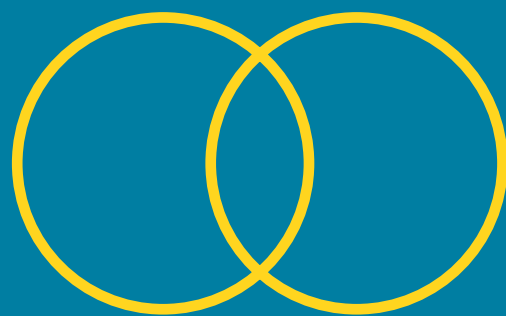


POETRY Express

A quarterly newsletter from survivors' poetry



S U M M E R

2001

number 12

“The art of
getting work
published”

promoting poetry
by survivors
of mental distress

INSIDE

Poetry Groups
Workshops, Articles
News, Readings
Performances, Events
lots of New Books
& your Letters

PLUS

Stepping Out Theatre,
Bipolar Power Poetry,
National Maritime Museum,
The Poetry Café Society,
Network News,
and more ...

who's who. at survivors' poetry

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Miriam Hastings, John Hirst,
Danielle Hope, Andrew
Pinnock.

Richard Sutton,
an Advisor to and friend of
Survivors' Poetry passed away
very recently. Our deepest
sympathies and thoughts are
with his family and friends.

... from the Director

Sharon Holder writes,

Survivors' Poetry has faced almost a year of flux and insecurity, with three members of staff leaving in 2000 and remaining staff having to focus on areas of work outside the original remit for which they were employed. Survivors' Poetry then faced further difficulty when it became clear that our financial position was not as secure as we had thought, meaning that we were unable to recruit a full staff team. Since August 2000, we have been running the organisation with a reduced staff team of two, supported by dedicated volunteers, Advisors and Trustees.



Sharon enjoying the Facilitator Training Course, August 2000,

This hard work has paid off and we are in a position where we are able to maintain our basic services and two staff this year. I have enclosed Survivors' Poetry's Plan of Work for 2001 for your information. This has meant that we have not been as able to develop new projects and work as we would have liked, although we did run a short pilot of daytime facilitated workshops in London and collaborated with the National Maritime Museum.

Further to this, the really good news is that we expect to be in a position to recruit a full staff team in 2002, possibly earlier, thanks largely to substantial financial support from The Arts Council of England and London Arts. We have secured approximately £100,000 which will cover our core costs from 2002 - 2004.

Survivors' Poetry would like to express our thanks to all the charities, Trusts and institutions that have supported us and continue to do so.

Having been with the organisation for the past sixteen months, initially as Outreach Co-ordinator and latterly as Acting Director & Outreach, I have witnessed great change within the organisation. I will be adding to this change as I will be leaving Survivors' Poetry in June 2001. The last year, and especially the past eight months, have been difficult, but I feel that I am leaving at a time of new opportunities.

If August 2000's successful Facilitator Training Course is the standard by which I should judge my outreach work with you, I am disappointed that I wasn't able to meet with more of you. It was the most enjoyable single piece of work that I did for Survivors' Poetry.

With Thanks and Good Thoughts,

Sharon Holder

Acting Director & Outreach for Survivors' Poetry



... from the Editor

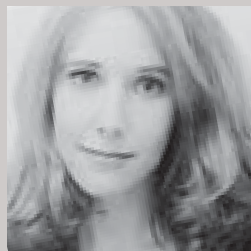
Welcome to issue 12 of Poetry Express. There has been a longer gap between the last two issues because staff time had to be spent on essential fund-raising work. Poetry Express is now back on track and, as Sharon explains in her article, our hard work means Survivors' Poetry's future looks brighter.

Sharon leaves Survivors' Poetry in June 2001. A huge thank you to Sharon for the brilliant work she has done, her determination and clear-sighted leadership. I'll certainly miss working with you, Sharon! I will be the only member of staff for a time, which will be difficult, but at least Survivors' Poetry now has the funds to recruit a new Director.

Thank you to everyone who contributed to this issue of Poetry Express. Please do keep sending your letters, articles and events listings (send to Emma Parish, Editor - Poetry Express, Survivors' Poetry, Diorama Arts Centre, 34 Osnaburgh Street, London NW1 3ND). It would be fantastic to hear from you.

Enjoy the rest of the summer!

Yours,
Emma Parish



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Poetry Express is a quarterly publication. Its purpose is to publicise events and activities organised by Survivors' Poetry and by Survivor-led Poetry groups all over the country and to offer a forum for debate in which to share and discuss information and experiences. Please send us articles, small features, photographs, artwork and events listings about your group or about anything that you think may be of interest to our readers. Work should preferably be typed or on disk. We cannot guarantee publication and the editor reserves the right to edit any contributions. No more than 750 words please. The views expressed in this publication are not necessarily the views of Survivors' Poetry. The next copy deadline for the Winter 2001 issue is Monday 17th September 2001.

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Small Press review

JOHN THIRST, a survivor poet from the West Midlands, has successfully published poems in various poetry magazines and anthologies. Here he provides a guide to the small press industry in the UK and offers some tried and tested advice on the art of getting work published.

The life blood of today's poetry scene is not the handful of 'select' publishing houses or the 'eye-brow' periodicals, but the thriving small press scene. At the last count there were over 700 publishers listed as active in the UK. Publications range from the perfectly-bound, well-marketed title with a healthy circulation to the 'single-sheet' enthusiast appearing when they have enough stamps and can afford a new print cartridge. Many are specialist and elitist, only publishing 'established names'; many more only publish the work of subscribers. Then you have the failed writers turned editors with their own agendas. Some publications are vehicles for more commercial ventures, i.e. expensive catch-all anthologies. I could go on. My advice is to buy and try. Trust your own taste.

Try to sample and read a range of small press publications before submitting work. Beg, borrow, send for cheap back issues, share subscriptions with friends etc. I have compiled a short list of magazines that are accessible, reader/writer-friendly, good value for money and offer a wide range of quality poetry. Many of the publications regularly include reviews of current magazines. I have found that once you start to receive and read these titles regularly, you easily keep in touch with developments within the small press scene. They all carry their submission requirements and often feature guidelines and advice on how to get published.

House style is also a consideration. A few publications are still dedicated to rhyming verse. Some are thematic, with all poems linked to a central message. Most feature free verse with the editor's choice being the only criterion. If you want continuity and a regular supply of your poetic fix, you need to consider both your budget and the frequency of publication. Many small press titles are published half-yearly or quarterly,

however a small selection are available every month. It can help to build a common bond between writer and publisher if you contribute to or support a fledgling publication. Along with the pleasure of having your work accepted, you may be able to shape the magazine's future direction.

Nothing prepares you for that dreaded 'rejection letter', except knowing that it is often helpful to receive constructive criticism from a dedicated editor who also happens to be a practising poet. Some editors will point out why your poems were rejected this time and what to do about reversing the trend in the future.

The following list is intended as a starting point, painting a general picture of the range of small press publications in the UK. I've enjoyed being part of many of these publications over the last three years. I still subscribe to most, so sample copies are available. Good luck!

A4 Size Publications:

Voice & Verse*. Quarterly. Approx. 28pp. £3.00. Poetry, competitions, market news, articles, reviews, adverts. Editor; Ruth Booth, 7 Pincott Place, London, SE4 2ER.

Never Bury Poetry. Quarterly. Approx. 44pp. £2.50. Thematic poetry / editorial. Editor; Jean Tarry, Bracken Clock, Troutbeck Close, Hawkshaw, Bury, BL8 4LJ.

Poetry Now Magazine. Quarterly. Approx. 46pp. £12.00 per year. Poetry, features, articles, workshops, featured poet, thematic poetry page, writers' group listings, competition listings. Part of the larger Forward Press literary publishing house. Editor; Heather Killingray, Remus House, Coltsfoot Drive, Woodston, Peterborough, PE2 9JX.

A5 Size Publications:

Reach.* Monthly, approx. 48pp. £2.50 per issue. Poetry, comment, competitions, reviews, adverts. Editor; Shelagh Nugent (part of Cherrybite Publications) Linden Cottage, 45 Burton Road, Little Neston Cheshire, CH64 4AE.

First Time. Every six months. Approx. 96 pp. £7.50 per year. Poetry by new 'first time' published poets / editorial. Editor; Josephine Austin, The Snoring Cat, 136 Harold Road, East Sussex, TN35 5NN.

Poetry Monthly*. Monthly. Approx. 28pp. £2 per issue. £14 per year. Poetry, comment, letter pages, editorial, reviews. Editor; Martin Holroyd, 39 Cavendish Road, Long Eaton, Nottingham, NG10 4HY.

The Affectionate Punch. Every 6 months. Approx. 40pp. £5.00 per year. Poetry, editorials, magazine reviews, competitions, short stories. Editor; Andrew Tutty, 35 Brundage Road, Manchester, M22 0BY.

A Bard Hair Day*. Quarterly. Approx. 38pp. £2.50 per issue. Poetry, short stories, adverts, editorial, competitions, reviews. Editor; Ian Deal, 289 Elmwood Avenue, Feltham, Middlesex, TW13 7QB.

Writers' Own Magazine*. Quarterly. Approx. 48pp. £2.50 per issue. Articles, short stories, poetry, competitions, adverts, reviews. Editor; Eileen Pickering, 121 Highbury Grove, Clapham, Bedford, MK41 6DU.

Purple Patch. Quarterly. Approx. 26pp. £2.50 per issue. Poetry, comment, reviews, book reviews. Editor; Geoff Stevens, 25 Griffiths Road, West Bromwich, B71 2EH.

*=Offer a self-publishing service (editing and printing of your own booklet of poetry).

Other References:

Light's List of Small Press Publications, £1.50 from John Light, 37 The Meadows, Berwick upon Tweed, Northumberland, TD15 1NY.

The Small Press Guide, £9.99 from Writers' Bookshop, Forward Press, Remus House, Coltsfoot Drive, Woodston, Peterborough, PE2 9JX.

The Poetry Business by Peter Finch (all you need to know about how to get along in the poetry world), £5.95 from Seren, Poetry Wales Press, Wyndham Street, Bridgend, Mid Glamorgan, Wales.

The 'Rough & Ready' Guide to Publishing Poetry by Martin Holroyd, £2.50 (all profits to Poetry Monthly magazine) from Poetry Monthly Press, 39 Cavendish Road, Long Eaton, Nottingham NG10 4HY.

news...news...news

National Poetry Foundation

This year sees a change in the function of the National Poetry Foundation. The NPF will no longer have subscribers, nor will it consider applications for grant aid. However, anyone (whether published before in book form or not) may submit a manuscript for possible publication. You need to send:

- A. 45 pages of very clearly typed poems to arrive no later than 1st of September 2001.
- B. An administration and reading fee of £30 (payable to the NPF).
- C. An envelope which is large enough and which has the correct postage on it for the return of your manuscript.

If your work is accepted the NPF will publish a Perfectly Bound book of your work at no additional cost to you. You will receive five free copies and may also purchase as many extra copies as you wish at £4 each for resale at £5 each. The NPF will send review copies to your local newspaper/s and radio, to selected poetry magazines and to the mainstream bookshops and library suppliers. Should they feel your work suitable, the NPF will enter your book for any relevant awards. For further details please contact: NPF, 27 Mill Road, Fareham, Hants, PO16 0TH.

Rehab UK

Rehab UK is a registered charity established in the UK in December 1994 as the England and Wales division of the Rehab Group (Ireland and Scotland based) which itself celebrated a 50th anniversary last year. Rehab UK's vital work enhances the social and economic independence of people with disabilities and other special needs.

Rehab UK's work in the UK focuses primarily on helping people to gain skills and to regain confidence,

particularly in the working environment. In many cases this leads to finding full or part-time employment. This is a crucial ingredient to a person's fullest possible rehabilitation following Acquired Brain Injury. At their Brain Injury Vocational Centres in London, Birmingham and Newcastle, full and individual assessment, re-training and job finding takes place. If you wish to find out more about Rehab UK please contact: Rehab UK, Windermere House, Kendal Avenue, London W3 0XA. Tel: 020 8896 2333 Fax: 020 8896 2444
Website: www.rehabuk.org

One Heart One World

One Heart One World is a significant opportunity to promote disability culture through poetry and artwork. In partnership with the UK's National Disability Arts Forum and Disability Now magazine, the Japan Broadcasting Corporation (NHK) asks disabled poets and writers from around the United Kingdom to contribute short poems (maximum 15 lines) for possible inclusion in the exhibition. If you are a disabled person you are welcome to send a poem, on the theme of 'the Heart', which has not been previously published. Each poem selected for

exhibition will be illustrated by an artwork by a contemporary British artist. Judges include Andrew Motion and Ian Dughig.

Poems and artwork will be exhibited at Cotton's Atrium, in London's Tooley Street, in January 2002, from where they will tour to Salt Lake City, USA (to coincide with the Winter Paralympics) and Tokyo, Japan. Entry to the exhibition is free. The closing date for entries is Saturday June 30th 2001. For more information please contact Fernando Guasch on 020 7639 3014 / ferrang@onetel.net.uk
Poems can also be submitted via the homepage of DisabilityNow: www.disabilitynow.org.uk

Manchester Workshops

Manchester Survivors' Poetry are running a series of free weekly creative writing workshops for women, facilitated by women. Facilitators include Pat Winston, Quibilah Montsho and Rosie Garland. Workshops will be held every Thursday (1-3pm) at The Pankhurst Centre, 64 Nelson Street, Chorlton-on-Medlock, M13 9WP. For further details please call Rosie on 0161 881 5743. Workshops run until July 19th 2001.

TRUSTEES WANTED

Survivors' Poetry is seeking to develop the membership and diversity of its Board of Trustees. We would particularly welcome applications from women, young adults and members of black and other ethnic minority communities.

If you have up to one day a month to spare, can meet in the evenings and are able to offer telephone/e-mail advice and support, we would like to hear from you. We are especially interested in marketing, legal or fund-raising expertise, but would be happy to hear from you if you have other skills to bring to the organisation.

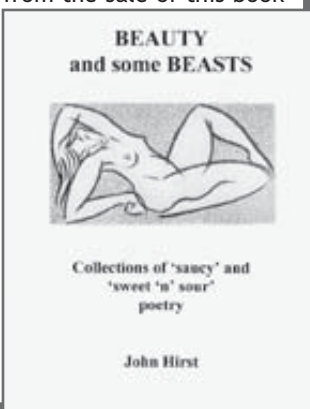
If you are interested in becoming a Trustee please send a CV to the Survivors' Poetry office (for the attention of John O'Donoghue), with a covering letter highlighting the skills you would bring to the Board and the reasons why you wish to become a Trustee of Survivors' Poetry.

BEAUTY and some BEASTS

A Collection of 'Saucy' & 'Sweet 'n' Sour' Poetry by John Hirst

John Hirst's sixth collection is a feast for the senses. Hirst serves up the 'sweets' and 'sours' of reflections past and present, observes the beauty of artistic works and tackles beasts such as inequality, injustice, illness and depression. All proceeds from the sale of this book will go to Survivors' Poetry - many thanks to John for his generosity! £143.00 has been donated so far.

'Beauty and some Beasts' is available from Survivors' Poetry, priced £3.00 (plus 40p p&p). Readers of *Poetry Express* may buy the book for the reduced price of £2.00 (plus 40p p&p). Please make all cheques payable to 'Survivors' Poetry'. Thanks!



Opportunity for a Freelance Website Designer

Survivors' Poetry is in the early stages of planning a website and are looking for a talented web designer to create our site.

If you have the relevant skills and website design experience and would like to be considered for this freelance opportunity, please send your contact details (including a CV highlighting your website design experience) to Survivors' Poetry, Diorama Arts Centre, 34 Osaburgh Street, London, NW1 3ND. Your details will be kept on file and you will be contacted later.

Closing date for application: 31st July 2001.

If you have not been contacted by the end of August 2001, please assume that you have not been successful on this occasion.

FWWCP 25th Anniversary Celebration of Writing Roy Holland attended...

I was lucky enough to be able to attend the Federation of Worker Writers and Community Publishers' 25th Anniversary Celebration of Writing and AGM at Leicester University in April 2001.

The FWWCP aims to promote community writing and publishing throughout Britain and abroad. It has recently organised free training weekends in Using the Media, Selling your Books and Designing a Community Website, from which survivors have benefited. All Survivors' Poetry's Network of groups are entitled to apply for one year's complimentary membership as First Chapter members and five UK Survivors' Poetry groups are full members. The Celebration began with a performance recreating the main events of the Fed's first twenty five years. We were spoiled for choice of workshops to attend. I was very glad I chose

a dance workshop organised by the Foundation for Community Dance and led by Lisa Kateraga from Leicester. From simple movements, she developed a group interaction. We then wrote down our feelings about our piece and used key phrases and words from our observations to choreograph Lisa herself in a performance. It is hoped that the FWWCP might team up with the Foundations for Community Dance and for Community Music for a future collaboration.

On Saturday evening there was a brilliant show by over fifty performers representing about fifteen groups, including the Survivors' Poetry groups. Sexy and scatological poems raised some laughs and some eyebrows at the start, but the performance soon broadened out and included some very moving pieces. Some people performed for the first time, which must have required considerable courage.

Before the final reflections on Sunday, Rebecca O'Rourke (whose fantastic thriller set in Hackney in

the eighties readers may remember), who is based in Continuing Education at the University of Leeds, spoke about her hope of compiling a bibliography of all the FWWCP's writings over the 25-year period. The Fed has been discussing the creation of an archive and of participating in a European archive of community writing, and Rebecca's plan would be a good practical step to begin with. We need to record the work for posterity and provide a descriptive index of the work so people are able to access it. I do recommend that survivors and survivor writing groups get involved in the FWWCP.

If your writing group would like more information about the FWWCP please contact: FWWCP, 67 The Boulevard, Tunstall, Stoke on Trent, ST6 6BD. E-mail: fwwcp@cwcom.net

Congratulations to Roy Holland, who has been elected to the FWWCP's Executive Committee!



Victims of Tranquillizers'

Barry Merchant

Victims of Tranquillizers' London representative, has experienced the debilitating effects of prescribed benzodiazepine tranquillizer drugs:

"Thirty years ago I contracted a rare neurological disease and was prescribed Valium. I was addicted for the next seventeen years. The effect was devastating. When I finally came through I was underdeveloped in all aspects of my life. It was like I had been in cold storage for all those years."

Benzodiazepines such as Ativan, Vallium and Librium have been widely prescribed in the UK since the early 1960s. It is claimed that they are highly addictive with users suffering severe withdrawal symptoms following discontinuance and that they cause a huge range of side effects which have devastated users' lives. These side effects include depression, fatigue, blurred vision and hallucinations and possible disabilities in babies born to addicted mothers.

Victims of Tranquillizers was formed in the spring of 1993 to promote understanding of the suffering and neuro-chemical brain damage caused to thousands of British people by benzodiazepine tranquillizers prescribed by their doctors. VOT's aim is to persuade the government to hold a public enquiry into the effect and use of these dangerous drugs by doctors, and to compensate victims in the same way as people injured by industrial accidents and diseases. To enable victims to come to terms with their suffering, the immediate need is to organise as much mutual help through local tranquillizer support groups as possible.

Thousands of victims of tranquillizer damage are suffering alone in their homes all over the country, getting little or no support from the medical profession, but are too frightened to venture out to seek help for themselves. Friendly and supportive contact for these sufferers is vital if they are to have any chance to rebuild their shattered lives.

VOT has established databases to provide immediately accessible information for their three most urgent tasks:-

a national register of groups for the Tranx Help Directory.

a national register of sufferers, families, friends, supporters and benzodiazepine experts.

a bibliography of benzodiazepine-related literature, medical, biochemical, sociological and general.

One of VOT's key activities is

the documenting of complaints resulting from the failure of the medical profession, institutions and the NHS to recognise benzodiazepine addiction and damage and to provide appropriate treatment and after-care. VOT also compiles complaints from the current benzodiazepine litigation. VOT is a self-supporting organisation without membership fees. VOT produces information sheets on many aspects of problems inherent in benzodiazepines, including information about medical and legal rights of benzodiazepine addicts.

If you would like more information about Victims of Tranquillizers or would like to help in promoting support and understanding of the long-term physical, mental and sociological damage caused by benzodiazepines, please contact Barry Merchant, VOT London Representative, 12D Worbeck Road, Anerley, London SE20 7SW.

Opportunity for a *Part-time Freelance Fund-raiser*

Survivors' Poetry is looking for a Part-time Freelance Fund-raiser. Experience of the voluntary sector funding system is essential.

Survivors' Poetry has recently successfully secured funding from *The Arts Council of England*, *London Arts* and a number of other sources for the next two financial years. We are looking for an experienced fund-raiser to build on this success and to secure new project and core funds

You must have a proven track record of successful fund-raising, be able to produce budgets/financial information as required for funding applications, have a sound knowledge of funding sources and be able to produce long-term and short-term fund-raising strategies.

Application by CV to the Director.
Closing date for application: 31 July 2001.

News of our ev

Somers Town Blues Night Poetry and Songs by Survivors

Somers Town Performances - April and May 2001

The performers at Somers Town Blues Night in April 2001 were: Peter Brown, Dave Russell, Jeanette ju Pierre and Isha (MC). Performers in May 2001 were: Lloyd Lindsay, Roger Moulson, Viv Youell and Dave Russell (MC). Thanks to all!

Somers Town Community Centre, 150 Ossulston Street, (off Euston Road), London, NW1.

7.30pm - 10pm with interval. Doors: 7.00 pm. (If you wish to do a floor spot on the night please aim to arrive by 7pm). Admission: £3.50, concessions: £1.50, floor spots and current inpatients: £1.00.

Tube: Euston / Kings Cross. Buses: 10, 30, 68, 73, 168, 188 and 253. Wheelchair Access. Accessible Toilet.

Saturday 30th June 2001

**Frank Bangay,
Christina Dunhill
& Kath Tait**

Saturday 28th July 2001

**'From Lead to Gold'
Launch of the 'Write on the Edge' anthology
Featuring readings from the contributors**

Induction Loop.

NB. If you wish to walk with somebody from Kings Cross BR station to Somers Town you can meet with a Survivors' Poetry volunteer (they will be wearing a badge) at the entrance to WH Smith inside Kings Cross Station. Please plan to arrive at 6.30pm. The volunteer and group will leave Kings Cross for Somers Town at 6.45pm sharp.

After July's event there will be a SUMMER BREAK. There will be no Somers Town event in August & September 2000

Write on the Edge - Poetry workshops by survivors for survivors

The Garden Studio, Diorama Arts Centre, 34 Osnaurgh Street, London NW1 3ND. 7.30pm: FREE

Survivors' Poetry holds fortnightly creative writing, poetry feedback and performance workshops for survivors. These provide participants with an opportunity to have work reviewed and discussed in a friendly, supportive environment. Participants of feedback workshops should bring along a poem typed, or clearly hand written from which we can take photocopies.

Tuesday 3rd July 2001 (feedback) Tuesday 17th July 2001 (performance) Tuesday 31st July 2001 (writing)
Tuesday 14th August 2001 (Participants' Party - all welcome) SUMMER BREAK

National Maritime Museum - Poetry workshops

The National Maritime Museum, Greenwich is working in partnership with Survivors' Poetry for a second course in creative writing commencing Thursday 5th July 2001. The Museum will provide a venue, a highly experienced facilitator and the inspiration of its collections for people who want to write creatively through the medium of poetry. All course workshops are free of charge, with attendance to be confirmed in advance. This is a follow up to the highly successful partnership course that ran from November 2000 to January of this year. The outcome of the course resulted in some wonderful written pieces, that are due to be published on our Museum website within the next couple of months.

If you would like further details of the course and how to enrol then please telephone
Emma Clarke, Community Officer on 020 8312 6643 (direct line).

ents in London

“WIRED ON WORDS”

Survivors’ Open Mic. at The Poetry Café

Poetry Café Society

by Xochitl Tuck, Poetry Café Coordinator

The five ‘Wired on Words’ events held so far this year at the Poetry Café have maintained the high standards set in previous years. The variety of material presented, the respect shown by poet-audiences to performers and the courage it takes to perform combine to set such an inspiring example that any initial anxiety in the room is dispelled. Peter Campbell, Roy Birch and Lucia Birch, the guest performers in March, April and May respectively, held the audiences in rapt attention as they described the influences on and their reasons for remaining committed to their art form. Their testimony and work gave extra encouragement to the ‘new and nervous’ artistes present. Lloyd Lindsay will be the shining example at our June 14th event.

“A full spectrum
of literally marvellous
contributions”

Let me give you some idea of the broad range of performances at ‘Wired on Words’. The 2001 line-ups have so far included: voice and harmonica duets, stand-up comedy, overtone chanting, poems about nature, prison and being a Holocaust-survivor, Romantic and insight poetry, a man’s musical tribute to International Women’s Day (‘Dream of a Better World’), Fresher Than Green poets in person, male-angst monologues, improvised melodic howling, sonnets, haiku and two-line poetry. Peter Campbell’s critical and rallying verses about the inadequacies of the mental health service, Roy Birch’s frank and moving exploration of his life, poetry and love of nature and Lucia Birch’s gorgeous singing and guitar-playing represent a full spectrum of literally marvellous contributions.

Thursday 12th July 2001

Thursday 9th August

Thursday 13th September

Thursday 11th October

Poetry Café,

22 Betterton Street,

WC2 9BU

(nearest tube -

Covent Garden)

8pm - 11pm

Admission £2, £1 conc.

A wonderful opportunity for new and more experienced poets to have their work heard in a friendly and supportive atmosphere. There is a lift to the lower floor and a wheelchair-accessible toilet. Smoking upstairs, non-smoking downstairs.

In you want to read or perform your work you need to arrive between 7pm and 7.30pm in order to book your floor spot.

The doors will open to other audience members from 7.30pm and the performance will start at 8pm sharp. We do not have a regular finish time for the event as this very much depends on the amount of people who want to do floor spots.

**There will be a break halfway through the evening.
See you there !!!**

Survivor Focus:

BIPOLAR POWER POETRY

Bipolar Power Poetry event organiser John Weedon reports on the progress so far...

On 29th January 2001 Bipolar Power Poetry held the first of a quarterly series of Open Mic. Events at the Poetry Café in London. Special thanks to Survivors' Poetry for their support and for a donation of poetry books to Bipolar's Free Prize Draw. Thanks also to Danielle Hope who donated some of her own work to the draw.

The 29th January was an extraordinary experience for me. All of the performances were impressive. Carol read her only poem, which was truly outstanding. Afterwards she was showered with compliments. Carol's poem was so beautifully crafted. She really should write more. Patrick Huddie from Brentwood is a more experienced and classical writer, whose strong voice and clear diction commanded the audience's respect. Rachel Hannah delighted us with a varied array of performance poetry, displaying a lighter look at life interlaced with sharp witty observation.

I was complimented on my strong word memory. Thank you, but I have to admit that developing this ability has taken me a long time. Writing music over my poetry has helped. I hope sincerely that everyone enjoyed my songs, in particular 'Do You Remember?' and 'You've Got To Fight' (a song I wrote especially for Bipolar Power Poetry). Both these songs contain a special message for all survivors.

Bipolar Power Poetry is now evolving into a very exciting 'poetry for therapy' project. The ingredients are in place; The Poetry Café is an

network news

There are now over 30 Network groups affiliated to Survivors' Poetry. We are delighted to now have contacts in each of the Arts Boards regions. Affiliation to the Survivors' Poetry Network is free to groups of survivors who come together to write. For details of your nearest group please contact the Survivors' Poetry office.

In this issue of Poetry Express we focus on CAST Creative Writing Group. Sigrid Williams describes some of the group's writing techniques and shares her poetry with us. CAST Creative Writing Group is based in North

CAST is a trust for women in exceptional circumstances. The creative writing group meets weekly on Monday afternoon and consists of about six to eight members. Our tutor, Cicely Herbert, who is one of the three people responsible for 'Poems on the Underground', inspires and encourages us to bring to paper anything that comes to mind.

Usually, after a short discussion about events of the past week, we open the session by hearing what each member has produced at home, which is then criticised in a constructive, positive manner. Group projects, such as plays, are outlined and discussed. Help and support is provided for personal projects. A typical writing exercise is where Cicely gives us just the opening words such as 'I'm a strange creature...' and we continue writing for a few minutes. We then read out our pieces and compare the different routes our thoughts have taken.

Often Cicely brings in objects or asks us to put something on the table, examine and then write about it. On other days we go outside, as we did on the day after the storm, choose a subject, in this case an uprooted tree, and jot down our individual impressions, which will be worked into poems, read out and discussed.

I think the most important criteria for any creative group is that individual

The White Beam Tree in Bayham Street.

The grand tree lies shattered on the city's concrete jungle.
The dreadful impact not softened by the gentle moss of forest grounds

when he was felled by early autumn gales.

Gathering strength for the privation of the coming winter season,
he'd sent all energy up to the smallest twig.
Unprepared, the roots were weak.

The storm, that might have eased the falling of the leaves,
came in an unexpected ambush in the night,
set off for killing, not for aid.

A jagged splinter of the trunk points as plaintiff to the sky,
juicy leaves ooze out a soundless cry.
See the branches reaching out for you and me.
That was not in nature's diary.

The roots, clinging to the surface, never found the earth to spread along.

The artificial pasture, made for cars, the gas pipes, light,
has expelled this stranger in the man-made city,



Poster detail from 'Ziggy'

Bristol Survivors' Poetry...

strength to strength

Congratulations to Bristol Survivors' Poetry's Stepping Out Theatre Company who have been awarded core funding for their work for the next three years! Stepping Out's Steve Hennessy says, 'It is the most wonderful news we've had and it had given us some REAL security for the first time ever'.

First, there was Bristol Survivors' Poetry. Four years ago, the group gave birth to the Stepping Out Theatre Company. Four years, four productions and two national awards later, the group are going from strength to strength. Their latest show has been receiving an enthusiastic reception in Bristol and Worcester.

Formed in Bristol in 1997, The Stepping Out Theatre Company is open to people who have used mental health services. It offers survivors the opportunity to work alongside people with professional experience of writing, directing and acting. The Company has produced a new play for World Mental Health Day each year for the last four years. They are now one of the longest established and best known theatre companies run by and working with survivors in the country. They have already won two national awards for their work. 'The Voyages of the Starship Lunar Sea' picked up a Focus Award in 1998 and 'The Truth is Out There' was a winner of the Rosalind Caplin Award in 1999. Last year's production was the Company's most ambitious to date.

'The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Fraud and the Choirboys from Vienna' was a rock and roll musical comedy about Sigmund Freud, with apologies to David Bowie. However, the father of psychoanalysis received less than reverential treatment from the Bristol group. Mike McGarvey, who played Ziggy, explained:

"Basically, he's a coke-snorting rock superstar! We wanted to draw attention to Sigmund Freud's own cocaine habit and to his extraordinary ego. He managed to alienate many of his psychoanalytical colleagues like Adler, Stekel, Ferenczi and Reich. After this, they were usually forced to leave the psychoanalytic establishment.

Similar to rock stars of today whose monstrous egos drive people out of their bands".

The show was entertainment, but writer Steve Hennessy hoped for something more: "All our plays have used humour to put across a serious message about mental health. The dedication of this year's play said it all. 'Ziggy' was dedicated to 'All the victims of nineteenth century psychiatry, in the nineteenth, twentieth and twenty-first centuries.' We wanted audiences to think about how antiquated nineteenth century ideas about mental illness are still shaping modern mental health services".

The show featured a live band on stage and had three performances at Bristol's Hope Centre in October and went on tour to Worcester's Huntingdon Hall in an event jointly organised by Survivors' Poetry of Malvern. There was an additional performance at Bristol Council House to an audience of mental health groups and councillors. The events received extensive coverage on local radio. Audiences and critics alike were enthusiastic. One local reviewer for 'Venue' magazine wrote:

"The play was not only a witty and often hilarious dotty comedy, but also managed to raise serious issues regarding the

influence of 19th century psychology on 20th century treatment of people with mental health difficulties. Its wide range of references to popular culture embraced film, TV, literature and pop music, bringing them all together into a remarkable fictional logic ... a fantasy with meaningful method in its madness ... splendid performances given by all, the finale ... one of those strokes of pure genius that are unforgettable".

No longer content to be seen as a 'worthy' theatrical venture on the margins, Stepping Out is continuing to bridge the gap between 'community' theatre and mainstream theatre. They are proving that survivors can produce exciting and groundbreaking theatre with wide appeal. The group are pleased to announce that their fifth production will be staged at Bristol's Hope Centre on October 11th, 12th and 13th of this year. The group are also open to approaches about touring their show. Stepping Out Theatre Company are also currently in discussion with a producer at BBC Radio 4 about taking their unique blend of performance onto the nation's airwaves. Watch this space! For further information please contact Steve Hennessy on 0117 983 2790.



Cast photograph; 'The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Fraud and the Choirboys from Vienna'.

letters page

We would love to hear from you. Please send us your letters on any subject which you think might be of interest to our readers. You may wish to respond to what you have read in this newsletter. Send to:

"Letters", Survivors' Poetry, Diorama Arts Centre, 34 Osnaburgh Street, London NW1 3ND

Dear Survivors' Poetry,

Seven years ago, after a complete 'mental breakdown', I spent Christmas Day as a voluntary in-patient in a psychiatric hospital. But despite my being hospitalised, the depression deepened (a state which had gradually overcome me in the months following a heart bypass operation and unwise early return to work), and when my mind turned to thoughts of suicide, my situation was no longer voluntary, and my 'stay' lasted for several months. Because of the heart problems, the drugs of choice were not an option and eventually it was only a course of much-maligned (but not by me) ECT which set me on the road to complete recovery.

Some eighteen months after leaving hospital and, although physically well, mentally still not quite, shall we say, 'normal', I began a two-year evening course in creative writing. Quite why I chose writing isn't clear to me. It wasn't something I had always longed to do. I'd hated writing essays at school, and yet I felt there was something within me which needed expression and release.

Five years later I'm still attending the class. Partly because, at 57, I look upon it as an ongoing apprenticeship, partly because it's great fun and mentally stimulating and partly because through writing comes a kind of release that is impossible for me to put into the spoken word. I've been lucky. I have a wonderful tutor at the college, and with her help and guidance I've had several minor successes in terms of being published, and paid, both here and in America - short stories, articles and poetry. Thank you so much for the Newsletter

and the accompanying information sheets, which I found moving, interesting and informative.

George Laing, Fife.

Dear Survivors' Poetry,

Thank you for sending me some information. I feel very inspired. I really enjoy writing and will write whether I get a piece published or not. I have trouble leaving my home area. I am getting some help, so maybe one day I'll be able to attend a workshop.

I do feel lonely most days, but when I write poems or journals, I feel I have a friendship with the pen and paper.

Jean Fitzpatrick, London.

Dear Survivors' Poetry,

I write prose, but Poetry Express has saved my reason and I am most grateful to receive it. In particular, I have been helped by the two-page article in the March issue by Georgina Wakefield, mother of a "paranoid schizophrenic" that dealt so effectively with these dehumanising labels.

Far be it from me to under-estimate the work done by chief mental health charities, staffed, in the main, by non-sufferers. However the fact that most of the workers have never experienced mental distress and stigma on a personal level, seems to cause the attitudes of many to be incorrect. For example, I contacted a leading mental health group recently. I told them I had been a journalist before I got sick and that I have the permission of the Department of

Social Security to write articles as a therapy. The volunteer asked if I would be prepared to help publicize his organisation and I said I would. A few days later a worker from the organisation rang me and almost her first question was: "What's your diagnosis?". I reacted with some indignation because I felt my help being accepted or rejected depended on which brand of looney I turned out to be. The stated aim of the charity is to "combat ignorance and prejudice". With prejudice within the mental health charities themselves the task of educating society about this form of illness is made doubly hard.

Rosemary Woodland, Herts.

Dear Survivors' Poetry,

A big thank you to Emma for her article, 'A Mother's Story', in the previous issue of Poetry Express. It was very well written and informative. My family were all very impressed. I'm going to Manchester on March 29th to read parts of the book to 100 senior consultants. It's being arranged and paid for by Norartis, the makers of Clozarill, in the hope that more people are given the chance to go on Clozarill. I've also got two publishers waiting to read my book. I'll let you know what transpires. Best wishes to all at Survivors' Poetry and thanks for all your help.

Georgie Wakefield, Essex.

Dear Survivors' Poetry,

I am writing as (pseudonym) Lance Steppenwolf. I have had some of my poetry published by Agenda magazine,

NEW POETRY & NEW BOOKS

and have kept in contact with one person who moved from Agenda, Anita

Money (W. H. Auden's niece). It seems she absolutely loves my poetry! There's a hint of madness in all my poetry and my work is diverse. Unfortunately though, I am in hospital suffering from schizophrenia. I contacted further magazines and they have decided to publish some more of my poetry. I got Survivors' Poetry's fantastic book, 'The Pillar of Fire' by Nikolay Gumilyov and found the book inspiring.

Neil Gooding, Northampton.

Hi Survivors' Poetry,

I really enjoyed the recent day-time writing workshops that you ran in Barnet and Haringey. I really do feel that there is a place for day-time sessions as well as the evening ones that you run. I think with proper publicity, research and funding that they would be an important addition to Survivors' Poetry's calendar of events. There are loads of talented people out here who just do not relish coming out in the evenings!

Catherine Harris, by e-mail.

Dear Survivors' Poetry,

I would like to say how good it is that Survivors' Poetry exists to offer support and help to people who have suffered some kind of mental illness while enabling them to help others in return.

I have been writing poetry since I was seventeen and have been under psychiatric care since I was nineteen. I use my poetry as a way of expressing my emotions and saying things I couldn't say out loud. Unfortunately, some of the people closest to me don't read my work as they find poetry too dark and depressing. Thanks to the Web I have found a new sense of hope through poetry chat rooms and poetry boards, speaking to others with similar problems past and present.

Rae Burton, Dorset.

Before the Storm

by Nicky L. Stones
Reviewed by Carolyn O'Connell

Nicky Stones' poems have already received wide publication in magazines and anthologies both here and in Canada and the USA. Here they have been gathered in his first collection - twenty-five well crafted poems of various styles and nuances. 'Elephants Remember', the opening poem, is a humorous cleriheh that conceals a dry irony. It is his trademark, and springs unexpectedly from the page to confront the reader, especially in apparently traditional or romantic longer poems such as 'Seagulls are Calling' or 'Flasks'. Nicky has a great sense of rhythm which he deploys in the centrepiece 'Abseil Down Dungeon Ghyll' to enable others to feel its tensions and emotions, orally and visually. I was with him over the 'rabid ravine' and felt the 'sodden dirty moss', as well as his adrenaline rush of achievement on completion.

Nicky Stones has achieved a haunting and masterly first collection as anyone who gets the pleasure of reading it will realise.

Available from Light Industry Enterprises, Colston Fort, 1 Montague Place, Bristol, priced £2.50 (plus p&p).

Strange Baggage

by Salisbury Arts Centre Kingfisher Group
Edited by Fiona Sampson
Reviewed by Janet Green

This is a well laid-out collection of poems from the Salisbury Arts Centre Kingfisher writing group. Sue Moran is an interesting writer and brings to life the more mundane aspects of everyday life; I particularly enjoyed her poem, 'O.T'.

Brian F. Billen is an excellent writer, who captures the very essence of his

chosen subject. I found 'Oestrogen' particularly captivating and true to life. Terry Cleeve's work is very well written with a sense of nostalgia. All his poems have a very positive outlook, which I enjoyed immensely. Pegasus writes very interesting and positive poetry. 'Visions' was beautifully written and left me wanting more.

Available from Salisbury Arts Centre, Bedwin Street, Salisbury, Wiltshire, priced £3.50 (plus £1 p&p). ISBN 0953977501.

Dolphins Leap

by Patrick Cooper-Duffy
Reviewed by Mary Neville

'Dolphins Leap' tells through poetry of childhood memories, the realities of adulthood and draws a conclusion that expresses contentment in later life. The opening poem 'Bally Bay Horse Ride' encapsulates fond memories. Gushing adrenaline experienced years ago is clearly captured; 'I am the king of the woods and its breath is mine'. Many an adult survivor reflects on their early days for inner exploration as to what has brought them into the 'survivor industry'.

Onward into adulthood, 'Housing Benefits Alternatives' is cleverly written, sending a clear message to the Chancellor. Watch out, Mr. Brown, if you happen to read this one! In contrast, 'Sunflower Seed' depicts the author's depth of love, ending; 'So I am dreaming of you and tomorrow'. Without doubt this is my favourite poem in the book. Deep thought combined with common sense are clearly expressed in 'The Solutions to Life are Simple'; a modern-day desideratum perhaps. The final poem, 'No one Told Me the Joys of Growing Old', is simple, yet empowering. The reader can visualise contentment, a description of reality that every survivor longs for. Certainly worthy of a place on your bookshelf.

Available from Soundworks, 51 Downs Park Crescent, Totton, Southampton SO40 9GR, priced £2.00. ISBN 0-9538149-0-4.

NEW POETRY &

The Courage to Bare Our Souls **A Collection of Pieces Written Out of Mental Disress** **Reviewed by Roy Holland**

The production of this book was part of the Mental Health Foundation's Strategies for Living programme which aims to promote 'an holistic approach towards mental health, taking account of people's mental, physical, spiritual and emotional needs' and which is user-led. The book's approach is generally deeply personal, born out of desperation and sometimes in opposition to uncaring medical professionals. Faith often seems to develop alongside uncertainties; several writers appear to be still seeking a solution.

The book is interspersed with short creative pieces, and Angela Morton's poem 'Spikenard and Jasmine' is a real gem. 'Lazarus' speaks for all concerning the healing process; 'only when all life and love had lain eclipsed: / only when sisters' tears had lain dissolving in my hair'. Do get hold of this book, and hopefully the Strategies for Living project will continue to promote health through creativity.

Available from the MHF, 20-21 Cornwall Terrace, London NW1 4QL, priced £10.00 (£7.00 to service users and survivors). ISBN 0-901944-71-8.

Giving Shine **by Ann McKay** **Reviewed by Vickie Rouse**

Traditional story-telling draws audiences into a rich tapestry of colourful words, leading the senses along pathways of discovery and

enchantment. 'Giving Shine', by Irish poet Ann McKay, records long gone pleasures evocative of time and place; scenes are well mapped out in rich resonant passages.

'Ness Wood Nature Notes' is environmentally friendly in a wondrously magical way; 'Wee birds, beset, make open conversation amidst the magpies' martial rattle'. Reading 'Pig Crisis', the reader cannot help but feel sympathy with its 'real' sow statements and know the horror of factory farming, portrayed by living animals commenting upon their cruel, unfortunate living/giving birth/dying conditions! What a delight to review this collection of quality poetry and stories.

Available from the publishers, Summer Palace Press, Cladnageeragh, Kilbeg, Kilcar, County Donegal, Ireland and from all good bookshops, priced £7.00. ISBN 0-9535912-2-0.

The Third Way **by Ian Rutter** **Reviewed by Angela Morton**

This 20-page booklet brings together a collection of seventeen love poems which address the theme of unconsummated love, as described in the title poem; 'But there is a third way / That looks like a misty day / As to many souls / It is not clear, / And if it was they would fear / What they do not see / Love but do not bed'. Some of the poems also draw on Christian themes and images.

The poems usually fill a page apiece; the final poem has over 70 lines. Although the booklet has a unifying theme, I failed to find much development in the poems themselves or in the relationships they describe. If Ian Rutter perhaps moved away from the short line he might discover a way of developing the range and depth of his work. I appreciated the

modest but careful way the collection is presented and feel that 'The Third Way' is authentic, and written from the heart.

Available from Ian Rutter, 20 Fleur De Lys Drive, Southwick, Trowbridge, Wiltshire BA14 9QH, priced £2.00.

Beauty and Some Beasts **by John Hirst** **Reviewed by Quibilah Montsho**

The saucy, sensuous, saline-drip of poetry flows throughout this collection. John Hirst's use of imagery is fantastic. His enigmatic use of alliteration expresses a whole world of poetic perspectives. We 'travel the tormented trail of trauma', witness 'Cosmo-city' and deal with a 'marble mystification'. We are exposed to a range of vivid pictures that play before our eyes for page after page - screen goddesses, icons, Prozac Queens, sweets in exchange for treats - all clamour for our attention. Hirst casts before us his experience and knowledge as a survivor and observer of humanity itself. We are introduced to a number of experiences that stick in our minds. There is a challenge and insurrection here, as in the waves that 'break ... the mould' and 'breach ... the beach' ('Waving'). There is a beauty unforeshadowed in the reflections of Hirst's observations; 'dip fingers into the seven seas ... linger awhile' and geographical places become sensuous objects ('Fingering the Contours'). John Hirst does not necessarily use traditional ways of producing poetry. What he says, however, is challenging, and is to be listened to.

Available from Survivors' Poetry, priced £3.00 (plus 40p p&p). Cheques payable to Survivors' Poetry. Published by Poetry Monthly Press. ISBN 1-903031-01-X. Reduced price for Poetry Express readers: £2.00 (plus 40p p&p).

NEW BOOKS

A Crocus Selection

The National Library for The Blind and Commonword
Reviewed by Francis Anderson

This fascinating small collection of thirteen poems is the product of a collaboration between the National Library for the Blind (NLB) and CommonWord, the North West Writing Development Agency. The poems were chosen by Matthew Sweeney (Writer-in-Residence at the NLB in 1999) and participants of the 'Feeling Your Way' project funded by the National Lottery. Some of the poems draw on personal experience; homosexuality, disability, conformity, to mention but a few.

This unique dual formatted book in Braille and print means that it can be read and appreciated by both the visually-impaired and sighted alike which, in my view, is a major step forward in the publishing industry, bridging the gap between Braille and text. In saying that, my only criticism is that very little attention has been paid to line endings in the Braille version; probably because the poems have been printed on A4 paper to match that of the print. Depending on your experience as a Braille reader, you may find yourself having to read the poems several times just to make sense of them. Why couldn't the NLB, who are well aware of Two Way Books, have incorporated the print with the braille on the same page and produced it on bigger paper?

Despite these minor hiccups, this book has much to offer to the survivor and non-survivor. A good read for £2.50!

Available from Commonword, Cheetwood House, 21 Newton Street, Manchester M1 1FZ, priced £2.50. Published by the NLB and Commonword.

Emotions (Volume Two)

An Anthology of Poetry by Members and Staff of the Rosehill Club
Reviewed by Alex Warner

This anthology is a testament to the good work which the Derby MIND Rosehill Club does and features five talented people. Steph Carter's poem, 'The Serpent', certainly caught my eye; 'Symbol of all things misunderstood ... on ancient tombs / among the runes / misread ... Unchanged since time began'. Mythology comes alive. She draws the reader in with her skillful storytelling.

Robert E. Fitzjohn is a poet with a social conscience and a sense of humour. 'Tomato Man?' catches your funny bone; 'To market, to market with my cousin Jim. / When somebody threw a tomato at him. / Tomatoes don't hurt! / said he with a grin / But this one did / cause it came in a tin.'

Derek Beal (alias Del-Boy) has a lovely sense of rhyme; 'When everything in life looks black / And you feel that you can't sort anything out / Life feels like everyone is on your back / It makes you scream and shout.' ('Going Nowhere or Somewhere'). The anthology demonstrates variety and diversity and shows that poetry is therapy for people who have mental health problems.

Available from Steph Carter, Manager, Derby MIND Rosehill Club, 127-129 Clarence Road, Derby, Derbyshire DE23 6LS, priced £2.50 (£1.50 concessions). Published by Derby MIND.

Parents

An Anthology of Poems by Women Writers

Edited by Myra Schneider and Dilys Wood
Reviewed by Emma Lee

This is an anthology by women poets over the age of forty writing about their mothers, fathers, or both parents, exploring relationships, death and ageing. Jackie Kay's poem, 'The Telling Part', in which she remembers telling a school friend she was adopted, ends poignantly; 'I bet your mother's never missed your birthday? How could she?'

Perhaps it is a reflection of the generations, but fathers seem to be remembered as being emotionally uncommunicative. Here from Priscilla Borthwick's 'Forest'; 'Waiting. Only your gabardine flapped, / Sound-tracked the mystery. / Then I knew I didn't want soon to begin. / I didn't want our waiting to stop.'

U.A. Fanthorpe's introductory assertion; 'The age of these poets is important ... Those who have lived hardest and thought most deeply are not generally the under thirties ... or the very old ... It's the women, the Second Light Network, who have seen, but have often been stifled, who are speaking out now', makes a grand claim for this anthology of well-crafted poems on a familiar theme.

Available from all good bookshops, priced £8.95. Published by Enitharmon / Second Light. ISBN 1-900564-71-8.

IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN WRITING REVIEWS FOR SURVIVORS' POETRY PLEASE WRITE TO ROY HOLLAND, REVIEWS EDITOR, AT OUR USUAL ADDRESS. IF YOU HAVE PUBLISHED A BOOK OF POEMS OR ARE PART OF A GROUP WHO HAS PUBLISHED A COLLECTION IN THE LAST SIX MONTHS PLEASE SEND A COPY TO THE SURVIVORS' POETRY OFFICE AND WE WILL DO OUR BEST TO REVIEW IT.

Survivors' Poetry is a national literature and performance organisation dedicated to promoting poetry by survivors of mental distress through workshops, performances, readings and publications to audiences all over the UK. It was founded in 1991 by four poets with firsthand experience of the mental health system.

Our community outreach work provides survivors with opportunities to actively participate in writing or performance training workshops, poetry performances and publishing projects throughout the UK. We support the formation of a nationwide network of survivors' writing groups and work in partnership with local and national arts, mental health, community and disability organisations.

workshops

We hold regular workshops in London at the Diorama Arts Centre, NW1 and organise many one-off projects in London and throughout the UK.

performances

We have regular performances twice a month at two separate venues in central London. These give space for new and established survivor poets to read or perform their work in relaxed surroundings. Survivor Poets regularly take part in literary and poetry festivals throughout the country.

publications

We have published a variety of poetry anthologies and are currently undertaking a number of translation projects within our *Surviving the Millennium* project funded by the National Lottery through the Arts Council of England. Please do not send us poetry for publication. We regret that we do not have the resources to give feedback or criticism regarding your work. We will ask for submissions through this newsletter when we publish our next anthology.

support to writers' groups

If you are involved in a writing or poetry group you may find that there are benefits in your group becoming an affiliated member of the Survivors' Poetry national network of writing groups. We offer workshop facilitator training and other training opportunities for members of your group. There are opportunities to visit or take part in literary festivals and the chance to share skills and information with other writers and writing groups throughout the UK. Contact us for further details.

free mailings

We publish and distribute our *sixteen* page, *Poetry Express* newsletter four times a year. Its purpose is to publicise events and activities organised by Survivors' Poetry and by Survivor-led Poetry groups all over the country. We publish articles, features, personal stories, news, letters, events listings and book reviews. Through joining our mailing list you will receive this newsletter, quarterly - completely free of charge!

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