

Spring's Bride



A collection of poetry, flash fiction, art and photography about Spring and Easter.

Image 'I will go into a Hare' by Linda Murray.
Title 'Spring's Bride' taken from a poem by Órla Fay

Editors' Welcome

Welcome to 'Spring's Bride', a collection of poetry, flash fiction, art and photography about Spring and Easter.

We had a phenomenal response to the call for work on this theme and therefore a very difficult task in selecting the work for this publication. The standard, as we have always found with our call-outs, has been extremely high. We are delighted to include work from both established and emerging creatives from all over the world, within this Spring publication.

'Spring Bride' touches on what the season of Spring means to us. It also includes work that has Easter and spiritual elements. Yet, however people interpret this time of year, we can all agree- that with Spring comes a feeling of starting over again, the melting away of winter, as the days stretch in length and we see new life rising to the surface.

We hope that you enjoy this collection of poetry, fiction, art and photography. We also hope that the words and images that you will find here, highlight the sense of potential which Spring and Easter time bring to us all.

Amy and Paul

Editors

Contents

Page 4-5	Órla Fay	Poetry	Spring's Bride
Page 6	Linda Murray	Painting	I will go into a Hare
Page 7	Csilla Toldy	Poetry	To Zeffirelli
Page 8	Stephanie Conn	Poetry	The Promise of Spring
Page 9	Antoinette Rock	Poetry	Daisies
Page 10	Kenneth Pobo	Poetry	Eater Homily
Page 11	Lynda Tavakoli	Haiku/ Photograph	Easter
Page 12	Laura Cameron	Poetry	2nd April 1998
Page 13	Amy Louise Wyatt	Poetry	One Daffodil
Page 14	Karen Mooney	Photograph	Places of Grace
Page 15	Meg McCleery	Flash Fiction	That Damned Ribbon
Page 16	Moyra Donaldson	Poetry	Resurrection
Page 17	Peter Adair	Poetry	Good Friday
Page 18	Marilyn Timms	Poetry	Other People's Easter
Page 19	Gaynor Kane	Poetry	Spring Bank Holiday
Page 20	Caroline Johnstone	Poetry	Rose Tinted Glasses
Page 21	Holly Graham	Photography	Cow (get title)
Page 22	David Atkinson	Poetry	Palaeontology Lesson
Page 23	Jeannie Prinsen	Poetry	Daylight Saving
Page 24	Patricia Hughes	Poetry	Daffodils
Page 25	Dom Conlon	Poetry	Faberge Smith Visits his Mother
Page 26	Amlan Goswami	Poetry	New Leaf
Page 27	Thomas Elliot	Poetry	Risen
Page 28	Clark Chambers	Photography	Eventide
Page 29	Gerry McCullough	Poetry	Colours of Life
Page 30	Glen Wilson	Poetry	Easter Market, Prague 2006
Page 31	Angela Graham	Poetry	Easter
Page 32	Zoe McGrath	Photography	Delphinium (Bee's blue peace)
Page 33	Alice Kinsella	Poetry	Messiah Frog
Page 34	Anne Donnelly	Poetry	Sod Off Spring
Page 35	Yvonne Boyle	Poetry	Easter Romance
Page 36	Andrew Soye	Poetry	Easter
Page 37	Anne Summerfield	Poetry	Easter Sunday
Page 38-39	Pat Mullan	Flash Fiction	Enduring Guilt
Page 40	Alison Thompson	Poetry	Evocation
Page 41	Anne McMaster	Photography	Cold Spring
Page 42	Matthew Lavery	Poetry	Easter 2016
Page 43	Iain Campbell	Poetry	Ballyholme
Page 44-45	Patricia Bennett	Poetry	Echoes in Drumglass Park
Page 46	Maureen Boyle	Poetry	Spring Haiku
Page 47	Paul Daniel Rafferty	Poetry	Prohibition
Page 48	Joe Williams	Poetry	Easter Prayer
Page 48	Anesu Mtowa	Painted Stone	Easter Flower
Page 49	Morna Sullivan	Photography	Hoppy Easter from Bertram Bunny

Órla Fay Poetry

Spring's Bride

She powders her face
in delicate tones
pale pink cherry blossom
along fine cheek bones.

Into the mirror
she peers wide-eyed,
a celebrated beauty,
April's returned child.

The rainwater collects
to fashion the mirror;
a puddle on dark tarmac
contrasts with her glamour.

The streams gush and fight
falling over each other,
beneath drenched branches
she hears them discover

the shared language of water
she learned through her roots,
the ebb and flow of time,
the cyclicity of youth.

In looking she remembers
the falling of snow
once upon a time
and long, long ago,

jaded of autumn, faded of summer
the land hushed, the frozen river.
Icicles hung wind-chimes by noon,
white fields at twilight retired maroon.

The thaw of amnesia
inspired splitting of ice,
the birth of a season,
the firing of light.

Then buttercups grew in fields
of grass waxed tall,
the church bells rang
outside the castle's wall.

This tale is tolled far and wide;
how every year she becomes the bride,
how all is one, how nothing is spared,
how in the sacrament this is declared!

Linda Murray Painting

I will go into a Hare



The painting is based on the superstition that witches could turn into hares. You can see in the painting that the head has already turned and the hands are transforming into paws.

Csilla Toldy Poetry

To Zeffirelli

I used to have dreams of flying,
swimming in the air.
Controlling space
I could soar and dive with ease,
exhilarating.

In another dreamlike state
a dark entity
lifted me up, but half
of my body remained on the floor,
fearing the fear.

It lasted too long, this hanging in the air.
I resorted to prayer
and, not for the first time in my life,
the image of the Saviour saved me -
and I'm not even religious.

This poem is included in VERTICAL MONTAGE

The Promise of Spring

Last week the sunshine burnt my skin,
a slap mark at the t-shirt line,
for I'd been busy sipping gin,
observing sunlight's strange design,
so unexpected on the lawn,
and had not known the strength of it
until long after it was gone.
That night I thought of you a bit.

Now there are hailstones on the road,
grey clouds grow heavy in the sky,
spit out white flakes to softly goad
those people planning DIY
and buying coal for barbeques,
but I am happy by the fire,
changing channels or watching news;
the price of fuel is getting higher.

Next week I'll have a good clear out,
regardless of the weather -
not wonder what it's all about
when people start to blether
about the season's rapid shift
from hot to cold. I'll just pretend
that each new day is still a gift
and summer comes at winter's end.

Daisies

In long string grasses
waving gently
are medallion centres
virgin spokes
that light the meadow.
I lie in Easterfield
picking daises
for a child sweetheart
a gift of love for you.

Kenneth Pobo Poetry

Easter Homily

I like the Jesus who barged
in to the Temple and stuck it
to the moneythugs. Yes,
there's something Lordlike

about him. And the Jesus
who said "Judge not
lest ye be judged," I give him
a load of credit. Nowadays

we could use some judge not.
And the parable teller who
wasn't flummoxed over a woman
taken in adultery. Creeps

wanted her hide and he said
to stone her if they had no sin.
But this other Jesus who got
hungry and wanted fruit

from a barren fig tree--he's
awful, cursing the tree,
making it die. Even barren figs
deserve respect. I'm mixed

about Gethsemane Jesus,
madly maudlin, asking the cup
to be taken from him but
capitulating to his Father

anyway. I like the Bette Davis
in *Dark Victory* pathos, but
he did decide to dash down
from heaven. If he hated

the results, he should've
stayed up where angels watch us
lose and lose on
our endless game shows.

Lynda Tavakoli Haiku and Photography

Easter Haiku

sigh of winter
a single daffodil
promising spring



Laura Cameron Poetry

2nd April 1998

The Good Friday Agreement was signed on 10th April, 1998, marking an end to 30 years of conflict in Northern Ireland.

From the TV on the wall,
The Agreement hovers
over your see-through cot.

Frowns.
Smiles.
Handshakes.
Is it really over?

Blood washes away
in the hospital bathroom.
I take a sideways glance in the mirror
at my mutilated belly
stapled up.

They tell me I'll mend in time
and you,
who smells so new,
haven't a mark.

Amy Louise Wyatt Poetry

One daffodil

One daffodil. Is that my Spring?
Is that my version of the season of new beginnings?
How can one daffodil stand for us all?
How can one daffodil stand for us all and all
our struggles, and all our effort and all our beauty?

I am fed up planting bulbs.
I am fed up planting bulbs that don't come back
the following year.
I am fed up planting bulbs that don't come back
the following year, bar that one daffodil.

I am fed up being the only daffodil.
The one daffodil. The only one that made it back.
The only one that made it back in time
to see the only sky she's ever known.
The only one that made it back in time for Spring.

Places of Grace



A photograph of the spire of St Saviours, Church of Ireland taken through the pointed arched windows of Grey Abbey. Grey Abbey dates from 1193 and is the first fully gothic style building in Ulster, it is the first fully stone church in which every window arch and door was pointed rather than round headed. The abbey is located in the parkland of Rosemount House, home of the Montgomery family, to the east side of Greyabbey village

That Damned Ribbon...

The bright red satin ribbon encasing the chocolate egg shone against the background of the golden foil. I studied it for a while, but I knew that I was defeated and admitted that there was no way that I was going to be able to open the egg and take the sweets out without anyone knowing.

If it hadn't been for that damned ribbon I could have done it! When the annual Easter Sunday ritual of opening Easter Eggs began no one would have noticed, not the children, excited and boisterous, and Arthur, fresh from car washing duties, wouldn't notice either. But the ribbon had defeated me.

My mind took me back to the Easter ritual of my childhood when opening my Easter Egg I was shocked to find that the sweets had gone. My father was really angry and my brother Tom, indignant and protesting, was instantly banished to his room. But it didn't stop there! Sweets disappeared out of my Christmas stocking, bars of chocolate were mysteriously missing from my selection box, and so it went on, little lies here and there and Tom was punished with his pocket money taken off him, no dinner, or sent to his room in disgrace whilst I always looked on in surprise.

I sighed and put the untouched egg back. One for Tom.

That damned ribbon!

Moyra Donaldson Poetry

Resurrection

I had forgotten spring;
then green tongue tips
licking the blue sky,
all the birds in a tizzy,
juicy energies in every thing –
the whole world, eastering.

Peter Adair Poetry

Good Friday

With dreary drip Christ's blood stains
the glass, the mob's clamour
scourges ears, soldiers hammer
in the nails

for the few who come to kneel and pray
and, trying hard, half expect
ageing bones might resurrect
on Easter Day.

Above grey heads the rector drones,
insisting brother Jesus bears
our sins, hears our little cares,
our big groans.

Outside: shoppers with screeching prams,
DIY husbands reborn in shorts,
hear no heavenly voices, no reports
of incarnate psalms.

How far away that lonely hill,
that lonely man. Close beside,
the poor and grieving, the broken in mind,
trouble us still.

Yet though dogmatic atheists rejoice
that Christ has dropped his rotting cross,
some of us still feel the loss
of our forebears' choice

and the sun undarkened, veil unrent,
no touch of angels' whirring wings,
no tongues uttering unutterable things,
and the Son unspent.

Marilyn Timms Poetry

Other People's Easter

Between the pages of his Bible,
a pale flutter of papyrus,
his first Palm Sunday Cross.
The man traces its ancient outlines,
recalls coolness of a distant nave,
the certainties he's lost.
His grandchild gnaws her cache
of Easter eggs; paints face, fist,
furniture with chocolate drool.
The mangled boxes of her treasures
rely on Barbie and Pokemon
to relay the Easter message.
The strategy isn't working.

In the next street, town, country –
bombs, floods, earthquakes,
indifference, fanaticism.
And yet – deep beneath asphalt
a bulb sprouts, forces leaves into air.
Look to the skies!
The sun is as warm as Love.

Gaynor Kane Poetry

Spring Bank Holiday

We travelled far from city noise
to wide skies, woods, wetland
and a lapping lough-shore.
Lego birds had been the bribe.

Leaving Minecraft in the boot
we time-travelled, from plastic blocks
to the kiln, where men had fired
clay bricks. Further back, in the
Crannog's rustic roundhouse,
we stroked hand-daubed clay walls.

Posed for pictures with brick birds
but spent more time feeding the living,
adding new naming words, researching
migration paths, becoming birders.
Pinched your mouth on finding
a yolk-stained shell outside the coop.

Drifting off homeward bound
with Shovelers, Shelducks, Redshanks
flying around your head,
Best day out, EVER, you said.

Until the next one...

Caroline Johnstone Poetry

Rose tinted glasses

Snow fell that Easter, nestled on tents,
Settled on Tollymore trees.

We gathered brown onion skins,
Yellow whin to dye eggs we cooled

Then painted, tongues poked through teeth.
We walked to the long hill, ready to race

Them and each other, to the bottom.
Fresh air hunger made us quickly discard

Fragments of shattered shell, savour salted
White firmness, soft yellow sunshine.

Holly Graham Photography

Cows by the Cottage



A photo of the cows that live near Holly's home taken at Spring time. Holly lives in a traditional cottage and regularly goes on adventures to see her neighbouring animals. They are very friendly and calves have just been born which are going to be Holly's next models this year.

David Atkinson Poetry

Palaeontology Lesson

On Easter Sunday, with a sense of irony,
I took you hunting for fossils,
with a garden trowel, your red beach bucket,
and what my father would have called a "riddle".
When we stopped to dig you asked how I knew
it was the right place, I told you to trust me.
I dug a hole into the past, you filled it with sea water,
swirling the Jurassic mud with your fingers,
dredging the hole with the bucket and sifting
sludge through the riddle like a couple of sourdoughs.

Ramblers circumnavigated us, but one stopped
to ask what we were doing, you told him,
and he looked at you as if you were mad,
and me as if I should have more sense,
and smiled politely and rambled on.
When we found our first one you held it
aloft, like a nugget of grey gold,
arms black to the elbows with lias clay,
a Gryphaea, the Devil's toenail, seeing
the light, the first in 200 million years.

Stones speak to us without saying a word,
fragments of truth we piece back together,
evidence lies just below the surface,
if you know where to dig.
if you know where to dig.

First published in The CAP Anthology

Jeannie Prinsen Poetry

Daylight saving

The morning after the time change
sets you back on your heels a little.
An hour's worth of light has been given
to the evening instead, and when you wake,
you can't help but miss that bright piece of time.
But when you step out at dawn and breathe
the cool, fresh air, you realize
you haven't been cheated of anything. Not
when a black checkmark of geese
flies over, leaving its stamp of approval
on the gray-gold page of sky.

Patricia Hughes Poetry

Daffodils.

My dad said,
the sun was made from barley sugar.
My dad said,
daffodils danced in the garden
to make God smile.
My dad said,
take each season
embrace like a friend.
His season was Spring.
Gilded in hope.

Dom Conlon Poetry

Fabergé Smith Visits His Mother

Upon seeing dementia on his mother's face
Fabergé Smith borrowed her makeup
and her brushes and used her face like a mirror.

First he gave her a smile as though she had
a separate heart pumping blood to her lips
one which he could never break again.

He painted china blue eyes as though
they had always been wide
at the sight of him stood before her.

He made her cheeks glow as though
two suns had found the energy to reignite
and birth a solar system for him to live in
one in which he was at the centre.

Then he smoothed out the wrinkles in her skin
as though rivers had not run there
full of the all fish he could eat
or carrying his boat across their rapids.

And when he had finished
she took his fragile hands in hers and said
This is not Easter.
I am not your egg.
There will be no resurrection.

Amlan Goswami Poetry

New Leaf

Now, what of the old
Do we remember?
The new year calls at the
Curl of the road
And we don't know
Which way to turn....

On the left, and...right, is shrub green
Not the tall trees of childhood
Ahead, tiny sunlit steps, sheltered by branches,
You don't look behind.
You just crossed that shore.

Thomas Elliot Poetry

Risen

A bird's nest hangs
In a winter-bare gallows tree
Like a thorny crown

The Robin with
bloodied breast
Takes to flight
Into a Golden sun-singing

"He is Risen"

Clark Chambers Photography

Eventide
Bangor Abbey



The picture was taken on Clark's way to work on an early Spring day. It represents one last taste of palpable beauty, before being cooped up for another shift spent gazing out a window at a blue sky that he just wanted to touch.

Gerry McCullough **Poetry**

Colours of life

October leaves,
Yellow gold of chestnuts
Red gold of sycamores,
Mingling with the gentle tan of rowan
And bright red of maple.

In November they change
To the dull dead brown
Of beech and cherry.

By December
The last lingering life leeches out
As they fall to earth and sink into the ground.

Four dead months while we burn their leafless sticks
Finding warmth
In the brightness of their flames.

Then comes spring,
And the rising sap
Brings bright green leaves,
Small and powerless first,
Then covering the branches.

We praise the life giver
For the sharp acid green of beech
And the lovely soft green tenuous leaves of lilac.

Glen Wilson Poetry

Easter Market, Old Town Square, Prague 2006

I watch crowds gather by the astronomical clock,
waiting for Jesus and the apostles to appear.

At the corner of a side street a man is praying,
hoping for pennies to fall into his empty cap.

All along the square cafes are full of sightseers
sipping beverages brimming with creamy froth.

The bells toll and a despondent Christ comes out
does a circuit then disappears back into the clock,

the crowd turn back to their Cappuccinos,
caring little that he will be back in an hour.

Easter

A rent in the year
Through which the cold news comes:
 Even the best of us
 Will be consumed by pain,
 Abandoned undeservedly
 And not know why
 And asked to say to all this,
 Yes,
 Though he destroy me
 Yet I trust in him.

Each of us shivers
In this gap,
Choosing to assent
Or not
To love's defiance
Of anything other than itself.
Victory or vindication –
These it lets fall
(Aborted fruits),
Facing into the wind,
Arms wide.

Zoe McGrath **Photography**

Delphinium (Bee's blue peace)



'Whispful flight of bumble bee Maud. Hovering humbly beside the peaceful blue Larkspur.'

Alice Kinsella **Poetry**

Messiah Frog

At Easter we found a frog in the field
far from water and kidnapped it.
Took it for a pet, put it in a bucket,
Examined bulging eyes, splayed limbs,
dappled yellow green skin,
belly bloated from spawning.

In that plastic prison we'd filled so lovingly
with pond water, its stomach turned skyward,
showed no signs of life when poked with twigs.

We were too young to think of how swiftly death arrives,
to take the weight on sun speckled shoulders.

Mum lay the body beneath a blooming rose bush,
told us to stay away, it could be in shock, *give it time*.

We waited, hopeful,
having faith, as children do.

First Published in The Flower Press

Anne Donnelly Poetry

Sod off, Spring

I don't want your yellow daffodils or pansies.
The soil is too hard sow sunflowers
my shovel blunt
and my days for ploughing fields are behind me.

Sod off, Spring
I don't want to come out of hibernation
your blue skies give me migraines.
Let me lie under my ash-grey ceiling.

Sod off, Spring
I don't want your Easter bunnies or chocolate eggs.
They'll leave brown spots on the arse of my trousers
and my daughter will put me in a care home.

Sod off, Spring
Wait until I'm planted deep underground.

Yvonne Boyle Poetry

Easter Romance

I picked the whin bloom
 to dye my eggs
as a way to your heart.

Standing on the Coleraine bypass
 bright sky, spring breeze,
plucking yellow flowers.
Commuters file past
 conveying no concern.
I am delighted, naturally,
 at my find.

Eggs boiled the palest lemon,
 the phone call comes
*'Did you dye your eggs,
 like I suggested?'*
His smile like a bank of gorse
 on the hill.
'Yes' I said,
losing all memory of
 the prickly branches
of intimacy.

Easter

at the market
you want a cross
?
with a bloke
on't or not

Easter Sunday

I went for your sake. I had no wish to go.

The birds were operatic, the sky darker
than indigo. Inside the church
light was honeyed. Children's voices
read pages from ancient texts,
stumbled over names and numbers,
meaning lost before it was expressed.

Outside again - dawn yellowed,
day warmed, the birds still singing -
I found a tree frog, red-eyed,
tiny body, muscle-dense, bright and elastic.
I nursed it like a flame in my palms,
parted my hands like a hatching stone.

It leapt away to hide under fern fronds,
eyes like the blood of wounds,
a spirit waiting in the damp shade
between belief and memory.

Enduring Guilt

Holidays are important to us and we take several every year. And with the new travel apps going commercial in the seventies, a raft of new holiday destinations had opened up. By 2090 we were able to stand in the field at Gettysburg with Abe Lincoln and mingle with the Parisian crowd at Marie-Antoinette's execution. Time travel was easy – like going to the cinema or theatre. You only had to wear suitable clothing but this was usually provided as part of the package from the travel agent.

Abigail was looking forward to something different this year and, on the recommendation of the travel agent, had booked Jerusalem for one of the old religious festivals. She has a secret lingering attachment to the concept of Christianity, which came from her mother, which she wouldn't admit to. And, if I am honest, I too was looking forward to meeting the Galilean — to see what he was really like under pressure.

The smell of the place was what struck me first – and the noise. People on the move. Open sewers along the streets. Stalls selling food and other merchandise. Donkeys and soldiers everywhere on this beautiful spring morning. It was like a bank holiday weekend for the local Jewish Passover feast.

We were part of a group gathered outside Herod's Upper Palace. All were standing around with an air of expectation.

"What's up?" I asked a man in clerical garb.

"Ah. The usual. Bloody Romans interfering again. That chancer Jesus is up to his tricks again and they won't do a thing about it."

"What's he done?"

"Where have you been man? He's one of that Essene cult. A blasphemer. Should have been put away years ago. Now claims he's the son of God would you believe?"

We mingled as best we could with the crowd, keeping a low profile and doing as others did, as we'd been instructed by the travel agent. A hush descended on the crowd as a figure was dragged from the palace by a group of soldiers.

"It's him," Abigail whispered, eyes glazed, as in a trance. The prisoner's wrists were tied together and securely fastened above his head to a stone pillar. A burly Roman soldier appeared stripped to the waist carrying a whip with three long leather tails and small metal pieces and what looked like bones on the end. The clothes were ripped from the prisoner's back and the whipping began to the cheers of the crowd. We joined in as each lash drew more blood. Abigail was in tears. Visibly weakened after ten lashes with the metal and bone cutting into his skin as the leather thongs left their marks on his back and wrapped themselves around his side, his thighs and his ribs, drawing more and more blood. He fell to his knees but the lashes continued as the cheers and taunts from the crowd got louder.

He took his punishment like a man. No pleas for mercy from the Galilean. Yet the crowd cheered, jeered and screamed nothing but abuse. "Traitor," "Crucify him," and "Essene scum". We had to join in. It was clear they were bent on the complete physical and mental humiliation of the prisoner. Abigail could not bear to look. I had seen enough but we were not due to meet the tour guide for another ninety minutes. What could drive people to such frenzy?

When I looked up, the prisoner had collapsed and the lashes had stopped. The soldiers were putting some kind of a cap on his head. They took him away into the recesses of the palace. I brought Abigail over to a quiet, shaded area close to the perimeter wall. She was almost hysterical.

"I can't take any more of this," she said.

"I know. It's not what I expected either."

A silence descended on the crowd again as the prisoner was brought out once more. He had been cleaned up and was wrapped in what looked like a purple blanket. Trickle of blood ran from his head which was covered with a cap made of what looked like hawthorn twigs. We could hear shouts of "King of the Jews."

"Oh my God, the crown of thorns," whispered Abigail.

A fuss was being made by hangers-on as the lead Roman, a man called Pilate, appeared on the first floor balcony of the palace. "Well here he is people. I don't find him guilty of any crime", he said, addressing the crowd.

There were loud shouts of disagreement from the front of the crowd with calls to "Crucify him. Crucify him." This rapidly developed into a relentless atavistic chanting of "Crucify, crucify, crucify, crucify, crucify..." menacingly culminating in a crescendo taken up by the entire crowd.

Looking around, we began to realise that most of the crowd were going through the motions. Reluctant participants caught up in an act they had no option but see it through, like ourselves.

Could we all be responsible for what happened to the Galilean that spring day in Jerusalem over two thousand years ago?

First published by Word Bohemia 2015

Alison Thompson Poetry

Evocation

Just at the end of being lost,
when we are so far gone,
that we have forgotten
what we ever knew
about sky,
and light,
and a long afternoon,
there comes the first completely
golden day.

The sky is clear and open
and iris-blue.
It stretches above us
in the widest smile.
And we see each other in
that light, as if for the very first time,
and remember

watching the dusk,
slip through the garden,
as the cobbles
release their warmth.
Sitting on the stoop
with faces raised towards
the sun, like saucers,
tipped to catch
every drop of gold.

We look around
and we remember.
We unfold
and we are found again.

Anne McMaster Photography

Cold Spring



Anne loves the interplay of light and shade when snow falls. These photographs explore that connection and hint at the fragility of the last days of winter in rural areas as spring approaches

Matthew Lavery **Poetry**

Easter 2016

A drunken uncle tells me something inappropriate.
I laugh hesitantly as young cousins stare confused.
There are eggs spread throughout the house, some filled with
coins, candies. The youngest one doesn't know what
a half-dollar is. Finds an egg with one and hands it to her father;
then asks if she can have more sweets. Another
drunken uncle waits in a recliner for the baseball season to start.
He's pretty vocal about it; the young ones seem to fear him.

Night prepares itself, and most drunken uncles sleep if they've yet to leave.
You can hear it as the moon rises in open sky— gradual peace.

Ballyholme

This week the fresh Atlantic breeze
bade farewell to the last soft rains of April
to hint that longed for summer days
and skies of cloudless blue
might somehow stretch forever.

While all along that borrowed silver strand,
once grey and scarred from winter's empty storms,
a vibrant city's colour staked
its chaotic, hopeless claim
with castles of its own design.

We walked on, past far flung driftwood
to where, much further round the point,
the sea cotton and beach grass
waving on the in shore breeze,
reclaimed the coastal fringe,
as if they and we had never left.

Patricia Bennett Poetry

Echoes in Drumglass Park, Lisburn Road, Belfast

Children slither like little eels

down the sun-shine-slide

climbing frames yell yellows and ballsy blues

football fever races through grassy green.

Daffodils sunbathe in gangs

by the roots of love-carved trees

their petals luminescent in the midday beams

as spring light echoes off bark and swing.

Sentinels of pine, mute

the city surrounding this 'oasis'.

Parents and grandparents

loaded with baggage

keep a tight eye on the ice cream van
as it draws queues of upturned faces

eager to try the litany of flavours
recited like an echo from the shade

*Rum and raisin, vanilla,
butterscotch, walnut, peach...**

* *The Ice Cream Man* by Michael Longley.

Spring Haiku

1

Goldfinches, thistle-fed,
flash in the gloom of a wintry-spring
wearing the soul colours of the dead.

2

Botanic Spring
The end of winter hellebore
Pallid, pale, only just a flower.

Prohibition

I've always been a fan of the Easter weekend.
A bit like me, it doesn't know where it belongs.
Torn between religion and the moon,
April seems too late, March too soon.

I feel affinity with an unnamed Saturday;
caught amidst the beauty of a life reborn:
Holy Thursday, Good Friday, Easter Sunday.
Unnamed, unnoticed, scorned.

I was born, like Hitler, on the twentieth,
the very day before the Queen.
Yet, when my birthday falls on Good Friday
there's not a drink to be seen.

Happy Easter! Happy Springtime!

Thank you for taking the time to read 'Spring's Bride' and thank you to all our contributors!

Joe Williams Poetry

Easter Prayer

Spare a thought for the Easter Bunny,
laying all those eggs.
It's not natural, for a mammal,
excepting the platypus,

who would struggle with anything larger than
a Cadbury's Creme Egg,
and with wrapping it in foil
using flippers.

That task is better suited
to the orangutan,
as long as he can be persuaded
not to eat it.

Spare a thought for the Easter Bunny,
Platypus,
Orangutan.

*Photograph 'Hoppy Easter from Bertram Bunny'
by Morna Sullivan.*

Painted Easter stone by Anesu Mtowa.



Contributors' Biographies

Órla Fay

Órla Fay is the editor of *Boyne Berries Magazine*. Recently her work has appeared in *The Honest Ulsterman*, *Cyphers Magazine*, *Crossways Magazine* and forthcoming in *Quarryman* and *Skylight 47*. Currently she is studying the MA in Digital Arts and Humanities at UCC. She blogs at orlafay.blogspot.ie

Linda Murray

Linda studied Textile Design at the University of Ulster, and this influenced the surface pattern, and jewel colours of her work. Her textured work can resemble a woven fabric depicting fields and skies as the seasons change. Linda's work often suggests the continued presence of ancient beliefs represented by the wild creatures that move across the landscape.

Csilla Toldy

This poem is included in VERTICAL MONTAGE - Csilla Toldy's third pamphlet with Lapwing Belfast. She is launching the book on 19th April at 7 pm at NoAlibis, Botanic Avenue, combined with a screening of her film poems. "Vertical Montage" is dedicated to Sergei Eisenstein (1898-1948) the father of montage theory.

Stephanie Conn

Stephanie Conn's first collection, 'The Woman on the Other Side' is published by Doire Press and was shortlisted for the Shine/Strong Award for best first collection. Her pamphlet 'Copeland's Daughter' won the Poetry Business Pamphlet Competition and is published by Smith/Doorstep. Her new collection 'Island' is out in April 2018.

Antoinette Rock

Antoinette Rock lives in Cavan. Her poems have appeared in *Revival*, *The London Reader*, *Windows Authors & Artists Introduction Series No. 9*, *The Moth*, *North West Words*, *Poetry in Motion (N.I.)*, *Boyne Berries*, *Flight Writing*, *Skylight 47* and *a New Ulster*. Her poems have been commended in the *Happenstance Poetry Competition (U.K.)* and *Westport Poetry Competition 2017*.

Kenneth Pobo

Kenneth Pobo has a new book forthcoming from Clare Songbirds Press called *The Antlantis Hit Parade*. The work is all prose poems. He teaches English and creative writing at Widener University in Pennsylvania. Easter for him means gardening, the resurrection of bulbs and corms.

Lynda Tavakoli

Lynda Tavakoli divides her time between the Middle East and Northern Ireland. Her poetry and prose have been broadcast on both BBC Radio Ulster and RTE Sunday Miscellany and she has been selected as The Irish Times Hennessy poet of the month for her poems about dementia, a recurring theme in much of her poetry. Most recently her poems have been translated into Farsi while other poems and photographic images have seen publication in Bahrain. She is presently working on her debut poetry collection which she hopes to publish later on this year.

Laura Cameron

Laura Cameron's poems have been published in local anthologies including *Between Light and the Half Light* and *On the Grass When I Arrive*. Laura was long-listed twice for the Seamus Heaney Award for New Writing. She founded The Dead Shy Poets' Society, meeting weekly in Belfast to share poetry aloud.

Amy Louise Wyatt

Amy Louise Wyatt is an A Level Lecturer, poet and artist from Bangor, N.I. She is the editor of *The Bangor Literary Journal* and founded the The Bangor Poetry Competition. Amy has been published in *The Blue Nib*, *CAP Poetry In Motion Anthology*, *Lagan Online* and *FourXFour*. She was a finalist in the *2016 National Funeral Services Poetry Competition*; a finalist in the *2017 Aspects Festival Poetry Slam* and shortlisted for *The Seamus Heaney Award for New Writing 2018*. She has read at The Dublin Book Festival and Aspects Literature Festival, The Irish Writers Centre and The Seamus Heaney Homeplace. Amy is a member of Women Aloud NI. She is based at The Blackberry Path Studios in Bangor and is working towards her first collection of poetry.

Karen Mooney

Karen is an enthusiastic weekend snapper who enjoys capturing images from the natural environment mainly around the Ards Peninsula. Karen also is a poet and radio presenter for Lisburn FM.

Meg McCleery

Former College lecturer in English Literature and Media Meg ran Creative Writing classes in Belfast Community Centres, Women's Centres and lately Book Groups at Crescent Arts. She was awarded Highly Commended Poet at the Fifth Bangor Poetry Competition and has had poetry published in various journals such as *Poetry Now* and *Poetry Anthologies*. Currently working on a novel about college life, *Meg*, originally from Belfast, now lives in North Down.

Moyra Donaldson

Moyra Donaldson has published six collections of poetry including *Selected Poems* (2012), and *The Goose Tree* (2014) from Liberties Press, Dublin. She is also an experienced creative writing facilitator and mentor. She is currently working on a collaboration with artist Paddy Lennon, *Blood Horses* and a new collection is forthcoming from Doire Press in 2019.

Peter Adair

Peter Adair is a 12NOW (New Original Writer) with Lagan Online. His poems have appeared in *The Honest Ulsterman*, *The Galway Review*, *Four X Four* and other journals and anthologies. He was shortlisted for The 2018 Seamus Heaney Award for New Writing.

Marilyn Timms

Marilyn Timms, a writer and artist living in Gloucestershire, is a great believer in beginner's luck. The first poetry competition she entered won her a holiday for two in the Caribbean. Since then, she has performed her short stories and poems at Cheltenham Literature Festival and Cheltenham Poetry Festival. Her poetry ranges through time and place and has been described by Alison Brackenbury as 'a collection of brave and unexpected adventures, with intoxicating, sometimes threatening colours ... poems of war are particularly sharp and well-informed. Her writing explodes with energy.' She has had poems published in nine anthologies. Her collection, *Poppy Juice*, will be launched at the 2018 Cheltenham Poetry Festival. Two of her comedies have reached the stage, the third lies mouldering alongside her novel.

Gaynor Kane

Gaynor Kane is a graduate of the Open University, with a BA (Hons) Humanities with Literature. She has had poetry published in the Community Arts Partnership's 'Poetry in Motion' anthology *Matter* and in online journals, such as: *Atrium Poetry*, *The Galway Review* and *The Blue Nib*. In 2016, Gaynor was a finalist in the annual Funeral Services NI poetry competition. In June 2017, she was appointed as a member of the Executive Board for *Women Aloud NI*. Founded by Jane Talbot, *Women Aloud* aims to support female writers from, and/or living in, Northern Ireland.

Caroline Johnstone

Caroline is originally from Northern Ireland, now living in Ayrshire. Since 2014, she has been telling stories through her poetry, writing mainly on philosophical, political and life experience themes. She has been published in *The Galway Review*, *Positively Scottish*, *The Scottish Book Trust*, *Belfast Life*, *the Burningwood Literary Journal*, *HCE Review*, in the *The Snapdragon Journal*, *The Dove Tales Anthology*, *The Bangor Literary Journal* and the latest *Federation of Writers (Scotland) anthology Landfall*. She was also shortlisted for *Tales in the Forest*, *the Imprint Festival*, and by *People Not Borders*.

She's taken part in *The Big Renga*, a month long collaborative poem, and was interviewed by Sara Cox on BBC Radio 2 about this. She is a Scottish Poetry Library Ambassador, a member of the *Federation of Writers (Scotland)*, has been interviewed by children and parents in Dubai at a poetry workshop there, helps with the social media for the cross community group *Women Aloud NI*, is part of the *FreshAyr* initiative and their poetry events, and runs *The Moving On Poetry Group* weekly in Kilmarnock.

Holly Graham

Holly is 20 years old and an English and media student at Ulster University of Coleraine. She enjoys photography, writing and travelling.

David Atkinson

David Atkinson, Belfast born poet whose work has been published in magazines and journals nationally and internationally. He has published two collections of poetry, *Thomas* (2005) and *Black Eyed Peace* (2014), which includes the Pushcart nominated poem "Hunting for the Aurora". He was long-listed for the Seamus Heaney Award for New Writing 2017

Jeannie Prinsen

Jeannie lives in Kingston, Ontario, Canada with her husband and two teenagers. She teaches an online essay-writing course through Queen's University in Kingston, and writes poetry and fiction.

Patricia Hughes

Pat Hughes writes mostly for pleasure and the sake of her sanity. She is particularly keen in topics such as mental health and other topics not normally discussed in polite company.

Dom Conlon

Dom Conlon is a poet and author whose first collection, *Astro Poetica* has been praised as being 'insightful, thought provoking and fun, full of tenderness and wisdom.' (Nicola Davies). He visits schools, libraries and is a regular guest on BBC Radio.

Amlan Goswami

Amlanjyoti Goswami's poems have appeared in publications in India, Nepal, the UK, Hong Kong, South Africa, Kenya, Germany and the USA, including the anthologies *Forty under Forty: An Anthology of Post-Globalisation Poetry* (Poetrywala, 2016) and *A Change of Climate* (Manchester Metropolitan University, Environmental Justice Foundation and University of Edinburgh, 2017). He grew up in Guwahati, Assam and lives in Delhi.

Thomas Elliot

Thomas Elliott is From East Belfast and had his first work published in the mid 80s "The Stanger" a short story dealing with redundancy in the shipyard and a poem Vision of peace " in a writers anthology compiled by The Late Julian Broadhead (oe Cockers Biographer) After a decade away from writing while living in Cambridge upon returning has become a member of both Ards and Holywood writers. He has been published in *Panning for Poems*, John Hewitt- *Once Alien here showcase* and was awarded a bursary last summer by the JHS. His poem " Tree "was exhibited and sold at the recent Aspects Literature Festival and his micro poem" stone of remembrance was published on super poetry highway Holocaust memorial online journal. Thomas loves to read poems and short stories at open mics Poetry NI and The Monday Night cure at Sandinos in Derry/Londonderry. Thomas enjoys writing in East Belfast coffee shops and at Victoria Park

Clark Chambers

Clark Chambers grew up and lives in Bangor and while he doesn't use a "real" camera, his mobile phone serves him well when capturing interesting images that catch his attention. Clark has exhibited his work on several occasions at The Blackberry Path Art Studios during Aspects Festival and other events and exhibitions.

Gerry McCullough

Gerry McCullough is the author of eight bestselling novels as well as a children's book and four collections of short stories. She has had between eighty and ninety short stories published including a number which were prize winners, short listed or placed in prestigious literary competitions. Her debut novel *Belfast Girls* was a Number One bestseller on the overall Amazon list in 2012 for most of a year. Gerry was born and bred in Belfast and now lives just outside Bangor, County Down. She's married with four adult children. Gerry is also a poet and some of her poems have been shortlisted, placed, or come first in poetry competitions, as well as being published in various poetry magazines. In particular, her poem *Summer Passing* was the winner of the 4th Bangor Poetry Competition.

Glen Wilson

Glen Wilson lives and works in Portadown, Co Armagh. He has been widely published having work in *The Honest Ulsterman*, *Foliate Oak*, *Iota*, *Southword* and *The Incubator Journal* amongst others. In 2014 he won the Poetry Space competition and was shortlisted for the Wasafiri New Writing Prize. He won the Seamus Heaney Award for New Writing 2017. He is currently working on his first collection of poetry.

Angela Graham

Angela Graham is a documentary-maker and writer from Belfast who lives in Wales. She is currently writing a novel set in Northern Ireland. Her poetry has appeared in 'Poetry Wales' and she represented Northern Ireland in The H'mm Foundation's event, *Rhyme and Reason: Reflections on a Changing UK* with poets, Gillian Clarke (Wales), Christine De Luca (Scotland) and Jasmine Donahaye (England).

Zoe McGrath

Zoe is an artist and poet who lives in Bangor who is very much inspired by nature and her surroundings. She works in education, and in particular with children with special needs. She has displayed her artwork, photography and poetry in a wide variety of local exhibitions including Aspects Festival. When Zoe is not being creative, you will find her on the local beach, helping the environment, as part of North Down and Ards Beach Cleaners.

Alice Kinsella

Alice Kinsella is a poet from Dublin raised in Mayo. She was educated in Trinity College Dublin and NUI Galway. Her poetry has appeared or is forthcoming in *Banshee*, *The Lonely Crowd*, *The Irish Times*, and *Best New British and Irish Poets 2018* (Eyewear) and has been listed for prizes including Over the Edge New Writer of the Year, Cinnamon Press Poetry Competition, and Gregory O'Donoghue Award. She was SICCCA Liberties Festival writer in residence for 2017 and received a John Hewitt bursary in the same year. Her first book of poems, a pamphlet called *Flower Press*, was published in 2018.

Anne Donnelly

Anne Walsh Donnelly lives in Mayo. Her work has been published online and in print in various literary magazines such as Crannog, Boyne Berries, Star 82 and Blue Nib. Her short stories were shortlisted in various competitions including RTE Radio One Frances Mac Manus competition (2014, 2015). One of her poems was highly commended in the OTE New Writer of the Year Award (2017) and another commended in the Westport Arts Festival poetry competition (2017)

Yvonne Boyle

Yvonne Boyle has been writing for a number of years and has had a range of poems published in a variety of magazines and anthologies: *Literary Miscellany*, *Ulster Tatler*; 'Cobalt Blue', *Dunfanaghy Writers' Circle* (2016); the online Anthologies 'Holocaust Memorial Day' (2016) and 'A New Ulster. The Hidden and the Divine: Female Voices in Ireland' (2017); the Community Arts Partnership 2016/7 Poetry in Motion Community Anthology 'Matter' and their 2017/8 Anthology 'Resonance'. She was awarded the 1st Sam Overend Award for Poets and Writers (Spoken Word Competition), Seamus Heaney Poetry House, Bellgahy Bawn (2016). She has had poems exhibited at the Blackberry Path Art Studio, Bangor (2017). She worked as a CAP Artist-Facilitator in their Poetry in Motion Schools Project, September-November 2017.

Andrew Soye

Andrew Soye is currently studying part-time for an MA at Queen's University. His poems have been published in several magazines including *Abridged*, *Honest Ulsterman* and *Magma*. One of his poems won the 2014 Kent & Sussex Poetry Competition and another was shortlisted for the 2016 Bord Gáis Irish Book Awards Poem of the Year. Photo by Ger Holland.

Anne Summerfield

Anne Summerfield lives in Hampshire, England. Her publications include poems in *Orbis*, *Smith's Knoll* and *The Interpreter's House*, short stories in *Virago* and *Serpent's Tail* anthologies and on BBC Radio 4. Her poem 'I go with my grandfather' was first published in *Mslexia* as a shortlisted entry in their inaugural poetry competition and reprinted in the 2017 *Aesthetica Creative Writing Annual*. She tweets infrequently as @summerwriter

Pat J Mullan

Originally from North Derry, Pat now lives in Co Kildare. His short stories have been published in Spontaneity, The Galway Review, Paper Swans, Lagan-on-Line, The Incubator, Deep Water Literary Review, Shift Magazine, Honest Ulsterman and Word Bohemia. He also writes the occasional poem. Pat can be contacted by e-mail at pat1mullan@gmail.com . Twitter @pat_mullan

Alison Thompson

Alison Thompson lives in Bangor. She is a mum and a keen gardener and baker. She loves to ramble along local lanes and trails with her dog celebrating the beauty of the countryside by taking photos and writing about what she sees.

Anne McMaster

Anne McMaster is a poet and playwright who lives on an old farm outside a small town in rural mid-Ulster. Her poetry has been published in 19,751 Words: An Anthology, Paper Plane Pilots, The Honest Ulsterman, The Blue Nib, Fourth & Sycamore, The Hidden and the Divine from A New Ulster, Matter - the 2017 CAP Anthology, Lagan Online – The Power of Words: poems for Holocaust Memorial Day, Riggwelter Press and The International Poetry Marathon Anthology (2014, 2016 and 2017). Anne has read her work at the Irish Writers Centre in Dublin (WomenXBorders), across NI at various WANI events, through Belfast as part of a literary flashmob, at the Belfast Book Festival, at the CS Lewis Festival and (very happily) at The Blackberry Path Art Gallery.

Matthew Laverty

Matthew Laverty earned a BLA from the University of Massachusetts, Lowell where he studied creative writing under award winning poet Maggie Dietz and critically acclaimed author Andre Dubus III. His poems are forthcoming in Riggwelter Press, and have appeared at Poetry Quarterly, FORTH Magazine, and elsewhere. You can find him on Twitter @MattLavPoems.

Iain Campbell

Iain's poetry is inspired by his love of the landscape, the sea and sailing; his poems are often a tale of someone he has met, or of a journey he has undertaken.

His work has been published online in the Blue Nib, Lagan Online and the inaugural edition of the Bangor Literary Journal. He was runner up in the second year of The Bangor Poetry Competition, has read at Aspects Festival and is a regular contributor to Poetry NI's Friday nights at the Crescent Arts Centre, Belfast.

Patricia Bennett

Trish began writing to clear her head of shenanigans. She currently writes poetry, short stories and memoir. Her creatures have found homes in A New Ulster, Galway Review, CAP Poetry in Motion, Ireland's Own, The Leitrim Guardian, Number Eleven, Fermanagh Writers Anthologies, Beautiful Dragons Collaborations. She has read her work on BBC Radio Ulster; working on her first anthology of poetry. She won the Leitrim Guardian 2018 & 2017 Literary Awards for poetry, shortlisted for the North West Words/Donegal Creameries 2017 Poetry Award; long listed for the "Over the Edge 'New Writer of the Year Award'" in 2013. She is a member of WANI. Find out more on 'Bennett's Babblings.' Trish was commended in the FORTY Words competition for her poem 'Rewrite'.

Maureen Boyle

Maureen Boyle's debut poetry collection, 'The Work of a Winter' is published by Arlen House Press. She won the Ireland Chair of Poetry Prize; the Fish Short Memoir Prize and the inaugural Ireland Chair of Poetry Travel Bursary. She taught Creative Writing with the Open University for ten years and teaches English in St Dominic's Grammar School, Belfast.

Paul Daniel Rafferty

Paul Daniel Rafferty is a poet and photographer based at The Blackberry Art Studios in Bangor. Paul is co-editor of The Bangor Literary Journal and has been curating art and poetry exhibitions for the last six years. He has performed at Aspects Festival, Dublin Book Festival and many spoken word events throughout Ireland. Paul has had work published in several journals and had a successful interactive solo exhibition of his poetry and photography 'Poetry through Pictures'. He regularly exhibits his work in galleries and group exhibitions including North Down Museum, Bangor, Donaghadee and Saintfield Library, The St Patrick's Centre and The Art of Caring exhibition. He was a winner in the National Trust's 2016 poetry competition and the Spectator photography exhibition in 2014. You can listen to his poetry on SoundCloud.

Joe Williams

Joe Williams is a former starving musician who transformed into a starving writer and poet in 2015, entirely by mistake. He lives in Leeds and appears regularly at events in Yorkshire and beyond. He has been published in numerous anthologies, and in magazines online and in print. In 2017 he won the prestigious Open Mic Competition at Ilkley Literature Festival and had his debut poetry pamphlet, 'Killing the Piano', published by Half Moon Books.

Morna Sullivan

Morna Writer/ Morna Sullivan is a fantastic writer and we are really delighted that she will be joining us on Saturday to read two pieces of her moving poetry. Here are some of Morna's publications and achievements....Morna has had: short stories published in Celtic Life International magazine; The Incubator, Scottish Book Trust website, 'Sixteen' magazine. Children's stories and poetry published in - 'The Launchpad', 2nd prize – UK SPCSW competition. She was the UK Divine chocolate poetry competition prizewinner', longlisted 'Haikus for NHS', shortlisted in Bangor Poetry competition, poems published in A New Ulster.

Anesu Mtowa

Anesu Mtowa is a member of the Executive Committee for the Northern Ireland Youth Forum; her poem 'Where am I from?' was published as a broadside by NIYF in October, 2017 for Black History Month. This poem was well received at the A Hundred Thousand Voices of Freedom Belfast event for National Poetry Day. Further poems also appeared in FourXFour Poetry Journal from Poetry NI in January 2018 and the Seamus Heaney Resonance Poetry Anthology. Anesu is a cast member in the Vagina Monologues which shows in the Black Box and the Lyric Theatre. Anesu also enjoys pursuing art.