

I AM WATER



**Featuring work created at The Aspects Literary
Festival Poetry & Paddleboarding Workshop**

Ruth Fitzgerald
Iain McCarthy
Clark Chambers
Paul Daniel Rafferty

Zoe McGrath
Luke McArdle
Katie Taggart
Amy Louise Wyatt



'The Mermaid and the Kelp' by Alice Wyatt

About

'I am Water' showcases the work produced by participants of the 'Poetry and Paddleboarding' event which was part of Aspects Literary Festival 2021.

The paddleboarding session was run by Sup Hub NI at Bangor Marina, where participants were inspired to connect with the water and gain confidence on their boards. The poetry workshop was led by Amy Louise Wyatt, the theme being 'I am Water', encouraging the participants to explore their senses and their ability to become part of something greater.

Many thanks to Patricia from Aspects Festival for making this happen.

We hope you enjoy the resulting poems.

Cover artwork: 'The Mermaid and the Kelp', a collagraph by Alice Wyatt.

'I am Water' edited by Amy Louise Wyatt for The Bangor Literary Journal.

Sup Hub NI website: <https://suphubni.com/>

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I am

...Water

Lapping at the shore, presenting autumnal debris as an offering to gulls and wagtails rummaging for shallow treasure. These linear layers of my ebb tell a new story with every tide upon which I rise, to remove and then re-present this collection of materials.

...Exposed

Santa Maria dry-docked above the water, looking perfect from afar. The closer I get to the hulking behemoth that she is, I see her frayed at the seams and edges. Out of the water, we feel naked, exposing the reality, not the dream.

...Wind

A force (5) to be reckoned with. Feel my whistles, whips and whines as I scatter you into positions of discomfort and panic. Forcing these paddlers back to where they entered the water, making them ask of themselves *why am I here?* and carrying them on a journey to *should I have done this?* I mustn't relent, or else they will win.

...Industry

On the pontoon below *the world's most ignored sign*, one fisherman tends to his bait while another sorts his catch for distribution. The lifecycle of an industry hidden from view, moments from home. This pontoon should be a stage to the world, showcasing the graft and energy that goes into providing your next *catch of the day*.

...Sea

Slowly turning and changing direction of my flow, today I react only to the gentle caress of the breeze and the rare vessel gouging the skin of my surface. My mood is determined by wind from other places—it affects me deeply. Yet, crazy to think that something I cannot control and happens so far away, determines my behaviour. A metaphor for modern life perhaps?

...Connected

To people I do not know, sharing the idea that we are *out of our depth*, they on water, yet me on paper. As we share thoughts and words, I am reminded once again—that no matter how different we are, there is always more to connect us, than push us apart.

By Iain McCarthy

Observations at Bangor Marina

At certain times of the day the views are magnificent:
especially that time between the sun retiring and the moon awakening—
it makes for such a nice evening, so picturesque.

We land at the beach for a few minutes to relax:
take in surroundings—
rockpools forming for claspits to cling to,
seagulls hovering, hunting out crabs and lobsters.

We walk on seaweed:
when dry—I listen to its crunchiness,
when wet—so slippery.

By Ruth Fitzgerald

Avoiding Danger

As the saying goes:
avoid the rocks,
avoid the swimmers,
avoid the fishermen.

By Ruth Fitzgerald

Once again

Gentle lulling of the sea—
once again you beckon me,
caressing waves upon the shore,
transporting me to years before.

By Ruth Fitzgerald

Breaking

Fishermen's sound waves breaking but not breaking me.
The shimmering faux gold of the sunlight will not set me free.

I live by the ocean and it lives by me.
Salinity making me hungry to devour more than I can be.

But the pain, the aching in my exposed skin and eyes
is bringing me back to where I really am.

Will this still be with me when once again I'm no longer free?

In my mind, I can float, breaking loose from my moorings,
drifting while the isolated voices break through to me.

Words with no meaning resound through my mind from faces I can't see.

Like waves on the sea.
Break down my shoreline like waves from the sea.

But I sleep. And when I dream, I can feel that ocean rhythm,
moving through me, rocking me gently, keeping me safe.

From harm.

Harboured and anchored.

By Clark Chambers

Paddleboarding Micros

A fishing boat,
nets, crates;
starfish cling to concrete,
hide behind columns.

Ankles burning hot,
knees shake
as back breaks—
finally standing.

Unexpected dip,
water running down
my back:
I am the ocean.

Bitter taste of salt.
Enveloped
by ice cold sea.
Finally feeling free.

By Paul Daniel Rafferty

One With The Water

Inches from death, in it, but hovering above it.
The spherical wrecking ball that is the sea —
Destroyer of Worlds, essential for life, and death.

Meet gentle with smooth caress.
Wearing the sea like a robe,
dressed in the water, free of the world —
back to the beginning.

I am the sea: The Great Respector.
Giver of death, catalyst for life.
With every disrespect I become greater —
the world changes at my will.

Sounds and sights are mine.
Light slows, sound echoes,
what is, is not.
What was, is no more —
whether you stand confident,
or hold nervous to your neck.

By Luke McArdle

Killard

All seas connect to Killard:
a paddle with the dogs,
a skimming stone thrown,
a place to silence our thoughts,
or to be with them.

A mighty force in winter,
with waves pounding and erupting,
like an active volcano;
a serene and silent lapping
against the pebbles in summer.

How we needed that beach,
that view, that natural beauty.
Our world turned upside down.
This time it was very hard —
but in our hearts, we will always have Killard.

By Katie Taggart

paddleboarding at bangor marina

even the air is crystalised—
salt piles forming in my eyes
women turning on their own perspectives

tens of starfish speak to me—
under the water they sing to me—
happy to be witnessed

i open my mouth for air—
there is only brine
above & under at the same time

no longer part of land
no outlook belongs to me—
yet the ocean applauds

celebrates the moments
when my legs are almost—
strong enough to let me stand

By Amy Louise Wyatt

I am water...

Green depths of darkness stir stillness amidst my moonlit tides.
A compass, I dance to the sea's sombre ripples—
Unknown to my mind where she may lead.
Elements dispersing vast space beneath blankets of salty wash.
Ragged edges smack with groans against rocks—
Splashes from tumbling seals who seek their mermaid masters.

I am water...

I clamber to high ground encased in droplets—
Then descend mountain trails, rivers and creeks.
Water is mostly me!
Sadness reels me to the hook of the calm mineral well
Of Bangor Bay's peaceful water's deep.

Water becomes me...

By Zoe McGrath

About the contributors

Iain McCarthy

A reformed Banker, Iain and his family moved (back) to Bangor in 2016 and are enjoying sharing their love of the water, with a town that has a lot of water to love. (Sup Hub NI)

Ruth Fitzgerald

Ruth enjoys paddleboarding and experiencing nature. She is an active member of the local community.

Clark Chambers

Clark Chambers is an occasional writer from Bangor County Down. He views writing, literature and music as an escape from reality, and hopes that something he creates will offer that same freedom to another.

Paul Daniel Rafferty

Paul is a poet and photographer from Bangor. He is the co-editor of The Bangor Literary Journal and writes from his writer's room at The Blackberry Path Art Studios on Gray's Hill.

Luke McArdle

Luke is an undergraduate of English at Ulster University, after years of job-hopping he began soul searching. He had always found solace in writing and at the age of 30, decided to return to University and surround himself in the English language. Eighteen months into his three-year degree and he couldn't be happier. This is his first ever published poem, there will be many more.

Katie Taggart

Katie is a nurse and a people person. In her spare time she likes outdoor adventures, hiking, beach walks, paddle boarding, always up for a new activity. She is a lover of good food and travel. She is also a lover of the movies and enjoys a night at the flix.

Amy Louise Wyatt

Amy is a poet, artist and lecturer from Bangor. She is the founding editor of The Bangor Literary Journal. Her debut pamphlet is 'A Language I Understand' published by Indigo Dreams.

Zoe McGrath

Zoe is a writer and creative from Bangor, who loves the water. Zoe has had poetry published and has read at events in Northern Ireland. She enjoys being one with nature and the sea.



Photo Credit: Aspects Literary Festival