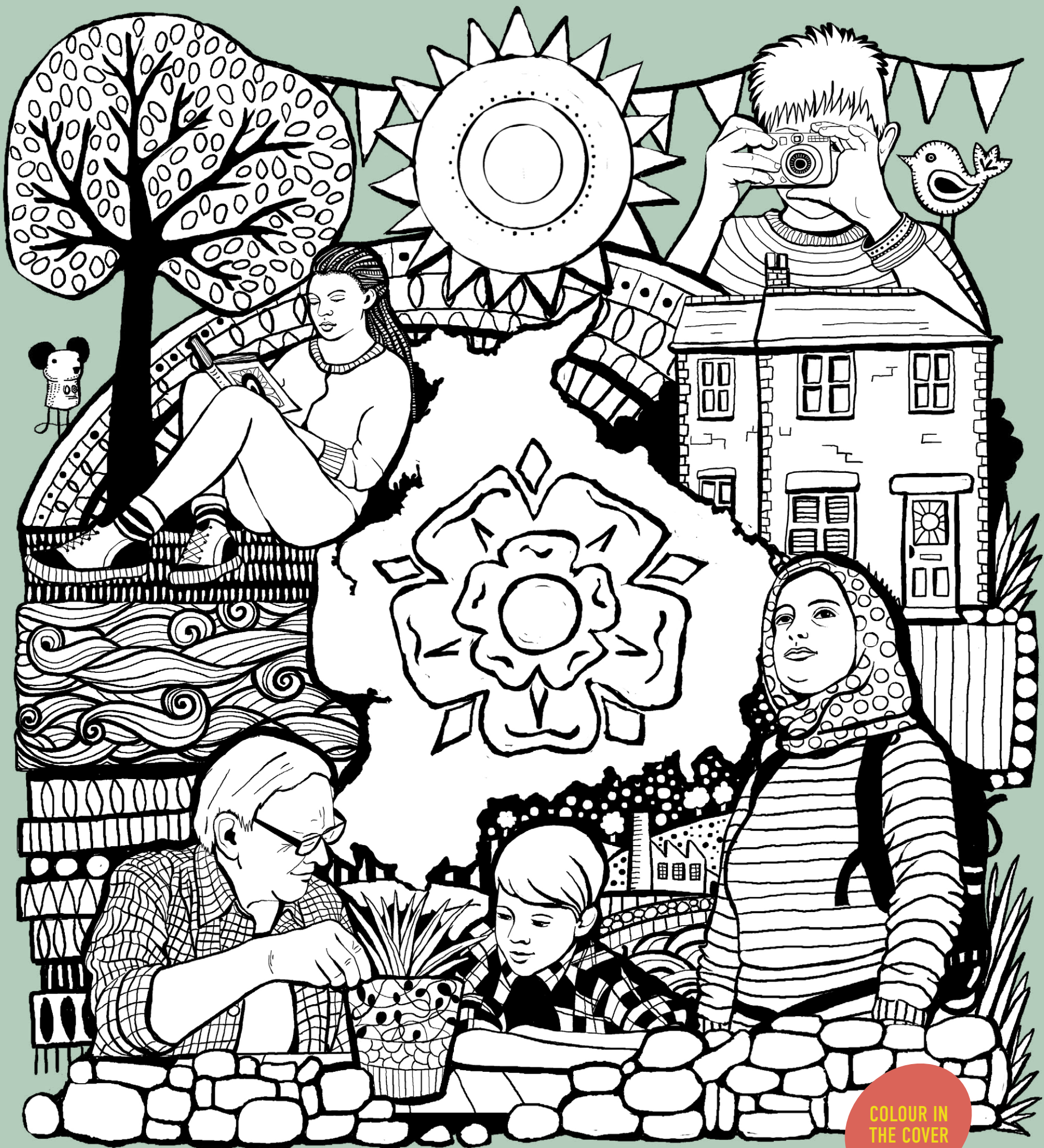


EXCLUSIVE WITH THE FAMILIARS AUTHOR, STACEY HALLS | **CREATE** YOUR OWN WILLOW LANTERN | HYGGE HOSTING **AT HOME**
GET **CREATIVE** WITH J-CLOTH PIXEL ART | PIMP UP YOUR CUSHIONS WITH POM POM **CRAFTS** | PLUS MUCH, MUCH MORE...

SPOT ON

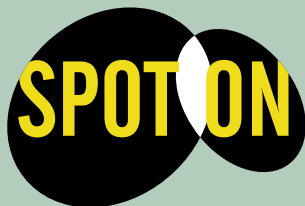
AT HOME

CREATIVE
ACTIVITIES
25
TO YOUR
DOOR



COLOUR IN
THE COVER

COVER ILLUSTRATION BY CATH FORD



WELCOME TO SPOT ON'S **At Home** edition

Welcome to the second edition of Spot On At Home. While the world is once again beginning to open up, and we cautiously dip our toe back into the pool of organising in-person events, we are aware that, while some of you might be itching to get out and about, others may not be ready just yet.

This edition of Spot On At Home focuses on the small pleasures of staying home, embracing and retaining the slowness that Lockdown forced upon us, and making the most of a summer in Lancashire.

We have linked up with the wonderful Lancashire-based Hopeful and Glorious who work with talented artists, designers and makers from across the North to bring you a whole range of craft and art activities you can do at home. You can create a 'Junk Journal' (p.8) to document your Lancashire adventures, go bonkers with cork (p.4/5), enjoy some mindful doodling (p.4) or upcycle some old wood into beautiful coasters (p.12).

For more information please contact:

Lyndsey Wilson — Programme Manager

Spot On, Lancashire's Rural & Library Touring Network
The Barn, 61A Manor Road, Blackburn, BB2 6LX

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📘 facebook.com/spotonlancashire

🌐 spotonlancashire.co.uk

And for those of you who have exhausted your craft supplies in the past 18 months (or just didn't have any to start with) then we've 40 Felt Bird making kits to giveaway (p.9).

If crafting isn't your thing, then there's a delicious recipe for Bowland Beef (p.6), Lancashire Libraries Robin Crowhshaw interviews the author of the 2020 Lancashire Book of the Year Sam Pollen (p.3) or take a trip into Lancashire Archives (p.14). Summer social life eating into your reading time? Then our Flash Fiction series (p.11) is just for you, or if you're feeling a little tense, then Cheshire Dance can help loosen up those joints (p.10).

Finally, we are able to bring this to your door thanks to the wonderful Lancashire Library Service and Arts Council England.

We'd love to hear what you thought, and see what you made! Get in touch with us via phone, email or social media.

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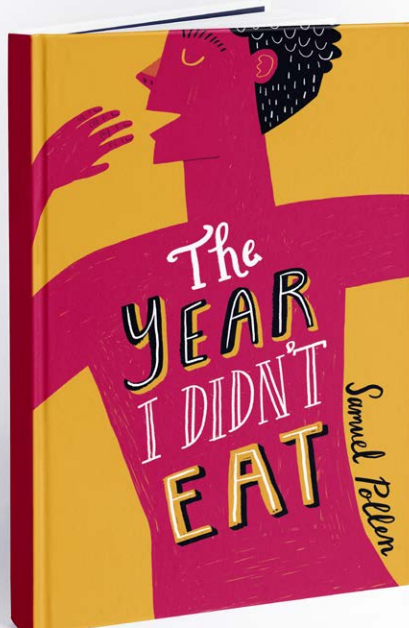
An Interview with Author Samuel Pollen

Lancashire Libraries'
Robin Crowshaw chats to
2020's Lancashire Book
of the Year author

Cheshire author, Samuel Pollen's unforgettable and uplifting novel about a boy with anorexia, *The Year I Didn't Eat*, was the well deserved winner of the 2020 Lancashire Book of the Year award, as voted by Young Readers. Robin Crowshaw, caught up with Sam to find out more.

We have all spent a lot of time at home over the past few months. Working from home seems to suit Samuel. He thinks that a lot of people become writers, "partly because they can just sit at a desk and they don't have to talk to anybody." As well as being an award winning author, Samuel is also a professional copywriter - both things that he can do from home. "I've been able to live my life reasonably normally but it can get boring. The best case for anyone this past year is that it's been quite boring."

Samuel spends most of his time writing copy for companies and websites. He is good at it and enjoys what he does "writing a book was [the next] natural thing to do." Samuel muses about all the half written ideas on the computers of aspiring novelists but *The Year I Didn't Eat* was "the first book I've tried to write in a concerted way." He feels that he had something to say that hadn't been said before. In this case it was something very personal. Like Max, the hero of the novel, Samuel had a teenage eating disorder. This is not a memoir "I wanted it to feel true and authentic but Max's experience isn't my experience." Samuel is keen to point out that it has been 15 years since he's had anorexia. This message was a motivation for writing the book. "It's important, when you're going through something like that, to know that other people do recover." Recalling elements from a long time past was a challenge but when writing about mental health, Samuel feels "you need a certain amount of distance in a way that makes it safe for you."



you want to write a book that you would have read when you were going through something like that.



Photo:
Jamie Drew

Samuel believes that there is real value in writing about something that you know well, "because you can make it more credible and authentic." With a book like this that addresses a mental health issue, "you want to write a book that you would have read when you were going through something like that." "When people write historical fiction they research it in massive amounts of detail and then they take most of that away because if you write a book that has all those facts... it becomes baggy and uninteresting to read." He feels that getting the level of detail right is really hard. It's also important to be sensitive, especially when writing about "experiences that you've not been through yourself." Samuel was writing about something he had been through but he was aware, even then that "I'm one person who's been through an eating disorder, other people have had tougher and different experiences" he needed to approach this diversity in the topic sensitively.

What is the process of getting a book published like? "Slow!" As a copywriter Sam's writing can often be public the next day. "Once you've written a book you're talking about a minimum of a year and often two years or more before the book actually exists." Sam gave his book to his agent but before it even went to publishers it had to go through an editing process. "Once someone wants to publish it you maybe go through that process twice more." He describes being slightly defensive at first "but then people say things and point out problems and you go, 'oh yeah, that's fair'."

Once published, getting recognition was lovely. The Lancashire Book of the Year award was "super lovely because [the recognition] came from my readers."

The Year I Didn't Eat is available from your local library, all good book sellers and as an eBook. Did you know that you can borrow eBooks from your library? Search online or ask your librarian for details.

You can see a full video version of this interview at <https://my.nicheacademy.com/lancashirereadingjourney/course/22810>

ONCE YOU'VE READ *THE YEAR I DIDN'T EAT*, SAMUEL HAS GIVEN US THREE RECOMMENDATIONS OF WHAT TO LOOK AT NEXT:

And The Stars Were Burning Brightly – Danielle Jawando

A powerful book about suicide and mental health from a talented Manchester-based author.

Am I Normal Yet? – Holly Bourne

All of Holly's books are great, but this one – about a girl living with OCD – is particularly touching (and funny).

Where'd You Go, Bernadette – Maria Semple

An offbeat family comedy, in which Bee Branch tries to track down her missing mother.

Design a doodle pot



Amina is a visual artist & surface pattern designer. Her art is full of bright colours and influenced by nature.

This project was inspired by Amina's love of doodles and her interest in wellbeing arts. Creating doodles is a wonderful, fun mindful activity for all the family and the perfect way to brighten up an old plant pot. If you want to know more about creating eye catching doodles and the wellbeing benefits, visit Amina's website or social media for updates on her next doodle art workshop aminasartdesign.co.uk

[amina.s_artanddesign](https://www.instagram.com/amina.s_artanddesign)

[@aminasartdesign](https://www.facebook.com/aminasartdesign)

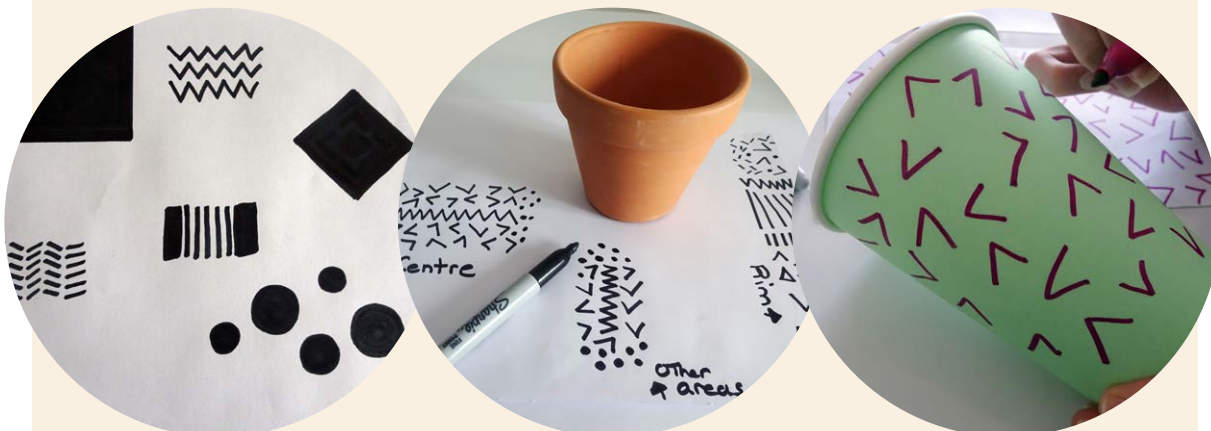
Etsy shop coming soon with greeting cards & notebooks

MATERIALS:

- Terracotta pot (great if it's from the garden)
- Sheets of A4 or A5 paper
- A black sharpie marker pen
- Coloured sharpies (if you have some lying about)
- A paper or a plastic cup (you can reuse a coffee cup) to practice on



INSTRUCTIONS



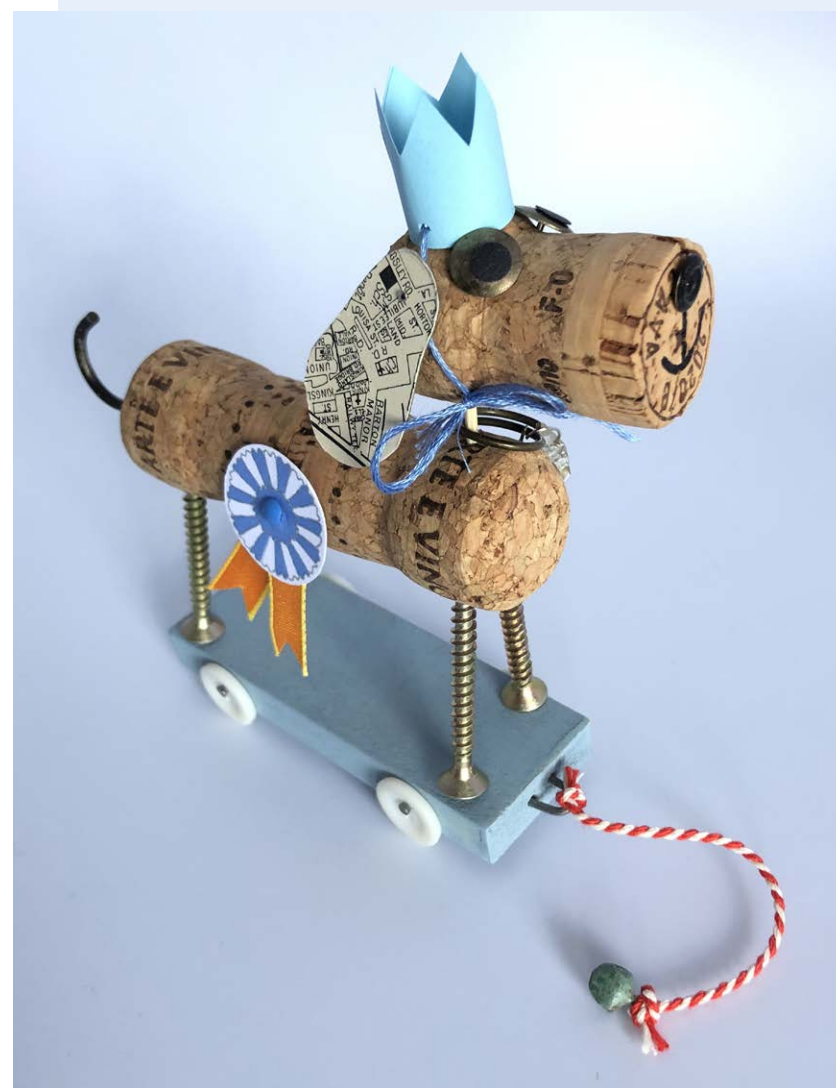
- 1 Think about your doodle design. This project is based on a geometric design, using shapes such as squares, circles, lines, zig-zags etc to create doodles.
- 2 Start doodling on paper first. Experiment using different shapes or stick with one shape. Have fun, creating new combinations of shapes and lines. Think about the overall design, is it a repeat pattern, or something loose and abstract? Think about which shapes fit well together and how you might want to space them out.
- 3 Which areas of the pot would you like to doodle on? Take a look at the plant pot, is it the whole pot, part of it or just the rim. How will the pattern you've come up with fit into this space?
- 4 Work out which colours to use. If you are using more than one colour, try a few different colour combinations out on paper. Light colours might not show up on the terracotta colour.
- 5 Practice on a paper cup, to get used to the curves of the pot. you can skip this part if you are itching to get started on your plant pot!
- 6 Start doodling on the plant pot. Use your black sharpie or coloured sharpies to create your doodle design on your terracotta pot.



A totally bonkers Trolley Dog

Bonker*s Clutterbucks are a husband (Peter) and wife (Kate) team working in a diverse range of materials to produce hand cut and painted animal dummy boards, dioramas, 3D models and card modelling kits.

Peter studied Fine Art Painting at Chelsea and Winchester School of Art while Kate studied Textile design and weaving at Huddersfield and Winchester. They formed Bonker*s Clutterbucks in 2011 and work from their studio at home in an old Corn Warehouse in the Rossendale Valley, Lancashire.



You can find them on Instagram, Etsy and their blog

bonkersclutterbucks.com

info@bonkersclutterbucks.co.uk

MATERIALS

For the Cork Dog

- Glue - PVA wood glue or UHU
- 3 Champagne / wine corks
- 4 Screws / nails at least 50 mm long
- 1 Cup hook
- Cocktail sticks or wooden skewer
- 2 sewing pins
- 2 Carpet tacks or brass drawing pins
- Small tack or drawing pin
- 1 Metal ring or washer
- Small charm or bell
- Piece of card and off cuts of patterned card
- 2 Punched holes in black paper or 2 sequins and 2 black seed beads

Party Hat

- A strip of coloured paper 60mm x 22mm
- 200mm length of embroidery type silk

Rosette

- 2p coin
- 5p coin
- Small piece of coloured card
- 60mm length of narrow ribbon
- A brass split or brad pin

Trolley (For dog to stand on)

- Off cut of wood (roughly 110mm x 30mm x 10mm)
- Paint
- 4 Buttons roughly the same colour and size, at least 20mm wide
- 4 Escutcheon pins How many mm long? eg 6mm, 9mm 15mm? (brass dome headed pins)
- 1 “U” Shaped netting staple
- String
- Wooden bead or bell

INSTRUCTIONS

Prep — For the dogs ears, glue some patterned paper or text to an offcut of card and leave to dry.



EQUIPMENT

Scissors

Pencil

Ruler

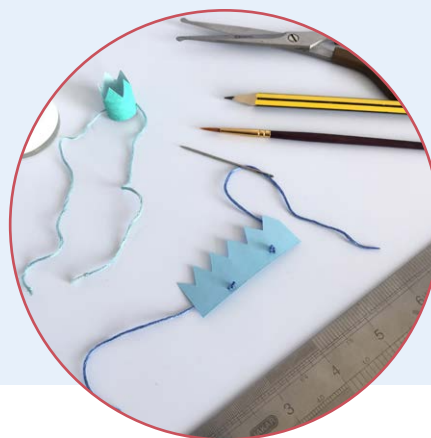
Small Hammer

Black sharpie pen

Sharp embroidery needle or scalpel

Pin vice/small hand drill

- 1 Attach two corks end to end to form the dog's body. Use a bradawl to make pilot holes in a triangular formation on the facing ends of two corks. Cut a cocktail stick into 3 pieces then poke the short sticks into one end of a cork. Put some glue on the opposite cork and sandwich them together. Use another shortened cocktail stick or wooden skewer for the dog's neck. Before attaching the head to the body add a metal ring with a small charm or bell for a collar.
- 2 Use a bradawl to make pilot holes underneath the body for legs and one for its tail. Screw the tips of the screws into the cork making sure they're secure and the dog is balanced when standing. Use a brass cup hook for its tail.
- 3 On the reverse of the pre-prepared patterned paper/card draw two pear shaped ears approximately 40mm x 24mm and cut out. Use the 2 sewing pins and some glue to attach these ears to the sides of the cork head. Make eyes using either panel or brass drawing pins with hole-punched black paper pupils glued on to them. Alternatively, sequins and beads can be used to create pupils. Push the pins into the cork for eyes and a drawing pin for the nose. Using a black sharpie to draw the dog's mouth.
- 4 Using the strip of coloured paper 60mm x 22cm, make a paper party hat. Draw the scallops out on the reverse of the paper and cut out. Glue the seam together. Using a sharp needle, make holes low down on each side for the chin strap. Tie a piece of fine embroidery thread to each side. This can either be tied together under the dog's chin or tucked under the dog's ears and wound around the pin. Cut off any excess thread.
- 5 To make a rosette out of coloured card, draw around a 2p and 5p coin and cut the two circles out. The 2p size will be the face of the rosette, the 5p size the reverse. Decorate the rosette or leave plain. Make a small hole in the centre of each card circle. Cut a 60mm length of narrow ribbon in half and cut a V out of two ends to prevent fraying. Stick the two blunt ends of the ribbon to the reverse of the 2p sized circle, in the centre and position the 5p sized piece of card on top centering it so that the ribbon is sandwiched in between with two ribbon tails. Push a brass split pin or brad type pin through the centre from the front to the back and push the pin into the side of the dog's cork body.
- 6 To make the trolley paint an off cut of wood (roughly 110mm x 30mm x 10mm in size). Select 4 buttons roughly the same size and colour and pre-drill pilot holes in the sides of the wood using a small hand drill or pin vice. Place an escutcheon pin through one of the buttonholes and hammer the buttons in place for wheels. Hammer a U shaped netting staple onto the front of the trolley. Tie on a string with a bead or bell on the end and pop Fido on top to complete the look!



Bowland beef feather blade, mash, shallots and pancetta

INGREDIENTS

For the Beef

- 1 medium onion, peeled
- 2 carrots
- 2 sticks of celery
- 3 cloves of garlic, peeled
- Splash of oil
- 4 200g raw beef feather blade steaks (trimmed)
- 300ml red wine
- black peppercorns
- 5 sprigs of thyme
- 2 bay leaves
- 30g tomato purée
- Beef stock (stock cubes are good)

For the creamed potato

- 1kg Maris Piper potatoes, peeled
- Pinch of salt
- 100ml whole milk
- 100ml double cream
- 50g salted butter

For the reduction

- 3 large banana shallots
- 150g pancetta
- 50ml sherry vinegar
- 3 sprigs of tarragon and parsley, finely chopped

To finish

- 25g salted butter
- 3 cloves of garlic
- 6 sprigs of thyme
- Maldon salt, to season
- 300g seasonal vegetables
- 50g salted butter

Twelve is a modern restaurant situated under the sails of an 18th century windmill in Thornton. It serves British food with a northern twist, and draws on influences from around the world to bring excitement and above all great, uncomplicated flavour to the table. It is fine dining cuisine served in a relaxed and welcoming atmosphere.

METHOD

For the beef

Chop all the vegetables into roughly 1cm slices then fry them in a pan with a little oil until soft and slightly browned. Place into an ovenproof dish along with the feather blade steaks, red wine, peppercorns, thyme, bay, tomato purée and enough beef stock to cover everything. Bring to a simmer on the hob then cook in the oven at 150°C for 4 to 5 hours. Alternatively, place into a slow cooker on medium for 6 to 8 hours.

For the creamed potato

Chop the potatoes into evenly sized pieces, cover with water in a saucepan, add a pinch of salt then boil until soft. Drain and return to a dry pan over a medium heat, stirring continuously to avoid sticking. Pass the cooked potatoes through a fine sieve then season with fine salt and stir in the milk, cream and butter. Transfer the creamed potato to a piping bag and keep warm until serving.

For the reduction

Dice the shallots and pancetta separately. Place the pancetta into a heavy-bottomed pan and fry slowly. The natural fats will come out so don't use any oil. Once the pancetta begins to crisp up, strain the fat into a bowl and set the pancetta aside. Return the fat to the original pan then add the diced shallots. Sweat until they are soft and translucent, then add the sherry vinegar. This will deglaze the bottom of the pan. Reduce the vinegar until it's almost all gone and the mixture looks like a jam. Stir in the pancetta along with the chopped tarragon and parsley.



Back to the beef

Once the beef is cooked, carefully remove it from the cooking liquor. It should feel very tender. Reduce the cooking liquor in a wide pan by at least half. Keep checking the taste and consistency. It should start to thicken, but gravy granules or other thickening agents can be added. Strain the sauce when you're happy with the consistency.

To finish

Pan fry the feather blade steaks in a splash of oil with the butter, garlic and thyme for 2 to 3 minutes on each side while continuously basting. Remove from the pan once crispy and season with the Maldon salt. Cook your preferred seasonal vegetables in the butter and enough water to cover them for 2 to 3 minutes until tender. Add the shallot and pancetta reduction to the beef sauce and plate everything as pictured.



Lancashire is a great place to eat out with some stunning locally reared and grown produce to hand.

Sometimes though it is just great to make a really special meal to eat at home. Why not try this sumptuous recipe from Head Chef, Graham Floyd at Taste Lancashire's 2018/19 Restaurant of the Year, Twelve.

"Braised beef and mash is a firm favourite in many households. We source our beef from Clark and Sons Butcher in Catforth, and our potatoes from Sunny Bank Farm in Hambleton. The secret to this recipe is well-balanced seasoning with the use of a shallot, pancetta and sherry vinegar reduction."

Inspired by this recipe? Why not find out what other culinary delights Twelve have on offer by booking a table?

 twelve-restaurant.co.uk/restaurant/

 01253 82 12 12

 info@twelve-restaurant.co.uk

Marsh Mill Village, Thornton-Cleveleys, Lancashire, FY5 4JZ

Junk Paper Journals

Capture your memories as you're out and about this summer



Rachel Crawshaw is a mixed media artist, crafter and owner of Mushroom Moon Designs, focusing on junk and art journals, mixed media art, collage and ephemera.

She is a member of the Blackburn artists society and has exhibited work at the Stewards Gallery and the Platform Gallery in Clitheroe. Rachel spends her days creating junk and art journals, painting, scribbling and designing digital paper kits. She is inspired by vintage items, the natural world, 'found objects' and loves to transform items that may be deemed as 'junk' into artwork.

You can find Rachel at:

-  mushroommoondesigns.com
-  [etsy.com/uk/shop/mushroommoondesigns](https://www.etsy.com/uk/shop/mushroommoondesigns)
-  [mushroommoondesigns](https://www.instagram.com/mushroommoondesigns)
-  [mushroommoondesigns](https://www.facebook.com/mushroommoondesigns)

MATERIALS

- 1 piece of thick paper or card (such as the cover of a magazine or some scrap card packaging) cut to size 20cm x 7cm for your cover
- 1 piece of thick paper or card in a contrasting colour or pattern cut to size 4cm x 6cm for your pocket
- 6 pieces of scrap paper (such as envelopes, junk mail, old book pages and paper bags) cut to size 18cm x 6cm. For a memory journal you could use leaflets from the places you have visited to make the pages of your book!
- Ruler
- Glue, double sided tape or staples
- Scissors or a paper cutter
- Hole punch
- Ribbon or string
- Small ephemera to decorate (such as tickets, paper clips, small photographs, buttons, stamps, leaves and bits of nature, pictures cut from magazines and leaflets etc)

- 1 Cut your thick piece of card for your cover and six or more pieces of scrap paper for your pages to the correct size with scissors or a paper cutter. You can make your journal bigger or smaller if you like, just make sure that the cover is at least 1cm bigger all the way round than your inside pages.
- 2 Fold the card for your cover and the papers for your pages in half.
- 3 Using the folds as a guide, glue your papers and your cover together by putting a line of glue (or double sided tape) along the fold of each page, until all your pages and the cover are glued together by the spine. Alternatively you could staple the pages along the spine or even sew them together with a sewing machine! You now have your miniature journal.
- 4 When the glue is dry, close your journal and make a pocket for the front cover using the contrasting coloured card cut to size. Glue along three edges of the contrasting card sticking it to the front of your journal ensuring you leave a gap at the top for the opening to your pocket.
- 5 Punch a hole through the front and back cover of your journal near the open end. Tie a piece of ribbon or string through the hole.
- 6 Decorate your journal using ephemera. It's nice to personalise it with objects you love such as buttons, old stamps, your favourite photograph or ticket stubs from one of your adventures!

You can now use your journal. It is the perfect size to pop in your pocket when you go out adventuring. You can fill your journal with notes and memories, you can stick curious objects that you find in it such as interesting leaves or you could draw a little picture on every page reminding you of somewhere you have visited!



Felt Birds

Ali Pickard is a 3D sculptor artist trained in metalwork with a varied artistic life including being part of a Women's Welding Collective, and running recycled design projects for women in Mexico & Ecuador.

Ali used to make large scale furniture pieces and metal sculptures, but now works on a smaller scale combining wood, metal, embroidery and automata movements.

Ali runs workshops and projects with community groups and schools using creativity and problem-solving skills.



We have 40 kits available with everything you need to make one of Ali's felt birds. If you would like one please call Spot On on 01254 660360 or email hello@spotonlancahire.co.uk.



MATERIALS

(provided in the pack)

- Scrap felt (2cm x 10cm squares)
- Skewer or similar size twig. (Paint if wished)
- Embroidery threads
- Small beads/sequins/button to decorate
- Children's wooden block - approx 4cm. (Paint if wished)
- Small piece scrap card (10cm square)
- Fabric scraps for stuffing

TOOLS

(not provided in the pack)

- Scissors and needle
- Hot glue or PVA glue

INSTRUCTIONS



- 1 Make a simple bird template on card then cut out two bird shapes in felt. Cut a wing shape from a contrasting colour of felt. Use the photo example as a template or design your own. The photo example is 9cm from beak to tail. Any bigger and it tends to be too heavy.
- 2 Position the wing and a small button or bead for the eye on one of the bird shapes and sew on using bright embroidery thread. This will be the front of our felt bird. Leave the back plain.



- 3 Now embellish this bird shape with embroidery and sequins/beads. Don't worry about it all being neat and perfect, it's all about using different colours and shapes. Don't go too close to the edge as you'll need to sew it together.
- 4 Cut a smaller bird shape from card. This will go in the middle of the bird to give it stability. Glue the card shape onto a skewer or similar sized twig.



- 5 Sew the top of your two bird shapes together from beak to tail. Use blanket stitch around the edge. Look at a video online if you're not sure, or use a simple running stitch. Now put the card shape on the skewer between the two felt bird shapes and sew round the rest, leaving an inch at the bottom to stuff your bird. Don't overstuff as you don't want to make it too top heavy. Finish sewing your bird.
- 6 Drill a small hole to fit your skewer into the centre of the wooden base and glue in place. Use a second-hand children's building block or cut a scrap of wood and paint. You could also make a base from polymer clay. Add a ribbon bow to finish off. If you prefer, you can add a ribbon to turn it into a hanging decoration instead.



You can find Ali at:

 curiousarty.com

 [curiousarty](https://www.facebook.com/curiousarty)



If you find yourself stuck with any of the makes in this magazine, then don't be afraid to check out youtube! There's a whole world of tutorials on there!

Moving Moments with Cheshire Dance

Feel Good in
Body and Mind

Cheshire
Dance

ACTIVITY 1: JUICY JOINTS



Sitting or standing tall - feet flat on the floor...

Make 4 circles with your shoulders.... your elbows... your arms.

Reach your arms forwards and open your chest towards the ceiling.

Make circles with your wrists and allow your arms to float in any direction you like - imagine you are a proud flamenco dancer on stage!

Imagine you have a hula hoop around your waist - circle your hips so that it doesn't fall down! Can you try 4 circles in one direction and 4 circles in the other?

Circle each ankle 4 times - notice how your knee, hip and whole leg join in the circles. Can you repeat this and make it even bigger?

Take a little walk on the spot - allow your arms to swing at your sides. Can you make the arm swings bigger, getting higher each time? Notice the way it feels in your torso. Can you feel a twist?

Let your arms reach upwards as you take a deep breath in... As you breathe out, let them fall and rest at your sides.

Can you repeat the whole sequence? Can you do it...

- To your favourite song?
- To the theme tune of your favourite TV programme?
- Faster? Slower... as if you were stuck in a pot of honey?
- With someone else? Teach it to a friend, a grandchild?

Dance is for everyone; young people, older adults, people with restricted mobility ... and everyone in between. It has long been proven that dance as an art form has the ability to transform lives.

From boosting confidence and enhancing social skills in younger people, to preventing falls, reducing isolation and improving coordination, strength and balance in older adults – and of course, raising the spirits of everyone – dance provides creative experiences for both body and mind.

Working to dispel the misconception that dance is simply learning steps and styles, in this issue Cheshire Dance shares with us two activities from its Moving Moments initiative that show how dance is so much more than this. Cheshire Dance shows us that creative movement (whilst seated as well as standing) can support people to learn about their own bodies, their health and wellbeing.

Give yourself the space and time for you to just be YOU by trying out these two Moving Moments activities.

To find out more about Cheshire Dance, classes and 'dance at home' activities, visit

 cheshiredance.org

 Cheshire Dance

Did you know we work in partnership with Cheshire Rural Touring Scheme? When they shared this article with us, we just had to include it in our magazine!

ACTIVITY 2: MOVING WITH BREATH

For each of the following, find a comfortable place to stand, sit or lie. If it feels good, allow your eyes to close...

a) Place your hands on your ribs...breathe deeply.

Notice your ribs expanding into your hands. Imagine your lungs as balloons inflating fully, taking up space.

b) Imagine your breath as the sea... as waves... coming in and out with the tide.

Feel the ebb and flow of your breath entering and leaving your body.

Can you allow your worries to dissolve and be carried away by the sea?

c) Notice the movement of your breath... in your body...

... chest...

... shoulders...

... stomach...

...rise and fall.

Breathing in, reach your arms out into space in any direction. Allow them to fall with the breath out.

Repeat this...

... breathing in and opening...

... breathing out and closing.

The Sweet Spot Flash Fiction

Sometimes sitting down to read, can feel like a real luxury, especially when life gets busy! That's why Flash Fiction and Short Stories can be so fantastic, helping you to switch off for 10, 5 or even just 2 minutes.



Hello? Hello? Ah yes, I can hear you. I've got you on headphones. Keep your walkie talkie on you. Alright, here goes.

He says it started small, in the patchy field down the side of Asda. Stupendous Stephen wheeled the cannon onto the flat bit, near the trellis of withered vines. He adjusted his spandex, lit the fuse, and with legs through muzzle he eased himself down into the cannon. The fuse burned for an eternity and then: bang.

What? Yes, Stephen, I have to say what happened. Everything that happened, just like you told me. Can I carry on? Alright.

He missed the target: a fudge torte with red circles of icing like a bullseye. He landed in a gloopy puddle of mud. Splashed a council worker scrubbing graffiti: a big willy without balls. Still, the cake was good for the eating.

What now? Tell them what? Ah. Okay.

He wants you to know the following week's attempt was better. Cleaner. Trifle this time, or rather an amorphous pile of jelly and brandy sponge on account of it not being in a dish. The cricket pitch was a better venue. They'd got permission from Vera, a big wig in the club, literally. Cream-slacked men with liver spots watched in glee. Overarm bowls, one of them joked, as Stupendous Stephen arced through the air and landed, left cheek, into the trifle. Perfect. His helmet pinged off. Nearly scored a six, said the onlookers. He celebrated by devouring chunky handfuls of flattened glacé cherries.

Next time it was the school football field, then the train station car park, then the sports centre. The desserts got larger, and the distance longer. Jam roly-poly, family pack, 27 metres. Christmas log the size of an actual log, 35 metres. Enough red velvet to feed a platoon, 48 metres. It was all about the angle of carriage. Keep those axles polished. Keep polishing off those delicious, destroyed desserts.

What? I'm sorry, but it's the truth. You did eat them. Every time. Yes, yes, I was getting to that. I'll tell that bit next.

He says the Gazette & Chronicle ran a front page: PUDDING STUNTMAN AIMS FOR SWEET SPOT. So he started selling tickets. He sold out the rugby ground on a Tuesday afternoon. Seven quid a pop, come see the dessert daredevil, no flash photography.

He'd put on a few stone, a few more stone, so he hit heavy. That crème brûlée burst like a caramelised firework. Eighteen gallons of thick custard rained down like fat blossom. There was Stephen, arms aloft, mouth open, eating his sweet success.

He was on The One Show alongside a pigtailed schoolgirl who'd got her head stuck in railings. He'd entered Britain's Got Talent too but was cut in the edit: the spandex was too revealing, what with all the extra bulge. He'd bought a bigger helmet especially. Fatter head, I suppose.

Huh? Okay, okay, I'll skip to the end.

Next was a strawberry sundae, marshmallows the size of footballs. A tarte Tatin, satellite dish wide. A swimming pool of Tapioca pudding, arm bands advised.

And finally, Wembley Stadium. The big one. At the west end was the cannon, the same old cannon that had trundled down the side of Asda but now plastered with sponsor ads: Spandex, Vaseline, SlimFast. The stands were full of face-painted fans in replica helmets swigging from tumblers the shape of cannons. At the east end was the target: a wedding cake. A hundred tiers, maybe more. A towering white Burj Cake-lifa, the piping wilting under the floodlights.

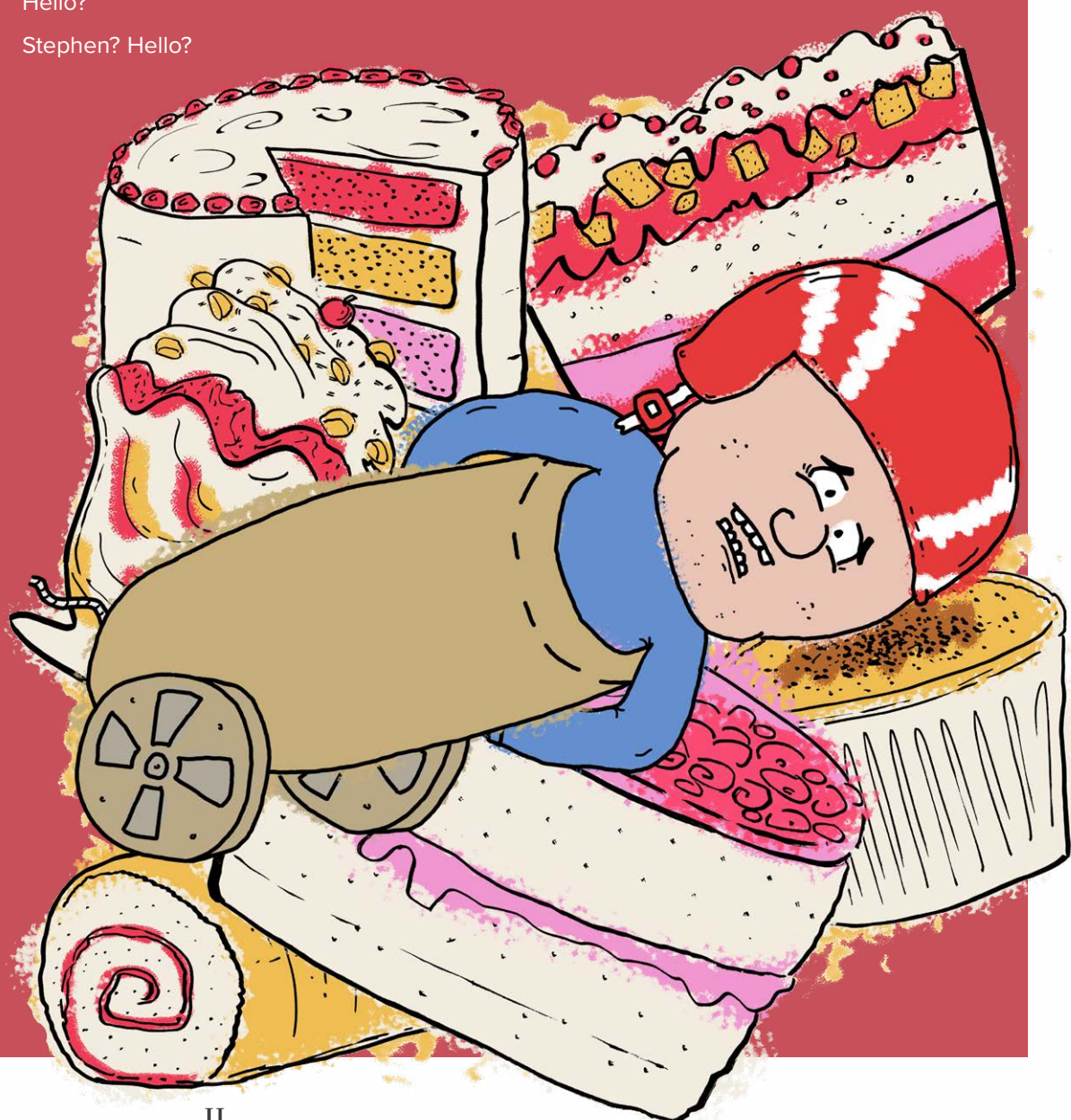
Stupendous Stephen pulled at his spandex, now chafing in all the wrong places. He lit the fuse. The stands thundered with stomps of excitement. With a wheeze, he manhandled his legs through the muzzle. He pushed, crammed, jammed himself down into the shaft. The fuse burned with fury, brightening the stadium like a million sparklers. Stupendous Stephen tried to say something, but he was deep in the cocoon of the cannon. No, wait, he said. Hold on, he said. I can't... I'm... I'm... The crowd cheered louder and then: bang.

Hello?

Hello?

Stephen? Hello?

The Sweet Spot is one of six adult flash fiction stories commissioned by Spot On Lancashire, Lancashire Libraries as part of the Reading Friends project. You can see all six, read by the authors, including Fat Roland reading the Sweet Spot, on the Spot On YouTube channel.



Create your own coaster

Ivy Upcycling are passionate about helping people be more conscious consumers and live a more sustainable, gentler life.

They take waste wood, fabric and small furniture pieces and create modern, practical and decorative items for homes and gardens. Everything made from fabric and wood is lovingly handmade by Jan working in her garden workshop and supported by her husband and woodturning Dad in his garage workshop.

Sign up for the Ivy Upcycling monthly newsletter or browse the latest products at www.ivyupcycling.co.uk



We hope you enjoy making your coaster and we'd love to see you at a local market or online.

TOP TIP

- A paper napkin with a white unpatterned background produces the best effect.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1 Sand your wood and seal it with a thin coat of varnish on both sides and allow to dry.



- 2 You'll find that there are normally 3 layers of tissue in a napkin and you want just one layer, with your motif on, to work with. Try making a tear on the edge to make splitting the layers easier or stick a small piece of sticky tape to the top and bottom layers and gently pull them apart.



- 3 Carefully tear around your motif as close to the edges as you can without damaging the graphic. It is important to tear not cut out the motif as this makes the edges blend in when you stick it down. Place it on your coaster.



- 4 Thin your PVA with a couple of drops of water to make it easier to work with. Starting at the centre of the graphic, very gently apply it, with a small brush, towards the outside torn edge. Repeat until all of the motif is covered in the PVA glue. Do not press too hard or 'over work' it or the motif will tear. You will find this easier as you practice.



- 5 Whilst the glue is still wet, place the cling film flat over the motif and gently smooth out the creases in the gluey graphic. Then carefully lift off the film. If there is still glue on the wood, away from the motif, carefully wipe it away. Wait for this to dry or use a hairdryer on a medium heat setting to speed up the drying process.

- 6 Finally add 2 more coats of varnish to seal and protect your coaster and add the little cork pads to base.

MATERIALS & EQUIPMENT LIST:

- Coaster sized log slice available from online marketplaces or your own seasoned log!
- Paper napkin with bee motif or other small motif of your choice that sits nicely on the wood
- PVA glue and small empty container or jar lid to mix
- Water based varnish - eg. Polyvine Wax Finish Flat Varnish
- Fine sandpaper
- Small soft water colour paint brush
- Larger brush for varnishing
- Small piece of cling film or thin plastic food bag
- Cork buttons for the base to protect your surfaces

Give old books a new lease of life



Kate Bufton creates intricate and fragile paper sculptures from pages of timeworn books. From geometric folded constructions to more delicately assembled paper vessels, she transforms this familiar medium from a carrier of text to an object of art. The process of repetition, seen throughout many of her pieces, enables her to enter a trance-like state, in which she finds her mind to be most creative.

MATERIALS & EQUIPMENT

- Old paperback book around 2cm thick
- Ribbon / lace for around the top
- Hessian / fabric
- Bird imagery from old books
- Buttons
- PVA glue
- Scissors

- 1 Remove the front and back covers of the paperback book and lay in front of you with the spine of the book to the left.
- 2 Fold the first page of the book – using your spine as a guide, fold the top right hand corner down to your spine – creating a big triangle.
- 3 Fold the outer edge of the page into the centre
- 4 Turn this folded page over as though you are reading the book and continue to fold the rest of the pages.
- 5 The book's spine should slowly start to curve as you fold more pages in the book. It does get a bit tricky towards the end but always try to get your folds lined up to the spine.
- 6 Once all the pages are folded you are now ready to decorate your sculpture, apply PVA glue to the ribbon or lace that will go around the top of your book. Continue to use the PVA to stick the hessian, paper birds and buttons to the front of the sculpture.



You can find Kate at:

 katebufton.co.uk

 [booktransformations_](https://www.instagram.com/booktransformations_)

 [KateBuftonArtist](https://www.facebook.com/KateBuftonArtist)

 [buftonkate](https://twitter.com/buftonkate)

Mrs Robinson's theatrical boarding house

David Tilsley pokes around in her guest book

My first visit to Burnley and have had a very good feed at Mrs Robinson's.

Archives are wonderful things. A single surviving document from the past can be rich and surprising.

For a few years either side of 1900, Margaret Robinson offered bed and board to theatrical artistes at 44 Rectory Road, Burnley. Mrs Robinson's guest book is one of the millions of historic documents cared for by Lancashire Archives. The guest book entries – which include comments, publicity material and ditties – tell us about some of those who trod the boards in Burnley back then.

Tony Iveson, for example, performing at the Burnley Empire on 2 Apr 1902, was a “piano breaker”. When I asked the British Music Hall Society, they suggested it might have involved smashing up an old piano and passing each piece through a small hoop. The whole instrument would gradually make its way through, with Tony working against the clock.

The hoop might well have also accommodated the contortionist Ossi Soupllessi, The “World's Greatest Bender.” His flyer gives ample evidence of his super suppleness and hints at an aerial dimension to his twisting and turning. Ossi, like a lot of the guests loved the high quality of his landlady's cooking (particularly her pies), “My first visit to Burnley and have had a very good feed at Mrs Robinson's.”

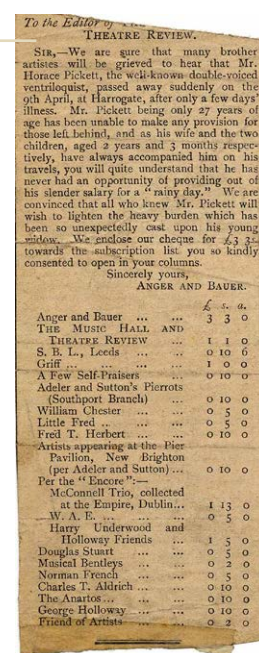
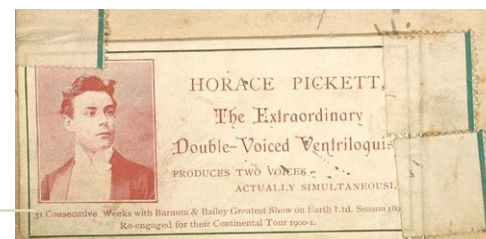
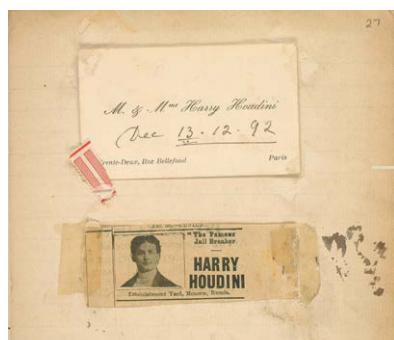
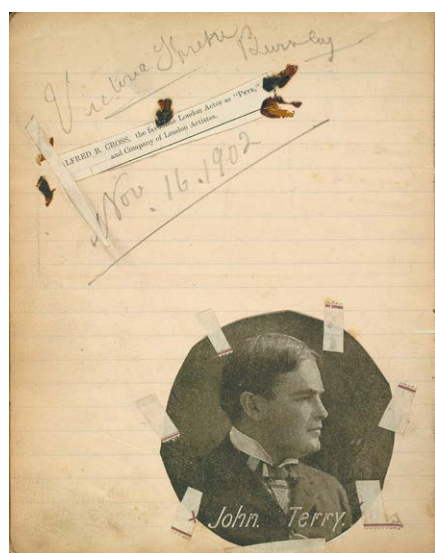
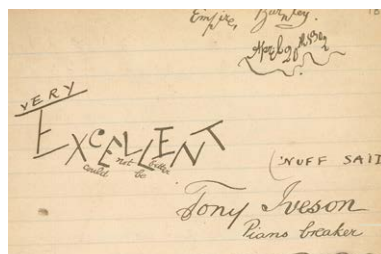
Home cooking must have been a bonus to home-sick, American “comic caricature” act, John Terry and Miss Mabel Lambert, in November 1903, “Mrs Robinson simply tops the bill with us every time. We have never been so comfortable and happy since we have been in England and her kindness to my baby will never be forgotten”.

Mabel was not the only performer to stay at Mrs Robinson's with her child. Horace Pickett, “The Extraordinary Double-Voiced Ventriloquist” was accompanied by his wife and baby. Sadly the guest book also contains a newspaper cutting, shortly after his stay in Burnley, telling of his death in Harrogate in 1903 at the age of just 27, and of the financial hardship of his wife and children.

Sometimes the child was the artiste. Another ventriloquist, Bessie Travis, stayed at Rectory Road in September 1903 with her mother whilst performing at the Empire. Bessie's act consisted of playing the piano whilst moving and giving voices to her three “dummies”. Not easy!

Best known of all those who stayed with Mrs Robinson is Harry Houdini, the world-famous escapologist. On 10 December 1902, the Burnley Express reported how Houdini, as a publicity stunt, had been locked in a police cell (in the basement of what is now Burnley Town Hall). Within five minutes he had not only unlocked his own cell door, but the doors of the other five cells on the corridor and the large iron gate at the end. It proved successful. Three days later, The Burnley Gazette reported “large houses at the Empire”. It describes how Houdini was secured in “Boer irons” and leg irons, forcing him into a crouching position before a second set of irons were placed on his wrists. “He freed himself... in five and three-quarter minutes and was largely cheered.”

The millions of documents at Lancashire Archives tell the stories of many more who have lived, worked, had fun and done lots of other things in Lancashire over the last 900 years. Our archives are kept safe so people can see and enjoy them. Pay us a visit and explore the stories that interest you. You could even ask to see Mrs Robinson and her paying guest Harry. As long as he hasn't escaped.



David Tilsley
Archivist

Lancashire Archives is Lancashire
County Council's archive service

✉ archives@lancashire.gov.uk

f @lanchistory

Hopeful & Glorious

Hopeful
AND
Glorious

Spot On has teamed up with Hopeful & Glorious in order to bring the fabulous makes to this edition of At Home

When not working with us, they create great quality events for artists, makers and designers from across the North. We caught up with founder, Heather Fox, to find out more about what they do.

We wanted to know why Heather founded Hopeful & Glorious back in 2014. She told us that as a maker herself she was looking for places to market her work, "There were not enough events in the area that focused on handmade work". Hopeful & Glorious curates events that bring together professional makers. Heather has kept the bar really high with each event having a wide range of handmade products available. "People may be using traditional techniques but with a contemporary and sometimes surprising twist" she tells us. "Something handmade means so much more than something mass produced" and people are often surprised to find that it doesn't cost any more.

Hopeful & Glorious works on the principle that the "events need to be enjoyable to both makers and visitors", that way, everyone has a positive experience.



Events need to be enjoyable to both makers and visitors



Heather loves the process of making and is keen to support people in trying new techniques and ideas such as those found in At Home. Workshops and 'how to' videos are also an important part of the online events that Hopeful & Glorious have developed since the start of the Pandemic. "We hope to be back live again at Lytham Hall in November" she tells us but in the meantime you can subscribe to their quarterly newsletter at hopefulandglorious.co.uk or follow them on facebook, twitter and instagram.

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Lancashire 2025



You may have heard on the news at the end of May, that Oliver Dowden, the Culture Secretary, announced the competition to find the 'City of Culture 2025'. Lancashire is not a city, but it is bidding. To find out a bit more, we chatted over Zoom, with Loz Kaye from the team behind the bid.

We started by stating the obvious: Lancashire is not a city. Loz pointed out that for the first time, "regions can bid for the 'City of Culture' title, including towns and rural areas." The team believes that this is long overdue. For the first time, the county is re-imagining itself as a virtual city with a mission to present an ambitious cultural programme, integrating the urban, the coast and the countryside.

But what will we get out of it? Loz told us that the title of 'City of Culture' will put Lancashire and its culture "on a national stage, showcasing what's great about the area and that we are ambitious." Building on the great things already here, he tells us that "there are so many exciting ideas around, all worthy of investment." Lancashire 2025 wants to build a groundbreaking cultural programme, in the virtual city of Lancashire - a cultural city of 'creative' citizens at a county scale.

Lancashire's strength is its amazingly creative people who will be at the heart of our bid

Loz wants "Lancashire residents to be right at the heart of everything that we do." He's encouraging Lancastrians to back the bid. In addition they are recruiting a citizens advisory panel. "We're looking for 100 people from right across the county that can advise us and be the voice of Lancashire people. It is vital that we hear the county's voices in what we do. We are not seeking 'art experts', just people who are "enthusiastic about the future of Lancashire."

The winner of the competition to be 'UK City of Culture 2025' will be announced in Spring 2022. Bradford, Medway and Cornwall have declared they want to join the competition. However, "Lancashire's strength is its amazingly creative people who will be at the heart of our bid".

To support the bid, go to lancashire2025.com where you can have your say, sign up and back Lancashire.

What's On This Autumn

Have you missed your Spot On performances? Have no fear, we're working on some small pop up events so **check our website and sign up for our newsletter** to receive updates. In the meantime take a look at some shows that don't require hand sanitiser or a 2m rule.

ON YOUR SCREEN



Over the past 18 months we've worked with X amount of artists to create a whole library of online short stories for you to watch and enjoy. Some are aimed at families, some are strictly for grown ups! Why not take 10 minutes out of your day and head to our website now.



This summer Spot On is heading outdoors, with two pieces of fantastic theatre commissioned and made for our Lancashire audiences. 'The Cabinet of Curiosity' and 'Conference of the Birds.' If you're looking for a great day out, keep an eye on the Spot On website for more information - why not join our mailing list while your there? And get all the latest show information in your inbox.



THE GREAT OUTDOORS

AT A VENUE

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