

'tae see yer badness richtly slashed

'tis true this day.'

'Steek yer bake gloatin get,'

Wullie guldered doon tha brae,

'lang time scober scobin yet

'naethin sic did granny say.

'Yer tha hoore o septic thumb,

'yer bouk's a sack o preens

'for sticking guid folk up tha bum,

'yer ilka jeg in evil teems

'tis clear ilk day!'

'Life is but a jeg, mo chara,'

Feely blattered bak disdain,

'that stoves richt throu tae marra,

'or blunts itsell on bane -

'oh whar's yer quills o' porcupine,

'yer lobster claws or crabs,

'yer muckle ainst were deadly spines

'turned intae mince kebabs,'

he mocked that day.

Wullie's broo in thranness set,

tha things ye heddie thole;

how'd he sic a neighbour get,

whase hairt's as blak as coal.

Phelim tae was deep set fashed,

for scoffin couldnae hide

his ilka hope an prayer lang dashed,

tae find a nicer slap tae bide,

ay clear tae aa.

Twixt tha twa flits Meggie megpey,

keeche seekened bae tha patter;

aften tae tha thoarn she'd fly,

or whun, it didnae metter.

When aft ootbye on messages,

keeked baith gypes frae afar,

tha maist pretty pair o savages

that iver groughed frae glar,

she thocht ilk day.

Wullie's robe o gowden petals

pricked her fancy tae tha root;

tha simmer sark on Feely settled

gart tickles throu her bosom shoot.

A wheekin sicht they cut thegeither,

ay spoiled bae fash an snash,

instead o hairtsome nighbour blether

they hateful hack an hash,

eneuch wuz eneuch.

---

'Twa bonnie bushes ay a stooshie,  
she skreighed abeen them fleppin,  
'ye ha'e mae heed a swithered cooshie,  
'me wee hairt aye buck leppin;  
'stap this hateful crabbit screed,  
'shake yer sprays an hug,  
'set aside tha menseless leid  
'alloo quiet tae mae lug,  
                          'I beseech this day.'

'You'll get yer prick bak Wullie dear;  
Meggie saftered her wee thrapple,  
'Be a whun an dinnae fear,  
coorse her whispers crattle,  
'tha droot's ahint yer prickless state,  
'there's muckle whuns tha same  
'dinnae let it gar ye blate  
'nor gae yer nighbour blame,'  
                          she appealed that day.

'O Wullie true', said Phelim noo  
'Oor wee Meggie bird is richt,  
'throu ilka dai we misconstrue,  
'an rue it ilka nicht;  
'ainst it wasnae just tha case,  
'for thoarn an whunny bhoys were freens,  
'sorry Wullie tae yer face  
'I'll try an mak amends,  
                          'if you dae tae!'

Wullie scobed his jugs sae soft,  
his tragic pricks o puree;  
an thought how Feely's fairy craft  
aft gart a whun tae fury;  
but aiblins tae his min did stray  
awa frae menseless gripe  
alloo'd that fechtin ilka day  
was, in truth a load o tripe,  
                          gey day it wuz.

---

Twas agreed that frae thon our  
nae moothy prick nor thorn,  
wad e'er agin rise a stoor  
or spoil tha dailygaun.  
Meggie fleppit sic a flap,  
skreich danced abeen them baith  
for noo at last a peaceful slap  
free o fash an skaith,  
                          weel done you bhoys.

Meggie up awa did speel  
in a gran aule fit o smeddum,  
left baith aneath tae seal tha deal  
an get shired o a tha venom.  
But as soon as she wuz oota sicht  
Feely's een set eldritch stane;  
he gaed owre poortith whun a dicht  
picked a stramish ainst again,  
                          an winked that day.

---

# Robert Morrow

## The Morrows

Fair fowk an' humble fairmers they, o' Covenantin' sires,  
Wha flit frae auld Dumfries, Wigtown, Selkirk, Kirkcudbrightshire,  
Tae Antrim's glens an' Down's guid plains they brought their name an' tongue,  
There auld Jock Morrow, set down his hame, in 1631.

Well, times cam guid, an' times cam haird, but crops they grew up braw,  
Frae ilka hoose the reek gied up, a' roond the toons sae sma',  
Here wark they did tae plant the land, an' set themsel's anew,  
Their promised land, they heard it said, frae ilka guid kirk's pew.

But this time o' peace it didnae last, a fecht it cam, an' fast,  
An' righteous anger o'erflowed, an' swords were drew at last,  
Frae '41 tae '89 the trouble cairried on,  
'Til guns and swords were locked awa' and troubled days were gone.

Well, in those days o' strife an' sair, we played oor pairt forbye,  
Jock Morrow wae his pike in han', for richt or wrang, stood high,  
An' e'en his bairns an' namesakes tae, born on the Emerald Isle,  
Were coonted there amang the men o' Ulster's rank an' file.

Tam Morrow, bould, Jock's aul'est son, gie'd tae defence o' hame,  
That which they'd made oot o' the land, where Tam was born the same,  
Anither yin, o' Irish birth, a Selkirk faither's joy,  
Wis Adam Morrow, wha played his pairt, wae Derry's men and boys.

But a foundrin' wynd cam frae some airts, an' took us by surprise,  
Although we'd focht fer Ireland's rights we werenae due a prize,  
An' kirks did shudder wae the soond o' ministers dread-cry,  
"Amerikay we must noo see, wave Ireland guid-bye".

So, Ulster-Scots frae hamesteads a' set oot noo aince again,  
Though west we'd cam, in '31, oor time here we'd it spen',  
The loanins reeked wae dust tae shire an' fowk wha's hope was thin,  
But hoping yet, an' praying still, tae He wha bides abin.

Well there we did a'right, I'm taul, some rich an famous fowk,  
Cam frae the hooses made o stane, and cast-off there their yoke,  
But here in Ireland, bad the days, for we were greetin' still,  
Yet vengeance cam, but 'fore the day, we did in secret drill.

In 1798, the green flag flew up high,  
For Auld Ireland then we raised the pike, an' struck for her there, nigh,  
Though Davy Morrow focht haird, an' true, it didnae gae oor way,  
Nae braver man fell on a field as I saw fall that day.

Tae end it here, since then we've gae'd each ilka different way,  
Tae oor ain thinking oot o' things, an' sundrie ways tae pray,  
But the name gaes true, an' the roots run through, these braes an' glens we bide,  
Morrow's mined in Scotland, forged in Ulster, and exported, still, worldwide.

---

# Stuart Paterson

## LOWSED Solway Firth

Anither day, anither same-sel tide  
inby tae dicht its wat feet oan a strand  
itsel a chyngein mat-bed lang syne panned  
an cleared o folk an boat whae'd wark an bide

aside an aff it. Thir days nae sic dregs  
as birlinns, creels nor stake nets mauger here  
whaur maist folk stey a few week in the year  
in saicunt hames tae stretch their een an legs,

tak dugs fir dauners, treat thirsels tae meals  
wi views, stroll by whaur thoosans endit shifts  
fir aye oan strand an land, were lowsed adrift  
oan same-sel tides they yuisst tae luve sae weel.

## PIECE

Ye want things back tae normal,  
tae the way they were afore?  
We arenae saints nor gomerils,  
get a piece at maist folks' doors.

Weel maist o us – there's yins whae'd speir  
wi face an een doonhairtit  
fir want o doors nae langer here  
an thaim lang syne depairtit.

Heize up yer mask a meenit, keep  
yer distance when ye stap  
but tak a mindin, dinnae threap,  
haud furrin when ye chap.

Then chap again, staun back an wait,  
the future's ayewes in.  
Wir normal noo's no oot nor blate,  
yer piece will still be duin.

## THRANGED

The weather's brill! The weather's mint!  
Yon sun wid fairly gar ye blinnt.

The weather's sound! The summer's here!  
Tak oot the barbie, weans an beer.

The weather's great! The weather's grand!  
Let's gan a hurl doon tae the strand.

The weather's boss! The weather's proper!  
Mon thrang the strand an loss wir clobber.

The weather's dope! The weather's fab!  
Yon ice cream van queue's jist the dab.

The weather's smart! The weather's boss!  
We'll lea a wheen o keech an dross.

The weather's brill! The sun red hot!  
Let's thrang the car parks, strand an shops.

The weather's buzzing, magic, ace!  
Nae need fir distance, health nor claes.

The weather's fly! The weather rocks!  
The wather's real, the Covid fause.

The weather's great! The weather's top!  
But when yer deid ye cannae shop.

---

## Charlie 'tha Poocher' Rannals

### Johnie's new hame.

Thae tane Johnie awa frae his hoose the dey  
Tae a graet big Hame fornenst tha sea,  
Thae toul him thae wud luk efter him  
But in his ain wee hoose he wus aye free.

Thae tane his wee doag tae tha doag shilter  
An haes wee budgie tae God know whaur,  
Thae left haes flooer garden jest tae grou wile  
Sure in a month ye wud niver ken he wus thaur.

Noo in Johnie's new hame bae the shore side  
He's loked efter wae tha graetest o' care,  
He luks poorfa weel noo haes shaived lake  
An aff coorse he haes got haes ain chaire.

But Johnie jest sits an thinks lang tae himsel  
An wunnthers whaut soart o a jailhouse haes in,  
Haes only crime wus thaut hae leeved tae grou oul  
Och, Lord surely thauts nae graet sin.

Sae freens jest think on this progress  
Thaut whun oor ain oul folk grou oul,  
Wull wae shunt them aff tae some Hame lake  
Whaur thae'll keep them a weethin better nir fowl.

---

## Alan Robinson

Quhare did ye come frae? Sudden apperin' in oor lives wi' a exotic leid giein' us baith  
shalla comedie an' deep commentar, we felt unsele. Thar was a amplefeystness tae  
yer wirds, a visceral shaw o' hertscaudin'. Tha need tae unnerstaun it stowlt in me  
but Ah'm no agricultural or duncher-wearin'. Ah like theatre, guid meat, fine wine.  
So Ah flit intill yer warld o' linen but stay groundit in ma oan, anchorit by satin bonds  
tyit tae tha posts that corner ma silken bedsheets.

Ah taste swait, bluid, poortith sythe-it throu ma oan cafetiere that demands ye irnae  
a victim. Tha richtin' o' wrangs carryt oot tae gie ye yer heidstairt in lif isnae goin' tae  
be grantit tae yer granchilder.

Ah feel calloused, hoved-up, boken hauns dautin' ma smooth skin. Tha clart unner  
nails suggests ye stealed tha same soil frae lang-deid generations. Yer lif in fustiness  
is retribution fer forefreends' sins.

Ah smell moul, turf, sheughwatter assaultin' ma rosewattered oud. Hou did ye live  
like that, fearty o' a soun doon tha loaney an tha bark o' tha sheepdug? Ye deserved it  
fer staunnin' duty on tha roadside tae halt an atrocity on tha neighbours o yer kintra  
that ye havnae ever met.

Ah hear rattle, reed, clash raisin' ma bluid, unwished. Primal souns that affect me in  
tha ways thaiy shudnae; ye irnae professional, weel-willt wud be ma kindest wurd but  
follid by a put-down tae differentiate me frae thou.

Ma thoct theday: Ah supported liberation aroon tha wirld, tha freedom frae  
oppression, tha richt tae lif. An' I did so in yer tongue, yin that has cried oot fer  
centuries on these issues but Ah darenae link tae ye lest Ah be termed a bigot anaw.  
But Ah am: ye irnae welcome here, ye ir ma byegone days o' yore.

Ah keek naethin: Een sae blind.

---

# *Finola Scott*

## **The world's back in tuin**

Ah'm halet oot o bed by a piper,  
outside a saltire sky cries Simmer.

At the kirk, hairt o it aw  
braw lads strut, kilts swing-sway  
tae the beat o soarin reels.

Thirles ablaw wi blossoms,  
declare bridegruim an best.

Mobiles an flaskies wheek oot,  
spirits lift, wee nips skaret  
in a swirl o merriment

Cars cavalcade, reebins flaff,  
waddiners wind an weave in guidwill.

Peerie-heeled weemen sashay  
tae strathspeys, sleek doon hair  
an silk dresses, jangle jewellery.

Fascinators dae thir job, heids turn,  
approval gied, pics snappit.

Folk gaither tae congratulate,  
tae witness the joy of this hairt jig  
this hand-fasting dance.

## **Guidnicht Guiddame!**

Aw day ma phone jynes us -  
ma dochter birthin her dochter.  
In the wee hours efter it's oer Ah'm awauk, champagne feenisht but Ah still fizz.

Ma pillow shoogles a wee message  
A photie an a puckle o wirds frae hospital.  
Bleary ma lass coories her wee bit lass.  
The fontanelle tremmles, Ah swear  
Ah can gust hinnie pap-milk.

# *Lauren Thompson*



## **Tha Wee Hoose in tha Moss**

In tha hairt o tha moss, up Killygullib wie,  
Thers a stead o tha aul hame.  
A roof o tin an walls o board,  
Whur nighbors aften came.

Up loanen, as crookit as bedammed,  
On a path lined wae stanes  
Lay tha wee hoose in tha moss,  
Whur Scotts raired al ther weans.

Wrocht sore they did, on ther wee patch,  
Agane tha wun an cowl.  
On Wunters nichts, rugh claes wur changed,  
An quare yarns wur towl.

Tha red, half leaf was appen,  
Inside a reek o smoke.  
Tha taypit, full to tha thrapple.  
Boys, they wur dacent folk.



---

Iverythin' in yin room,  
Farls on tha griddle.  
Simmets dryin by tha fire,  
A saft sait for tha fiddle.

They came tae lift ther mines,  
Intae tha wee sma oors.  
They dinnled tha aul sideboord.  
Heth Ay! They shuck tha flures.

He cud fairly hae tha fiddle.  
Och, he was fitless at tha jivin.  
The hoose couldnae howl naemair,  
Whun he played, it was hivin.  
We snuk a luksae, roon tha dure  
Thon would deeve the lugholes,  
Yoolin like tha deil hissel,  
Forgettin all ther struggles.

They stapped to bebble, mair nor yince,  
After twustin an a tummlin.  
"Mine tha wae ye tramp mae feet,  
Afore sprachlin an a rummlin".

Tha rare aul boy guldens,  
Wunst he's played his last tune.  
Aff they go like lilties.  
Dannerin, by tha light o tha moon.

He hadnae an erse in his trousers,  
But a quare penny he did hae.  
Quait an lingle sure was he,  
Naebdy knew whur he was frae.

He wouldnae take his payment.  
Not a penny for each tune.  
Fornenst, he tuk a soda an egg,  
An tay, to rensh it doon.

---

He set a while, for a ganche.  
Butter in tha weeks o his mooth.  
A half yin in tha gless.  
A swally to cut tha drooth.

We waved him aff into tha dark,  
By the fisslin o tha trees.  
Aff tae his dreich, big hoose,  
Liltin and rattlin his keys.

Now, thrissle cloaks tha path,  
And thers fog al ower tha grun.  
A boortry fills tha dure jam,  
An whuns grow up aroon.

A remember it like tha ither day,  
Naethin bates yer ain spot.  
That wee hoose in th' moss,  
A time that's soon forgot.

---

## Lynn Valentine

### Recoverin

Whaun thi land wis ower diffcil, a turnit  
tae sea, became lover and hunter o aa.  
A thievit hir treisures lik sweeties fae a jeely jar.  
A divit fir dunters, thi black shaddas o selkies,  
muckle gobs o skate bubbles tae. A even  
shookit loast sailors up fae thir auld waterie graves.  
An whaun a wis done wi thi loupin o sea-flechs  
an chasin thi brichtness o fish, the gows cairriet me  
fae sea tae thi strand, takit me back tae noo seelent land.

### Thi Eve o Battle

(i.m. of all those who died at Culloden)  
Aa day thair is thi tickin o a hairt,  
thi knottin o hopes, thi moothin o a prayer —  
sich fear ye cuid climb back intae yir mither's womb.

An ithers richt drunk fir the fecht,  
craws kissin thi hills, thi land blank wi haar.  
Thi moon comin oot an yir still oan thi merch.  
An thi morra begins wi a moo fu o stanes,  
a droonin in blood, thi shaftin o clans.  
An oor o cuttin a country in twa—  
thi whup o history still ridin wir backs.

---

## Matthew Warwick

### Watter

Frae Shan's Hill an Skerrywherry,  
Frae Capanagh an Glenheid  
Springs a source o rinnin watter,  
A flowin siller threed

that bes woven through tha claith  
an yarn o aa ma days,  
Tha story o ma life's spun oot  
Alang it's banks an braes.

Born an raired at "Bonnie Woodgreen"  
nearhan Kellswater meets tha Maine.  
Amang tha green bushes fur jist six yeir,  
A caa'd this wee place hame.

Til a flit up tae Maxwell's Waa's  
An a shift in alma mater  
frae Carnaghts upstream tae Moorfiels schuil-  
yit a stane's clod frae tha watter.

Noo raired in sicht o Slaimish;  
Elliott's Hill an Collin Big,  
fornenst Tardree an Carnearney  
Oan a fairm caa'd 'Tha Lang Rig'.

Yit throu thon grun an aal aroon  
Amang tha whinny knowes  
Tha watter rins frae sheuchs tae burns  
That til Kellswater flows.  
An frae Glenwherry tae tha Maine  
Doon floats tha hamely tongue,  
Whar yit tha leid o tha Ulster-Scotch  
is taak't by auld an young.

---

It haes left its mairk on names o place  
Aal along tha river's coorse  
That tha dollaghan troot an salmon aye  
Fallae upstraim tae it's soorce.  
Abain tha Shankbridge carrie,  
stanns Houston's Coveynanter kirk,  
then up tae Kells throu the Wiggletoon,  
By Templemoyle, an Dinsmore's warks.

Tae twa meetin- hooses oan Sabbath day,  
tha fowk still thrang an turn  
nicht Psalms an hymns fur aye be sung  
oan tha banks of tha Conyer Burn.

Naethin new unner tha sin,  
or sae tha Guid Buik says,  
fur near fower hunner yeir these streams  
hae tholed Presbyterian praise.

Then up tha lade til Laichland carrie,  
Whar keepin oot o sicht  
Yinst Edward Bruce's men crept forth  
Tae Tanneybrake, tae fecht.

Seiven hunner year or mair  
Lang syne tha battle roared  
Til Earl o Ulster De Burgh tuk flicht,  
An Bruce tuk Conyer's stores.

Frae tha Rock Engines tha nerra gauge yinst  
fallaed tha stroan tae Ballynashee.  
Tha reek an stoor's lang since awa,  
An lugs nae langer deeved.

Upstraim throu Ross til Castlegore,  
Whaupstoon an tha Clattery Knowes,  
Places named by fowk wha uised  
kye and coo fur 'cows'.

---

Oan up tae tha Battery Brig,  
whar tha Misty Burn flowes doon,  
Whar yinst Scotch Coveynanter Peden  
tuk refuge frae tha Croon.

Here's a halth tae ye, Bonnie Glenwherry,  
Unner tha shedda o Douglas tap  
Whar weaver poet Beggs wus raired  
An Sam Thomson affen stapt.

Noo A ken ma ain rhymes ir wile coorse  
an ruch, shair mair lake blethers  
But it gies a bodie a chance tae pit  
a when o thochts thegither.

Thochts o histrie, hame an kin,  
O wurds an things that metter-  
tae fowk lake me- wha leeve an dee-  
By Glenwherry an Kellswater.

---

# George J Watt

## Wee Geordie

Fan I first muived tae Dundeee ower thritty year ago syne, ane o the first fowk I got tae ken wis wee Geordie. Geordie wis a phlegmatic aul cheil, he speired nocht frae life an expectit nocht. His warkin life haed been spent in haird manual joabs, laigh pay an nae peinsion funds. Nae that Geordie iver complained like. He haed siller fur fags, ae wee bittie ower fur a pint an that met aa his requirements. He didnae crave fauncy meals or aetin oot, nor did he gamble. Geordie wis weel past retirement age but due tae ae shortage o men on wir shift he haed been caaed in tae help oot. The siller cam in gae haundy till him.

Geordie wis raised in ane o the wuar slums in Dundee. His faither wis a shipyard warker, or he wuid o been haed he no been bleklisted fur bein a communist. Geordie wis nae muckle ower five fit, but that wis nae unusual mang his geineration in Dundee. Fu growth potential, wis no a concept in thay deys. Rotten hooses, subsistence level o incomes alang wi aa the depravation that brocht wi it, ensured that bairns like Geordie niver grew tae ony great heicht. But fit Geordie lacked in statur, he mad up fur wi ae big heid (thochtwise) an big hert. Anely he wuidnae thank ye gin ye said so!

Aathou Geordie wis near seiventy, his guidmither wis still alive but fell frail. He wuid tak ae turn o sittin up aa nicht watchin ower her – wi a bottle o rum an ae packet o fags fur company. ‘Ye maun be awfy fond o her’ I jaloused. ‘Aul bitch’ cam his repone, ‘she niver haed nae time fur me!’

Thair graunson bid wi Geordie an his guidwife. I dinnae ken fit wey but he did. Fuar as I kent the loun didnae wark, but wis oot stravaigin ilka nicht chasin aifter quines, an spent maist o his days in bed or haein hae richt soak in the bath. ‘He’s fell clean, but ae dirty wee bastard’, wis Geordie’s evaluation. ‘Eh dinnae git thay yung anes an aa this sleepin aroun’ he said, ‘Eh’ve anely haed the wan wuman.’ Fan holiday time cam aroon, Geordie didnae gang awa. His ideal wis tae walk fur miles roun the toun o Dundee, visitin aa the pubs he didnae hae time fur fan he wis warkin. Ilka pub noted fur the quality o its beer. ‘Fuckin guid pint’ meant a return visit, even thou it micht hae been a seiven mile walk frae his hoose tae the hostelry. Geordie didnae haud wi takin the bus.

Geordie telt us that fan the threit o weir cam, his faither’s skills wir aa o a suddenty a commodity the kintra required, bein a communist didnae maitter onymair. Ships maun be biggit an repaired, it wis literary aa hauns on deck, it didnae maiter gin the heids wir faur tae the left! Fan Wurd Weir Twa stairtit, Geordie, an mony, mony louns like him in Dundee, didnae wait tae be cried up fur the airmy. Ships, sailin, an the sea wis in thair veins. Thay wir descendants o whalers, deep sea sailors, shipyard warkers, thay haed nae desire tae be in the airmy so thay aa jynt the Navy. While near aa his peers wis consigt tae a bricht new vessel cried HMS Hood, Geordie fun hissel berthed in an aul leaky frigate. Geordie an his ilk wir expendable, thare tae fill the gaps. ‘Deid man’s bits’, wis hoo he pit it. Geordie haed nae delusions. Fan ae bomb blew HMS Hood tae smithereens, near fifteen hunner seamen lost thair lives. Blek drapes hung in near ilka closie in Dundee. Ae bomb doused ae when o caunles in yon aul toun. Geordie haed a pikter o the ‘Hood’ in his locker at wark. Mony o the aul

pubs in Dundee haed a pikter o the ‘Hood’ on the wa. Sic wis the effec this traigedy haed on the toun. Geordie wis sailin tae Murmansk. The Murmansk convoys wuid tak the men tae the en pynt o human endurance. I speired Geordie fit it wis like, ‘aw hellish’ he said. ‘Thay wuidnae let ye ashore fan ye got thare, ye cuid see the pub eh; but ye cuidnae gang fur a pint’. He wuidnae be drawn further.

Ye’d be mistaken gin ye thocht Geordie haed nae mair thocht o the meanin o life than a coo in a pairk. That he tuik life’s blaws an cudgels stoically wi nae thocht ayont the here an noo, but ye’d be rang. Geordie haed read aa the great Marxist thinkers, a deidicated communist like his faither, he haed read ana, Long Walk to Freedom, lang afor Nelson Mandela became a superstar. I stuid aside him aince ootside the yetts o Dundee’s Heigh Skule. ‘Why shuid thay get aa the advantages juist caus thair fowk hae money, surely aa bairns deserve the same chaunce’ he reasoned. I cuidnae argie wi that. Accordin tae Geordie ilka time the fowk o Dundee voted in ae new Labour MP he bocht a hoos in Newport, ower the Tay frae Dundee, an weel awa frae thair supporters, ‘but thay wir that glaikit thay still voted fur thaim’.

Geordie gotten a richt bad bek. He laid on the flair fur thrie week, an aul remedy fur lumbago. Fan his dochter fun oot she sent him tae the doctor faa sent him tae Ninewells Hospital. Cancer. Geordie wis gaein twa weeks. I expec he juist shrugged his shudders an gaed ootside fur a fag. Wee Geordie wis fell phlegmatic.

## Laverocks

Fan I walk ower muir an maedie,  
laverocks levitate,  
fill the lift wi translucence,  
sangs like ae gowden shower  
reigns aa aroun.  
Div thay sing like yon aa the time,  
tae beast an burd,  
tae edder an ant,  
gress an grunwurm?  
Or div thay wait till thay see fowk,  
puir criturs booed doun  
wi the weirie wurld,  
tae urge thaim lift thare een,  
luik aroun,  
see aa the wunners afore thaim,  
the wurld an aa its creations,  
tae luik an seek  
the heichtmaist plane.

# The Scots Language Society/ Scots Leid Associe

**Aims tae promote the Scots Leid in aa its forms an dialects frae Aiberdeen tae Ainster, Embro tae Elgin, Berwick tae Bilfawst, Derry tae Duncansbayheid in airticles, prose an poesie.**

We hae been on the go noo fur fifty year syne, an oor Lallans magazine wull suin be publishing its 99th eidition! Foo many magazines last that lang, an Lallans is aa in Scots and aa new screivins. We micht be the auldest magazine oot thare, but we're the ane wi the yungest hert. Lallans is published twice ae year.

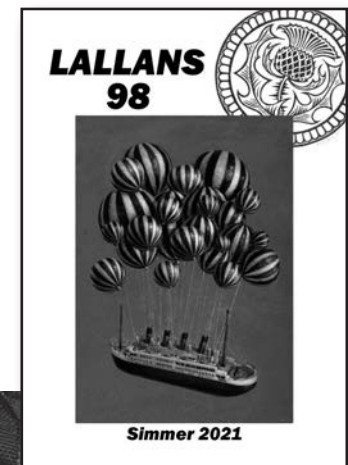
Scotsoun is the CD label o the Scots Leid Associe. Oor catalogue includes ilka important screiver in Scots sinsyne the middle ages tae the present day. Wark by sic dignitaries as Gavin Douglas, Henryson, Ferguson, throu tae Marion Angus, MacDiarmid an on tae the present day wi fowk like Stuart Paterson an Sheila Templeton are aa featured. We hae pipe music, fiddle music an fowk music an are aye chyavin awa wi new recordins.

We also hae wir Wabsteid, alang wi a preisence on Facebuik, Twitter, YouTube, and thay will be eesed tae promote yung Scots creatives like Len Pennie, Ely Percy and Colin Burnett. An thare is oor online Newsletter Eiks an Ens an wir annual collogue. So thare is muckle tae enjoy.

So, gin ye are a screiver, ae reader or ae listener in Scots, jyne oor Associe an jyne in.

Memmership is anely £20.00/annum fur the UK an ye can jyne online at [www.lallans.co.uk](http://www.lallans.co.uk)

Or Email us on [Lallans@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:Lallans@hotmail.co.uk)  
Or screive  
SLS  
C/o 61 Cliffturn Road,  
Arbroath  
Scotland  
DD11 5BA





## THE ULSTER-SCOTS LANGUAGE SOCIETY

formed to promote the Ulster-Scots language in literature and native speech. Applications from prospective members who are interested in supporting our work are welcome.

You will receive our journal, Ullans, and discounts on a selection of our other publications.

Please contact us at [ulsterscotslanguage@gmail.com](mailto:ulsterscotslanguage@gmail.com) and mark your inquiry for the attention of our Membership Secretary.

Current annual subscription rates are as follows: corporate membership £12.00, family membership £12.00, individual membership £8.00 and individual membership unwaged £5.00.



Ulster-Scots Community Network are grateful for the financial support from their funders Ulster-Scots Agency and Arts Council of Northern Ireland





Yarns was made possible by funding from the Ulster-Scots Agency through the Ulster-Scots Covid-19 Language Fund

