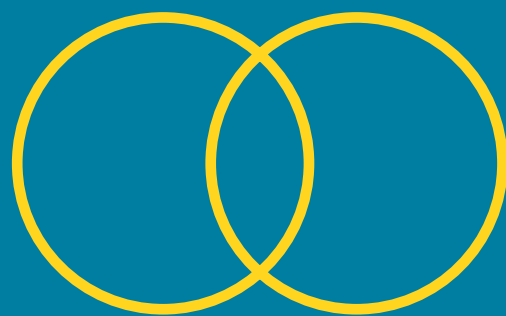


POETRY Express

A quarterly newsletter from survivors' poetry

WINTER 2001/2

number 13



“Coming Home”
healing the scars
of childhood

promoting poetry
by survivors
of mental distress

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

PLUS
Expressions 2001,
Nazrul Islam Posters,
Lapidus Conference,
The Poetry Café Society,
Network News,
and more ...

who's who at survivors' poetry

Trustees

Peter Greig
John O'Donoghue (Chair)
Celia Potterton
Julian Turner
Scott Verner

Staff

Alison Combes
(Director)
Emma Watson
(Information &
Publications Manager)

Freelance Staff

Hannah McCallum
(Camden Workshop
Coordinator)

Volunteers

Peter Campbell
(Events Volunteer)
Roy Holland
(Office Assistant)
Dave Russell
(Somers Town Flyers)
Xochitl Tuck
(Events Coordinator)

Advisory Group

Paul Beasley, Christina
Dunhill, Kwabena Gyedu,
Miriam Hastings, John Hirst,
Danielle Hope, Andrew
Pinnock.

Everyone at Survivors'
Poetry would like to thank
Roger Moulson very much
for his excellent work as
a Trustee from 1998 to
November 2001.

... from the new Director

Alison Combes writes,

As the new Director of Survivors' Poetry, I just want to take this opportunity to wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. I hope that this copy of the newsletter has hit your doormat in time for the holidays, providing food for thought and material for at least one New Year's Resolution: to make more space for the things that make us feel good about ourselves - specifically - to read and write more poetry in 2002.



Alison Combes, the new Director of Survivors' Poetry

For those of you who don't know me, I'd like to take the time to tell you a bit about myself and about my pleasure in starting as Director of such a splendid organisation at this festive time of year. As some of you may know, immediately before coming to Survivors' Poetry, I worked as Literature Officer at the Arts Council of England, but previously my background had been in the promotion of poetry.

Both through my experience of writing workshops and through my earlier work at the Poetry Society, I long ago came to appreciate the cathartic power of poetry for people at times of great change and upheaval. But my prior incarnation as a speech therapy student and teacher, caused me to question how we supported ourselves and others once we had, as it were, released our genies from the proverbial literary lamp.

Now, it seems to me that this network of survivor poets already provides a variety of answers; answers that are appropriate not only to those of us who call ourselves survivors but to the widest possible audience, because they are answers that everyone looks for on the journey through life. Consequently, I shall be spending the next twelve months promoting the work of Survivors' Poetry both nationally and internationally to as many audiences as I can find.

I look forward to telling you about my experiences and to meeting some of you on my travels in 2002.

With best wishes for the holidays,

Alison Combes
Director, Survivors' Poetry



... from the Editor

Welcome to issue 13 of Poetry Express! You may have noticed my change of name - I got married on 1st September 2001. So, I'm Emma Watson now, not Parish. I was delighted to discover that Emma Watson is an extremely literary name. Apparently, Jane Austin's final, unpublished novel is called The Watsons, in which Emma Watson is the heroine! Ahhhhhh!

Following four months of being the only member of staff, I have been joined by our new director, Alison Combes. It feels like a bright, new chapter for Survivors' Poetry and I'm very excited about the work being planned.

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 Watson, Editor, Poetry Express, Survivors' Poetry, Diorama Arts Centre, 34 Osnauburgh Street, London NW1 3ND). I look forward to hearing from you.

Happy New Year and enjoy the holidays!

Yours,
Emma Watson
Editor



c o n t e n t s

Who's Who and From the Director	2	Alison Combes
Coming Home	4	Caroline Delancy
The healing process of writing poetry	5	Various
News...News...News	6 & 7	Jemima Beider
Scratching the Surface	7	Survivors' Poetry
Interpreting the world through poetry	8 & 9	Xochitl Tuck
Introducing the Nazrul Islam Posters	10	Terry Simpson
OUR LONDON EVENTS		
Performances and Workshops	11	Dave Miller
NETWORK NEWS		
Leeds Survivors' Poetry	12 & 13	Various
Expressions 2001	13	Carolyn O'Connell
Poetry and paintings by young survivors		
LETTERS PAGE		
NEW POETRY AND NEW BOOKS	14 & 15	Roy Holland
From Lead to Gold		Zhanna Eliot
NEW POETRY AND NEW BOOKS		Henry Birtley
Scintilla 5		Mary Neville
Bipolarity: Poems of a Disorder		Kate Cunningham
The Stranger		

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 500 words please. The views expressed in this publication are not necessarily the views of Survivors' Poetry. The next copy deadline for Issue 14 of Poetry Express is Monday 4th March 2002. Poetry Express is distributed free around the UK.

Editor: Emma Watson
Reviews Editor: Roy Holland
Design: Emma Watson
Printed by: Gargoyle Graphics and East End Offset
Survivors' Poetry
Diorama Arts Centre, 34 Osnauburgh Street
London NW1 3ND
Tel: 020 7916 5317 Fax: 020 7916 0830
e-mail: survivor@survivorspoetry.org.uk
Registered Charity No. 1040177

coming

Poetry played an important role in helping CAROLINE DELANCEY recover from traumatic events of the past. Here she describes the healing process of writing poetry and shares her poems with us.

Poetry came to me as a way of easing my childhood wounds whilst in therapy. This did not happen as a premeditated action but completely naturally as a way of helping me express deeply painful thoughts and emotions. Once down in writing, the feelings and emotions seemed to shift from within me and lose their power over me. They left my insides and flew out into the world and found their place on the pages that I wrote on. A way of moving forward and dislodging the past had presented itself to me.

As I moved through therapy my poetry became more important to me. The more painful the place I found myself in, the more easily, bizarrely enough, the words flowed from me. It was as if they had been sitting there for years waiting for expression. On finding this, out they came like a force ten tornado. I had found a safe

haven to share feelings and experiences suppressed from the world for thirty years.

My poems have taken many shapes and sizes, some long, some short. Some happy and many very sad. They all reflect the stages I moved through in my journey to heal from the wounds of incest. All my poems, in their own way, reflect my personality and my search for peace in the very turbulent world of dealing with the aftermath of childhood sexual abuse. Looking back through my work I can see that even in my darkest moments I have always somehow had a sense of optimism, that I would come out the other side safely. This I have now done.

After all these years I have now found peace. I have come to a point of resolution, and have given myself perhaps the greatest prize:

forgiveness.

Forgiveness for all that I was involved in when I was just a child. Now I feel that I have come home to the person I was before the incest started; a gentle, loving, open female who does not wish harm to others and does not wish to be harmed by others.

I hope that through reading my poems, other people's hurts might lessen. If they do then I will be very pleased. Now I have recovered, I still have my writing with me. I will take it forwards to a future as yet unknown. I look forward to a future in which the dead weight of incest and secrecy no longer burdens me, but instead informs me of ways of looking after myself as best I can, whilst giving me the intuitive compassion to help others in distress. My future writing will focus on a life outside abuse and all the wonders that this will hopefully involve.

This poem describes the role that nature has played in bringing solace to my life.

Sadness

The gentle summer rain that falls and cleanses
Softly caressing the day are my teardrops falling
for my sad past, my sad, sad life.

The jewelled drops of dew that poise on each blade
of grass in the early morning mist across the fields
of the land are my teardrops, lacing the land in their
Exquisiteness.

My teardrops and my sadness have found their voice
and their place amidst this beautiful wondrous land of ours.

This is a question that has, at times,
almost plagued me ...what if?

What If?

What would life have been like
if this had not happened to me?
A life full of riches
Full of happiness
With parents who loved me.

So much confidence in the world out there
For sure I would have cared for others,
For sure I would have spread love and happiness,

For people like me.

news...news...news

Diaspora City

London Arts, in partnership with Arcadia Books, is delighted to invite entries to the fifth London New Writing Competition. They are looking for works of up to 7,000 words, which may be short stories, narrative non-fiction, reportage, memoir, or a mix of these genres. The theme for this year's competition is 'Diaspora City'. They are looking for narrative pieces that reflect what it is to live in the world's most culturally diverse capital.

The winner will be awarded £1,500 and there will be five runners-up prizes of £300. All six winning pieces will appear in an anthology to be published by Arcadia Books. Deadline for entries is 31st Jan 2002. For more details and an entry form contact: London Arts, 2 Pear Tree Court, London EC1R 0DS (Tel: 020 7608 6168 / Textphone: 020 7608 4101).

Solo Survivors

John Hirst is interested in sharing and publishing poetry by survivors who feel isolated - geographically, physically or mentally - from local writing groups. He aims to publish poetry, comments, news and letters from 'solo survivors' on a quarterly basis. For more information please send an A5, 1st class, stamped-addressed envelope to John Hirst, 37 Micklehill Drive, Shirley, Solihull, West Midlands, B90 2PU.

Calling survivor writers and artists

Writers and artists with mental health histories who have workshop skills are sought by ITHACA, an arts organisation working in Oxfordshire and Berkshire. They are wanted to run weekly sessions around the theme of MAPS on arts projects with adults with identified mental health needs,

in day centres and informal groups. Artists and writers in all artforms are sought. The fee will be £50 per 1 ½ hour session plus travel. ITHACA are also looking for people to perform poetry and music at two festivals for users and survivors in late April in Oxford and Reading.

For further information contact: Anna Thornhill on 01865 714652 or e-mail anna@ithaca.fsbusiness.co.uk

Text Appeal

Writers are invited to submit poems for onesixty, the world's first text message poetry magazine, to be published by centrifugalforges in conjunction with the Cheltenham Festival of Literature. Poems can be submitted on the move by sending a text message beginning with the keyword SB CLF followed by the poem to 07989 240023. Poems can also be sent from a PC using the online submission form on [centrifugalforges' website: www.centrifugalforges.co.uk](http://centrifugalforges.co.uk)

The only restriction on the poems is that they need to be 160 characters or less in length in order to fit into an SMS text message. Fourteen poems will then be chosen to make up the first issue of onesixty, and will be sent

back to readers' mobile phones, one poem per day for fourteen days. Onesixty will then be published regularly, and poems can be submitted at any time. Further information can be found on the website: www.centrifugalforges.co.uk

Writing For Yourself

Alison Clayburn will be facilitating the following adult education courses in Spring 2002. Contact the relevant college for a prospectus and course description. Morley College, Waterloo: Sunday Day School, Writing for Self Discovery, 10th Feb 2002 (enquiries@morleycollege.ac.uk or 020 7928 8501). Hammersmith and Fulham Adult Education (Macbeth Centre, Hammersmith): Writing for Self Exploration, alternate Saturdays, 10.30am-3pm, beginning 26th Jan 2002 (phone enquiries: 020 8563 2185 or 020 8846 9090).

West Midlands Poets

Annette Proffitt, John Hirst and two other local poets plan to re-launch a Survivors' Poetry group in Solihull, West Midlands in early 2002. If you are interested in joining the group please contact John Hirst on 0121 745 4381 (johnalanhirst@ukonline.co.uk).

Survivors' Poetry: Opportunity for an experienced OUTREACH WORKER

Survivors' Poetry is looking for an **Outreach Worker** to work from our London office 7 hours a day, 4 days a week (0.8 post). Some travel will be involved.

**For more information, contact Survivors' Poetry on
020 7916 3517,
or see our advertisement in The Guardian in January 2002.**

scratching the surface

Jemima Beider

17 year-old JEMIMA BEIDER is inspired to write poetry by “the people and colours” of everyday life. Here she describes how poetry helps her to pin down her ideas and interpret the world around her.

I have always liked poetry. When I was younger I would write stuff, but later dismiss it as being rubbish. And most of it was. I didn't draw inspiration from anything or anyone. My poems had no hidden meaning to me. There were no layers to



unfold. Things changed last year. I was getting increasingly bored, asking myself questions. This was both good and bad. Bad because I went into isolation. I got depressed and suicidal. I overdosed and started to self-harm. But writing poetry exorcised the questions in the back of my mind. It was like finding a friend you've always wanted. A way of escaping the same reality we all share. Poetry meant I could express hidden feelings without hurting myself.

I think the best thing about writing poetry is I can drown in my thoughts, but then rescue something from them. I like taking an idea and seeing how far I can twist it. I write about personal experiences, but enjoy writing

about people around me. I don't just mean my friends or family, but the people I see on the bus and on my way to college. It could be anyone. I'll invent secret lives for them, new identities, and take them to a place they never thought they'd go. I also write about people I see on the news or read about in the newspaper.

Personally, poetry was, and is, a great form of self-therapy. I've found it more helpful than any type of counselling I received. I've learned there's nothing wrong in looking at things differently, in scratching through the surface. Most importantly, I no longer internalise how I feel. If my mind's leaking I don't try and stop it, just get a pen and paper.

I leave the house this morning feeling fine, even slightly optimistic. The sun is bright. I have put last week at the back of my mind. I stand at the bus stop looking at people drive past in their shiny cars, determined to beat that red light. I smoke a cigarette. My lungs are black, but I can't see. The machine is up and running. Routines. Systems running like clockwork. The blank look of people in their cars is reflected in those I see on the bus. I take my seat upstairs and I'm already bored. I tap my fingers impatiently. A man glares at me. I carry on. I don't want to turn into one of them. I look out the window to see hundreds of ants scurrying along. I make a mental note to slow down. I feel my heart sink. How different it would look without these offices, ugly and unwilling to speak, their blacked out windows hiding the truth. People sitting behind computers. Dress smartly. Obey the hierarchy. The boss knows you're not working. Once more and that's it. The end of the line. Or a lie in on a Monday morning. Gossiping groups around the photocopier. They're talking about me. Who cares? I won my game. So back to the beginning.

I need to get out of this place. It's cutting me up, bringing me down. Suffocating me. I'm sure toxic fumes are not good for your health. So I'll go buy a bag of oxygen. Of course. Do the damage then take the easy way out. I'm getting sucked in, why does no one listen? I can't take this any longer. My mind is nothing more than four walls. Cut the rope and set me free.

You sit in the bar all day. Smoke. It's not getting you anywhere. You are wearing your best suit. Your shoes are polished. Your tie is straight. Run your fingers through your thinning hair. And think. Think. You're wasted. No one understands you. The television won't be your friend after closing hours. The computer's just as bad. A job that's sucking the life out of you isn't enough to buy that new car. You take a deep sigh and rub your forehead in what's meant to be frustration. Loosen your tie a little. Look at your watch. You stare into your empty glass then head for the door. Another day gone but you're still no closer. The newspapers will tell you what you missed.

The clocks had all melted away, as real as a Dali landscape. I ate a candy cane as I skipped to school, stopping only to catch a pink butterfly in a jar. I knew all the words to the songs in 'The Sound of Music'. My only worry was who to sit with in class. I knew the answer to every question. My teacher gave me a gold star. Mum was proud of me. I ate fish fingers in front of 'Top Of The Pops' and went to bed with a head full of happy thoughts.

Jemima Beider, 2001

Kazi Nazrul Islam Poem Posters

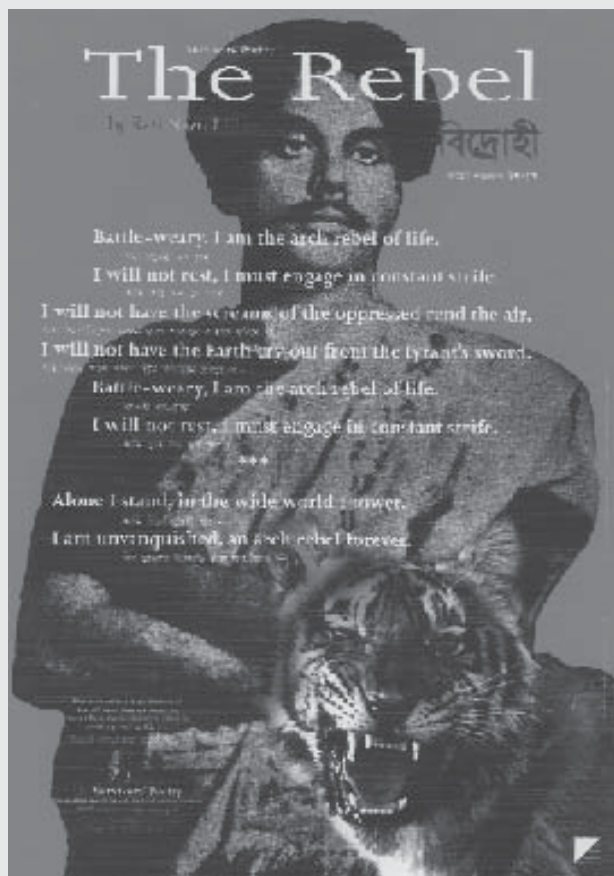
new from Survivors' Poetry:

These posters are the result of an Arts For Everyone funded project. They introduce readers to an important Indian and Bangladeshi poet-composer whose work seems particularly pertinent at this time of crisis. Kazi Nazrul Islam was a Muslim survivor who played a significant role in the establishment of Pakistan.

The posters are designed for the use of people aged 11 years upwards and show Survivors' Poetry's commitment to promoting poetry by survivors from all ethnic origins. The poems were translated into English by Debjani Chatterjee. The posters were designed and produced by Survivors' Poetry and em associates. A set of notes written by Debjani Chatterjee accompanies these posters.

Kazi Nazrul Islam Poem Posters:
£13.50 per set of six posters and notes
(including VAT and p&p).

Available from: Survivors' Poetry,
Diorama Arts Centre, 34 Osnaburgh Street,
London NW1 3ND.



Poster 3: The Rebel, by Kazi Nazrul Islam

Somers Town Blues Night

Poetry and Songs by Survivors

Poetry Events at Somers Town

Xochitl Tuck reports on all the action at Somers Town over the summer and autumn months...

June's event at Somers Town was gracefully presided over by the melodious Roz Kane and featured excellent performances from Christina Dunhill, Frank Bangay and Kath Tait. The launch of *From Lead to Gold* (an anthology of poetry written by members of Survivors' Poetry's Camden workshops) was the focus of the event in July. Many *From Lead to Gold* contributors performed their work and we heard from an array of new and experienced talent. Carrie Thomas was a sparkling and extremely witty host and a performer of great versatility. Thanks also to Duncan Hamilton and Lloyd Lindsay for being fantastic guest MCs.

Somers Town Community Centre is currently closed for redecoration. We staged a great event in October at the Diorama theatre. Survivors' Theatre founder and poet, Isha introduced the musical talents of Steve Dowsett and John Arthur. Katherine Gallagher, whose workshops and work with children are highly acclaimed, performed some of her latest output. Thank you to everyone who has supported Survivors' Poetry's events at Somers Town!

Somers Town is closed for redecoration until the end of March 2001. Survivors' Poetry plans to continue its monthly poetry performance events at alternative venues. We shall be sampling the delights of London's literary cafés! Please contact the Survivors' Poetry office for details or watch your letterbox!

Write on the Edge

FREE 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 an ideal opportunity to have work reviewed and discussed in a friendly, supportive environment.

**2002 DATES: Tuesday 8th January Tuesday 22nd January Tuesday 5th February
Tuesday 19th February Tuesday 5th March Tuesday 19th March Tuesday 2nd April**

ents in London

“WIRED ON WORDS” Survivors’ Open Mic.

Poetry Café Society by Xochitl Tuck, Poetry Café Coordinator

In recent months **Wired on Words** at the Poetry Café has featured some of the most formidable talent on the poetry scene. Guests poets and musicians have included Peter Campbell, Roy Birch, Lloyd Lindsay, Lucia Birch, Viv Youell, Razz, Kath Tait, Celia Potterton and Dave Russell. Their honest, moving accounts of their backgrounds, creative influences and inspirations, (including insights into writing routines and tips on dealing with stage fright) interspersed with samples of their work, kept audiences enthralled.

Invited guest MCs, Philip Buckley, Hannah McCallum and Alistair Brinkley - all great charmers and gifted performers - have added to the lively spirit of the **Wired on Words** gigs in the past three months. Audiences greatly appreciated and enjoyed regular floorspots from the talented Phil Poole, George Tartar, Jeanette Ju-Pierre, Lee Wilson, Paolo, Giten and Anne. All of these performances moved us with their sincerity, personal authenticity, lack of pretension and bravery.

“An atmosphere of
warmth and
security”

An atmosphere of warmth and security at the **Wired on Words** events enables newcomers and ‘nervous’ performers to relax and share their work without the stress of competitiveness, and braving the Poetry Café has been a very constructive experience for many so far. Perhaps it will be for you too, but you’ll have to come along to find out!

Thursday 10th January 2002
Thursday 14th February 2002
Thursday 14th March 2002
Thursday 11th April 2002
Thursday 9th May 2002

Poetry Café,
22 Betterton Street,
WC2H 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.

If 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:

LAPIDUS CONFERENCE 7th to 9th SEPTEMBER 2001

Thanks to a bursary from London Arts, I was able to attend the recent annual conference of Lapidus at Bretton Hall near Wakefield. Lapidus is an organisation dedicated to promoting writing for personal development and health. Members are mostly health professionals, including therapists, clinical psychologists and academics. I went along worrying that, as a survivor, I might be marginalised. But I was very pleasantly surprised. Most of the keynote speakers reflected the survivor ethos, and it was emphasised that writing for good health can produce some eminently publishable work.

There were four separate writing workshops, each meeting four times over the weekend. I was delighted to be working in Cheryl Moskowitz's group. At our first meeting we were all overcome by the beauty of our surroundings; Bretton Hall's grounds include the Yorkshire Sculpture Park and a nature reserve. We quickly lost our city baggage when we were given a poem about a train journey by Nazim Hikmet to reflect on.

Kate Thompson gave an interesting workshop on journal writing for therapy. My only doubt was that she seemed to exclude diaries written for others to read (or for posterity) from the healing process. The most exciting session was with Geetha Upadhyaya, a Bharatnatyam dancer from Kala Sangam. We all contributed to a poem which we then used to choreograph her dance. Indian classical dance came alive for

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 Leeds Survivors' Poetry. Terry Simpson updates us on the group's news, activities and achievements in 2001 and introduces a new work, *A Quiet Night on Roundhay Wing*.

Leeds Survivors' Poetry is alive and well! During 2001 we ran fortnightly workshops at the Metropolitan University, a monthly 'open mic.' night at Strawberry Fields bar and a series of workshops at St. Mary's House, a day hospital in Chapeltown. We staged a successful Valentine's night performance at the Studio Theatre and members of the group organised the fantastic Mad Pride picnic on Woodhouse Moor in July.

Individual members of Leeds Survivors' Poetry have been involved in various projects. Char March has now had three of her plays performed on Radio 4, including *People Come Here To Cry*, an account of a visit to a Crisis Centre. Steve Bindman has produced a CD of four of his poems set to music by the Bradford-based musician, Moses Ekebuisi. Johnny Solstice and I performed at the recent Independence Festival in Leeds, a national disability event. My poem, *Rubbish*, won the National Voices poetry competition. Andrea Chell, Johnny Solstice and Angela Hart have all published volumes of their poetry.

In September we performed *A Quiet Night on Roundhay Wing*, a play for voices which grew from a poem of mine. The play went very well and we had some excellent feedback. We have been asked to perform the piece again in December at the launch of *Mind Odyssey 2001*, a mental health and arts project in Leeds. Here's a sample of dialogue from *A Quiet Night...*

Angel: But this is the only service in the world where the customer is always wrong...

Doctor (pompously): Those who want to get into a place like this are obviously suffering from disorders of the personality, and are untreatable, so we cannot let them in. Those, on the other hand, who have been admitted and wish to leave, have not yet realised that they are ill, which is the first step to recovery, so we cannot let them out.

'Cured' Patient: I don't want to leave. I want to stay in. I like it here. I like the food. It's warm. I want to stay here forever.

Doctor: Ah! She's cured! Nurse, get the discharge papers! We must avoid institutionalisation.

Nurse: Come on, sunshine.
(*Sounds of patient being hustled off, protesting.*)

expressions 2001

Some beautiful and exciting poems were written by children in the Newcastle and North Tyneside region as part of Expressions 2001, a schools' poetry and painting competition on emotional health for pupils aged 5 to 11.

Dave Miller, Health Promotion Officer (Young People) at Newcastle and North Tyneside Health Promotion Department explained that the idea for a competition on 'feelings' came from the Newcastle and North Tyneside World Mental Health Day Planning Group:-

"They wanted teachers to include classroom activities on 'feelings' in their Personal, Social and Health Education lessons and during the Literacy Hour. Teachers were encouraged to end the activities with painting and writing for the 5 to 7 year old pupils and poetry for the 7 to 11 year old pupils.

The reason why the World Mental Health Day Planning Group wanted to promote this competition was to encourage schools to include mental and emotional health in the curriculum in order to promote the emotional well-being of their pupils, just as they promote the

physical health of the children.

Schools taking part in the competition were involved in various activities such as circle work on feelings, using activity sheets and keeping mood diaries. Schools were invited to submit two pieces of pupils' work from each age group.

Judging took place by local artists, poets and storytellers in September 2001 and a Celebration Day was held on World Mental Health Day (10 October 2001).

The young people's work was exhibited at the Discovery Museum, Newcastle upon Tyne."

Here are two of the winning poems and two of the wonderful paintings entered in the competition. The picture on the cover of this issue of Poetry Express is by Abigail, aged 7. Her Expressions 2001 painting is entitled



I am Sad when it is Raining,
by David, aged 5.



Happy, by Lydia, aged 5.

Friendship

Friendship is gold, like an never-ending chain of joining hands.

It smells like barbecues and picnics shared with friends.

Friendship tastes like party food, sausages on sticks.

It sounds like laughter, echoed from the jokes friends tell each other.

Friendship feels like glue sticking friends together.

Friendship lives in a helping hand.

Simon, aged 10.

What Makes Me Happy

Picking up flowers and smelling flowers
Which are fresh and clean, that makes me
Happy for ever.

When you close your eyes and smell the
Beautiful flowers you will see the truth
Of happiness inside your heart.

If I go out in my garden I can smell my
Yellow daffodils spread out through the
World.

I can now see happiness, happiness is
Something for everyone.

Tasmin, aged 8.

Survivors' Poetry

e-mail newsletter

In 2002, Survivors' Poetry will be launching our new e-mail newsletter!

If you want to receive the latest information about news and events
send your e-mail details to: survivor@survivorspoetry.org.uk

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.

Congratulations to Georgie Wakefield, whose book of poetry, *Schizophrenia: A Mother's Story*, is due to be published in early 2002! Georgie's poetry was featured in an article in issue 11 of *Poetry Express*.

Dear Survivors' Poetry,

I thought you may like to see this - my publishing contract! I'm still in a state of shock! *A Mother's Story* should be on sale by February 2002.

At last I'm beginning to feel that it was all worth it. The thought that my book may help other families unfortunate enough to be in the same situation does my heart good.

Georgie Wakefield, Essex.

PREFACE TO GEORGIE'S POEMS From *Schizophrenia: A Mother's Story*

Schizophrenia is a chronic, disabling illness, causing incalculable suffering to both patients and their families, as this book so aptly demonstrates. The poems are a reflective journey that unfortunately far too many patients and their families have to make. They encapsulate the hopelessness of the situation, the frustration and finally the glimmer of hope.

Schizophrenia is far more common than most people realise, affecting one in every 100 people worldwide - people in all races, cultures and social classes.

This book is a counterbalance to the negative perception of people with schizophrenia, so often portrayed in the media.

Copyright: Julia Bileckyj, 2001

Dear Survivors' Poetry,

I recently reviewed *Poetry Express* and finding it of considerable interest would like to be put on your mailing list.

I know you do not publish poetry in the newsletter, but wonder whether you might be interested in including

the enclosed poem in a letters page. My wife and I once lived a few doors away from Sylvia Plath, at the time of her suicide, and having read the review of *The Journals of Sylvia Plath*, written by Roy Holland, thought it might fit in.

Ron Woollard,
Chessington, Surrey.

Bitter Winter by Ron Woollard

That winter of '62 was the coldest for 60 years.
In Fitzroy Road, hard and slippery as an iceberg,
our breath condensed and froze as we chipped words
out from arctic air that stung like bees.
Breathless we'd hurried on past number 23,
Yeats' plaque we hardly noticed, more interested
in the Laundromat and a cosy evening at the Everyman.

January brought frozen pipes and electricity cuts,
snow in abundance and the flu,
but still no telephone for Sylvia. Her newly painted flat,
white, still and chaste, echoed the weather,
Christmas oddments glimpsed through misted windows
seemed like epitaphs to a long forgotten Summer.
In February she fled, seeking asylum,
clutching her sleeping pills
to numb the cold of morning.

Passing by again that Monday morning,
We noticed the ambulance parked at 23.
Back home again she'd reached the edge,
during the night, her axe had struck,
its echoes sounding still in Fitzroy Road.
We went to the Heath and threw snowballs,
watched snowmen occupying that white waste land,
while her left-over balloons, released
like Ariel, withered and burst.
Often we'd passed, but never spoken, never met,
years later we'd meet her ringing words
sounding now like omens, betraying the despair
that suffocated her that Winter in such icy air.

Dear Survivors' Poetry,

I saw the advert for the One Heart One World poetry exhibition in the last issue of Poetry Express. I entered ... and won! My poem has been selected for the exhibition in London, USA and Japan. I also qualified for an entry in the 2001 edition of Poet's Who's Who! Here is my winning poem:-

First Born
(for Bethany Dawn)

I'm on the line
Sounding out my girl
Picking up the pace
Kicking up a fuss
I listen...

She makes all the moves
All the right noises.

I'm down-loading her messages
She's off swimming
Followed by aerobics
Not missing her buoyant beat.

She's fine, She's mine
Heart to Heart.

She's six months
With three to go.

John Hirst, by e-mail.

Dear Survivors' Poetry,

I would like to express my gratitude to Survivors' Poetry for existing. Now I know there are other people who experience mental stress, whether this be general day-to-day stress or a more serious condition. I feel that putting pen to paper is the ultimate escape, where my imagination knows no bounds.

I want to thank Survivors' Poetry for giving people the opportunity to write and express the way they feel openly and without prejudice or judgment.

I hope I have helped to inspire some others to put pen to paper, and continue the good work of Survivors' Poetry.

NEW POETRY & NEW BOOKS

Mathew Normanton,
Merthyr Tydfil, S.Wales.

From Lead to Gold

An Anthology of
Survivors' Poetry from
the Camden Workshops
Reviewed by Carolyn
O'Connell

From Lead to Gold was a pleasure to read. The anthology is organised into four sections. Section one, entitled Beginnings, includes Joe Bidder's poem, Sun and Stucco, which superbly converts the holiday island of Fuerteventura into a dark, industrial, sacrificial altar where the visitor is both commodity and sacrifice. However, the main motif of this section is childhood and loss. Mala Mason's Ice Lolly opens with a child's demand, 'I want an ice lolly - a blue ice lolly'. Painful feelings of loss are summed up in the poem's final twist of a dying father making the same demand.

Relationships and Conflict, the second section in the anthology, contains many surprising poems on a multitude of themes. Mr.Malevolent by Razz resonates with images of the overbearing boss or bore. Two other memorable poems are The Final Kiss by Heather Beveridge with its assonance and alliteration and Alison

Clayburn's birth poem, A Cold Entry.

For me, the poem which sums up the third section of the anthology, Recovery, is Bring on the Vets by Ferenc. Not only does it contain a plethora of amusing and unusual images (for example, 'spiders with cystitis') but its ironic title sets up echoes of inverted expectation, maintained without sentiment.

The fourth section, Mystical and Spiritual, contains two poems by Lionel Bartleby. None Shall Still... is a poem with post 11th September resonances while using images of the English seaside town of Brighton to internalise self-fulfilment. The beat of Joe Kelly's Rhythm brings readers back into the word of the mind, while the final poem, Inner Landscape, brings the images, ideas and aims of Survivors' Poetry in this anthology into an anthem.

In trying to give an overview of From Lead to Gold, I haven't been able to mention many fascinating poems on a variety of subjects. I can only say buy, read and discover, for just £3.95! If fault is to be found, it lies in the layout and punctuation of the odd poem and the unfortunate, occasional lapse in proof reading.

Available from Survivors' Poetry, Diorama Arts Centre, 34 Osnaburgh Street, London NW1 3ND, priced £3.95. ISBN 1-874595-11-9.

Find your voice with *Msllexia*

Kickstart your creativity with the magazine for women who write. Debate, advice and inspiration; news, reviews, interviews; competitions, grants, events. *Msllexia* is the only magazine in the UK for woman writers by woman writers.

For a NO RISK trial subscription contact: 0191 261 6656 or write to *Msllexia* (SV) PO Box 656, Freepost NEA5566, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE99 2RP SVtrial@msllexia.demon.co.uk

'witty and practical' UA Fintflourpe
'intelligent and creative' Time Out
'diverse and brilliant' Fay Weldon
'deserves to go flying into people's hands' Jo Sharpcott

SUPPORTED BY THE NATIONAL LOTTERY THROUGH THE ARTS COUNCIL OF ENGLAND AND BY MULTIMEDIA AIDS

NEW POETRY &

Bipolarity: Poems of a Disorder

by Emma-Jane
Arkady
Reviewed Zhanna
Eliot

This thought-provoking collection illuminates the world of bipolarity. Multilayered images of religion, art, music and dance give Arkady's work a classical yet contemporary feel.

Sarah's Very Exciting Day shows a mother with two children, a 'toddled delight yet masking / the raw end of a doctorate in biomechanics', putting the washing in the machine, and as the dirty trainers whirl round 'the mud of a bed of despair', she sees the shoes, like her, 'pleading to escape from this drowning'. SAD describes the feeling of envy when a friend 'skipping delight' goes to New England to see 'the fall', while the poet endures the 'short-wavelength beams' of autumn and Seasonal Affective Disorder in Old England. 'I fall over a slight edge and plummet / down into a cold winter of pills that don't work'.

Spaceship Understanding Black Hole is a revealing description of bipolarity: 'Approaching this - the curve in space-time / the deep-dark, the pit / I always knew was there / ...is a terror / ... I have no will to resist'.

The eighteen poems in the volume chart incidents in Arkady's life - phone smashing, trying to kiss the Virgin door handles as the train whizzes by, being arrested for disturbing the peace. A disturbing, compelling read.

Available from Flarestack Publishing, c/o Redditch Library, 15 Market Place, Redditch, Worcestershire, B98 8AR, priced £3.00.
ISBN 1-900397-41-2.

Scintilla 5

Published by the
Usk Valley Vaughan
Association
Reviewed by Roy
Holland

Scintilla is a beautifully produced journal, containing poetry written in the spirit of Henry and Thomas Vaughan, the seventeenth century mystical poet and his alchemist brother. The journal includes articles on their work and historical context. Issue 5 is illustrated with photographs of Romanesque sculpture, depicting scenes from the Bible and the Bestiary and contains many insights relevant to writing and health.

In the poem Millennial Funerals 3, Anna Adams addresses the survivor as Holocaust victim and artist. Fred Johnston's Shadowing begins, 'My anger appals me / ...and when I go in that dark place / something calls me', but 'the fit will pass'. Parvin Loloi's essay links Henry Vaughan with Sufism, finding light and darkness 'wherever you look.' In Blake and Raine, Hilary Llewellyn-Williams finds the re-emergence from darkness to light, and from destruction to wholeness. She admits that that journey is more difficult than the descent: 'Sooner or later we must return to the cold light of day, and assess what we've really achieved.'

Hopefully survivors will enter next year's open poetry competition (details from the address below), or attend the annual conference of the Usk Valley Vaughan Association held in April in the Welsh countryside.

Available from Dr. Peter Thomas, ENCAP, Cardiff University, PO Box 94, Cardiff, CF11 3XB, priced £7.50. Please make cheques payable to 'UVVA - SCINTILLA ACCOUNT'. ISBN 0-9530674-4-0.

The Stranger: Selected Pieces 1974-2000

by Ian Seed
Reviewed by Henry
Birtley

Ian Seed's eighth book is a potent mix of styles, ranging from the romantic (as in Wedding Moment: 'the sky / bends down / to touch the ground / quite close / to where / you're standing') through to the deep abstraction of the prose poems in the middle of the book. Although there is a wide range of styles contained in the fifty-four pages of this book, this is not a mishmash of poetry hastily thrown together. It is well crafted and simply presented, allowing the poetry to speak for itself.

The effectiveness of the poetry lies in Ian's ability to use powerful imagery without being overbearing. I never quite knew if the next poem was going to sneak up on me and kiss me gently or lunge sharply between the ribs with a loving brutality.

The Stranger covers several themes: relationships, the need for solitude, the fear of standing still, weakness and strength - even flies get a couple of poems of their own. All this adds up to an overall feeling of movement, both physical and emotional, which is sometimes gentle stroll, sometimes roller-coaster.

If you have not read any of Ian's work before, this, as they say, is a good place to start. It well earns the description on the book's cover: 'a powerful and haunting work'.

Available from Moss & Flint Books, c/o 12 Shepherd Walk, Kegworth, Derby, DE74 2HS, priced £3.00 (cheques payable to 'Moss & Flint'). ISBN 0-905127-02-1.

NEW BOOKS

Breakthrough CD

by CARSOS

Reviewed by Mary
Neville

A collection of poetry read and sung to the sound of music: poems brought to life without the effort of reading. All of the members of CARSOS (Creative Arts Resource for the Sanity of the Soul) have experienced mental distress. Nikki Slade, consultant to the project, overcame a breakdown through her musical talent. She ran Free the Inner Voice workshops in Clapham, the seed of the Carsos project (sponsored by MIND Millennium Trust). Other members who have experienced prison and special hospitals have stayed alive by singing. CARSOS aims to unlock the potential of the dispossessed through the voice.

The songs on this album were born from improvisations at the Oasis Drop-in Centre in Chiswick between 1994-99. An array of musical instruments accompanies the varied poems, percussion providing a beat to enforce the power of the spoken word. The tempo of the music lightens the depth of the sentences and words of the poetry.

The poem For You, unique, with an Icelandic introduction, is deeply meaningful and beautifully written. It describes the melodious song of the lark. The poem tells of when a lark cries and when a lark dies:

'Not a forlorn dream, she's crying in
my soul
She sings a song of blue, sun kissed on
the shore
She holds a flame to me and lets me
kiss my heart
She's a diamante rhythm tearing me
apart'.

The final poem on the CD asks the



question, 'if?'. If we had peace? If we had love? If we had friends? If we opened our minds and hearts? These questions are answered, one by one, as the poem rolls along.

In contrast to the more usual 'book' of poetry, this CD quite simply brings together the magic of words and music.

Available from CARSOS, PO Box 30825, London W12 7GR (Tel: 020 7944 213882), priced £11.99 (£6.00 concessions).

Before the Storm

by Nicky L.Stones

Nicky's book, Before the Storm, was reviewed in the last issue of Poetry Express. It is available from the author at Winford Manor Retreat, Winword, Bristol BS40 8DW, priced £2.50 (plus 50p p&p), and not from the publisher as previously stated.

You're Really Cutting Me Up?

by Jenni Meredith
Reviewed by Kate
Cunningham

This book has some great ideas, which, for me, could have been further developed typographically and visually. The ideas contained in Jenni Meredith's book are inspiring; several expressions can be related to surrealism. I see this book as the beginning of something, possibly even a never-ending story.

Many people will find this book useful as a catalyst, to get the creative juices flowing. I particularly liked the use of the sight-test chart, but the splitting of words made the poem difficult to read and to get into the rhythm and flow of its structure.

I loved the found poem, but couldn't help thinking that the poem could be strongly visually represented if a photograph of where it was discovered were included. This book would benefit from slight changes to make it more lateral than literal. You're Really Cutting Me Up? is a very interesting read and I have gained new ideas and inspiration. Do give it a go.

Available from Colchester and Tendring Hospital Arts Project., Essex Rivers Health Care NHS Trust, Trust HQ, Turner Road, Colchester, Essex, CO4 5JL, priced £6.99. ISBN 0-9540492-0-9.

BOOK REVIEWERS WANTED

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!

survivor@survivorspoetry.org.uk

