

**ANNIE
ERIC
HELEN
JIM
MOLLY
TOMMY**

**A collection of writing and artwork created by Gateshead residents
working with writer Kate Fox and artist Tommy Anderson**



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Six glimpses into six lives...

This project is a result of lots of collaborations. Writer, stand up and journalist Kate Fox and visual artist, graphic designer and musician Tommy Anderson decided they wanted to collaborate on a project which would tell some overlooked Gateshead stories. Gateshead Council's Arts Development Team liked the idea and supported the project and gave us an exhibition space. Then we collaborated with six Gateshead people to tell elements of their stories using words and visuals. An exhibition and this booklet are the result.

The project was originally called 'Words on the Street' but, just as we improvised with each of the participants in how we worked with them to produce creative pieces, so we've gone with the flow on the project and renamed it to have the names of the six participants because it is about them, from them and for them. Ordinary Gateshead people who are extraordinary, everyday heroes, unsung voices, fellow creatives. They can't be summed up in these labels or in any of the work we've created. Think of this as a sneak peek into the worlds of some of the many amazing people who live here.

There were connections and disconnections. Alice in Wonderland came up three times and Gandhi twice, there are two passionate teachers, three people who changed course dramatically mid-life, several lovers of the beautiful and overlooked and lots of drinkers of tea. Kate found she was being a radio journalist (her original job) as much as a poet, as she listened to the patterns people made when they talked about their lives. What they said and didn't say.

Inspired by the diverse and thought provoking stories and narratives, Tommy used typography, graphic design, collage, aerosol art and photography to develop an equally diverse and exciting collection of artwork. Tommy also helped participants explore their own creative potential – experimenting with a range of art and design techniques.

Let's go down the rabbit hole...

Kate Fox



Kate Fox is a stand up poet who was born in Bradford. She has been a Poet in Residence on Radio 4's Saturday Live, Glastonbury Festival and the Great North Run. Her solo shows include "Poet in Residence", "The Starting Line" and "Kate Fox News", performed at venues including the Southbank Centre, Ilkley Literature Festival and the Edinburgh Fringe.

She has been commissioned to perform poems for BBC1, BBC2, Radio 3 and many Radio 4 shows. Publications include "Fox Populi" from Smokestack Books and "We Are Not Stone" from Ek Zuban Press as well as the "Makin News Mysteries", topical comic crime novellas co-authored with Alfie Crow. She's won the Andrew Waterhouse Award from New Writing North, an Arts Council Time to Write award and a K Blundell Trust grant from the Society of Authors, as well as the Cheltenham Science Festival Slam, City of Culture Slam and runner up in the BBC Radio 4 National Slam.

She has taught and facilitated for the Arvon Foundation, First Story, Creative Partnerships and New Writing North. She is currently doing a PhD in performance at Leeds University. Radio 4 broadcasts her two half hour comedy shows "The Price of Happiness" in May 2015.

She originally trained as a radio journalist and worked at Metro Radio and Galaxy Radio in Manchester and Newcastle. www.katefox.co.uk

Tommy Anderson



Tommy Anderson is an experienced visual artist, graphic designer and musician – delivering progressive participatory and educational arts programmes inspired by his practice. He is passionate about providing creative opportunities for people who wouldn't usually have access to the arts, and offers mentoring for those wishing to develop their creative skills and explore progression routes within the arts.

Tommy's practice combines photography, typography, aerosol art, visual/audio collage and music – celebrating beauty in the mundane and overlooked. Exhibitions have featured typography, aerosol art, animation and audio installations.

As a member of award winning band 'Guessmen' he has released a number of studio recordings and remixes on international labels, performed across the UK, and produced soundtracks for film, animation and television.

Tommy has also created a number of short films and animations bringing attention to issues such as homelessness, recovery from addiction, child poverty and knife crime – see vimeo.com/tommyanderson.

To see and hear more of Tommy's work visit www.baselineshift.co.uk



**I GET STRAIGHT
TO THE POINT
BUT SOME PEOPLE
DON'T LIKE
THE POINT.**

ANNIE.

We saw an article about centenarian Annie Murphy online. Turns out, after an article about her talk about her life in a Gateshead school, literally dozens of media outlets got in touch with her. She did interviews, walked along care home corridors for TV cameras and talked some more about her life. Then got a bit fed up of all the attention as she insists *"I'm just ordinary"*. Luckily, once we'd got in touch with the home's brilliant activities co ordinator Deb Carter, who'd arranged Annie's talks to schools, we were in. Annie's one hundred and one year old senses are as sharp as anybody's – apart from her hearing, so she said it was probably best if she just started talking. Sat in an armchair she painted a picture of a life long gone for an hour. Recurring themes were teaching and learning – she'd had to battle to become a teacher, supported by her miner uncles, maths and numbers and battleaxes. She talked about former mining village, Chopwell, where she grew up, which used to be Little Moscow, characters like the 'Red Dean' and the way the community pulled together in hard times. Her strong political statements inspired a constructivist feel to Tommy's design. The numbers that wove through her story made Kate want to write a ballad type poem. She took the draft to Annie and was relieved when she read it through and kept saying *"Yes, that's right"*. Sometimes very old people are congratulated just for being very old but Annie should be congratulated for sticking to, and living her principles all the one hundred and one years of her life.

Mrs Murphy and the Maths

Good food plus good exercise plus good genes
can equal living to one hundred and one,
but Annie Murphy's life has had many parts,
and she adds up to even more than the sum.

Her Uncles educated themselves,
scholars with a life down the mines,
Shakespeare and Dickens, "A Tale of Two Cities",
helped her break her home's bounds and confines.

A battleaxe of an infant school teacher
tried to take away her enthusiasm for learning
but she got all her sums right, passed the eleven plus,
a passion for justice already burning.

Refusing to say she was proud of the Empire,
unafraid to speak out and defy,
when her name went up on the Honours Board,
she wanted to spit in that Headteacher's eye.

Three miles walk to school every day,
then three miles home at the bell,
and many said girls didn't need books or exams,
they should be learning to sew and not spell.

She had to wait a year for her first job,
the Depression had taken its toll,
though in Little Moscow they faced it together,
fractions forming a whole.

Her Uncles advised her about budgets,
when she was in digs training for life as a teacher,
said it was like arithmetic you had to work out,
their values her lifestyle's defining feature.

The 3Rs and Times Tables still ruled back then,
chalk and talk and tradition,
but Annie said the school belonged to its children,
student democracy, her special addition.

She wanted them to say what they thought,
discuss how to divide up the milk,
told one Headteacher she made the children afraid,
couldn't stand dictators and those of that ilk.

The boy who asked if there was a God in the sky,
the one with a plastic bag and string round his shoes,
the little girl whose parents went out all night,
her belief you should sympathise and DO.

If children haven't slept or been fed,
there's something vital missing from the equation,
she knew she also needed to work with the parents,
try warnings and gentle persuasion.

She lived through a second world war,
her memories spool as the hour hands tock,
the caretaker asks "What will the inspector say?"
a hundred kids Twisting to "Rock Around the Clock".

The husband she left in her forties,
at a time when divorce wasn't done,
the former pupils saying thank you sixty years on,
the adventures of her academic son.

She says there are three films everybody should watch,
as part of their essential education,
Cry Freedom, Gandhi and Oh What a Lovely War,
mirrors of her own values and dedication.

She admires those who act for the common good,
like Mandela and Gandhi and Benn,
did it herself for the school children she encouraged
to take up the book and the pen.

Inspiring them to speak their minds,
in the way that she used her own voice,
still full throated at a hundred and one,
saying a vote is a right and a choice.

Furious at politicians of today with their calculators,
urging the accumulation of wealth,
Gove's "new ideas" she used seventy years ago,
the emphasis they put on the self.

So Annie is sharing her own stores of knowledge
with rapt students from this new generation,
she knows times are hard for these youngsters as well,
they could use some of her grit and self-motivation.

Equality is still a long way off,
but she reads the Guardian every day,
steamed puddings and books and care home staff who listen
encourage her to keep having her say.

Dozens of interviews with the media fascinated,
by the formula for how long you can live,
though in the end it's not the age you have reached,
but what you do with the days that you give.

Annie Murphy has outlasted the century,
but it's the quality of her life not the amount,
her lifetime of teaching and learning,
the way she has made it all count.

The legacy of standing up for your values,
in deeds as well as in thought,
life as a sum where the answers
live on in the thousands she has taught.

Kate Fox



DON'T JUST SYMPATHISE,

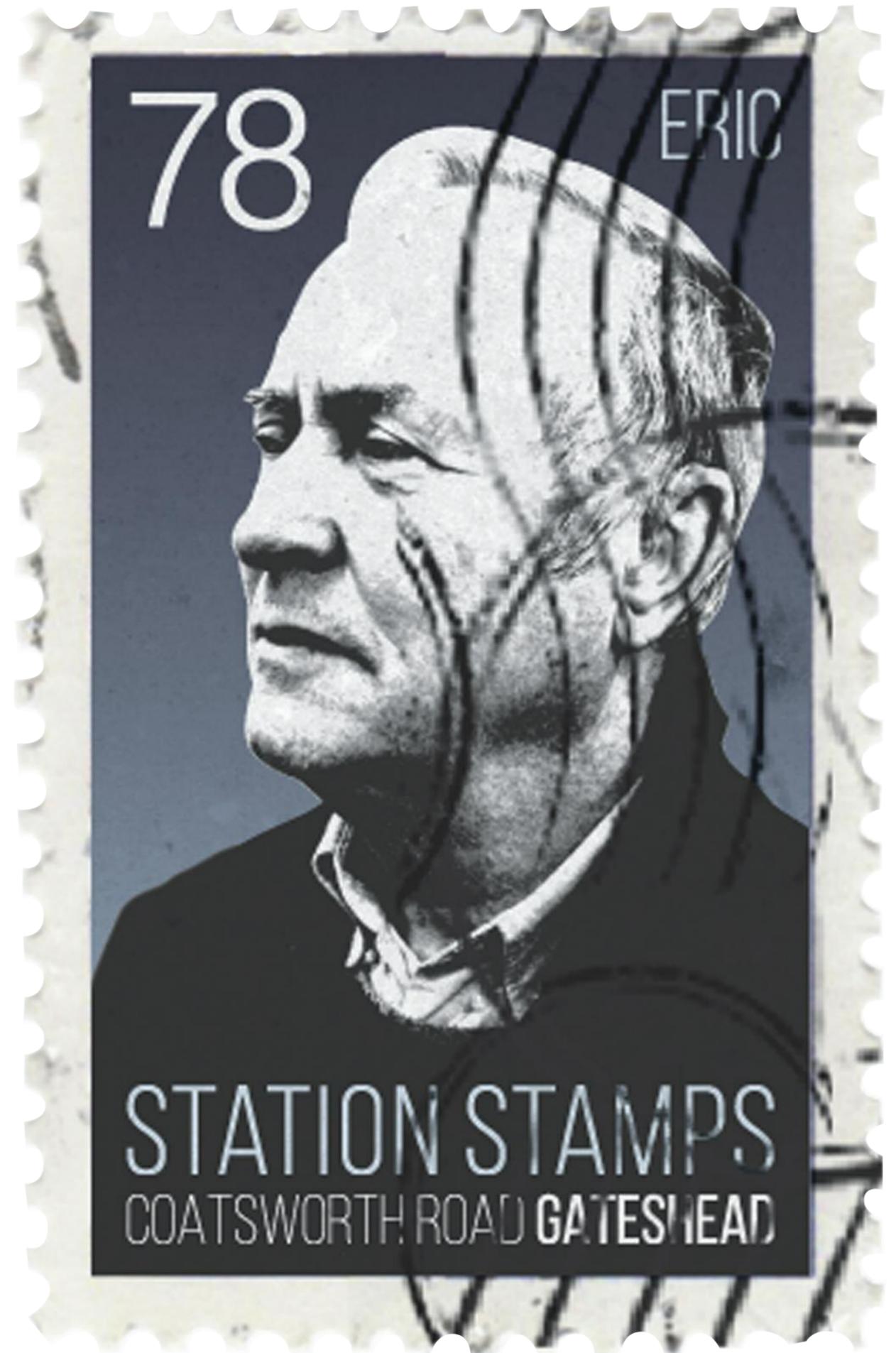
DO

SOMETHING.

IT'S **WHAT YOU DO** IN LIFE
THAT MAKES YOU
WHAT YOU ARE.

ERIC.

Tommy buys stamps and postcards from Eric's stamp shop on Coatsworth Road and could see how he was a sort of community hub for all the disparate people who collect stamps and stay to chat. He and his shop also seemed to symbolise something about Coatsworth Road itself where the Jewish bakers and the Indian sit alongside the Chinese takeaway. Stamps and envelopes from all over the world pass through here and tell thousands of stories. Among the teetering piles of boxes, the box files, the lovingly sorted collections and the random memorabilia, Eric talked about his Grandson and his former life at the Davey Rolls factory, about his stamp sourcing trips to Australia and Penny Blacks. He built a collage of words which Kate has ordered into verse. Tommy then designed a stamp featuring Eric which was hidden amongst a montage of other used portrait stamps from Eric's shop. Each individual stamp a work of art in itself, and the door to a hundred more stories...



POST CARD



Every stamp tells a story,
there are thousands in this shop,
Coatsworth Road in Gateshead,
is just their temporary stop.

Guarded by Eric,
whose stamps have made him free,
hailed in New Zealand by fellow collectors;
"Eric! Come and have a cup of tea!"

Eric used to be a collector too,
then gave his best stamp away,
realised he could have the best job in the world,
made his passion his pay.

Letters sent from zeppelins,
coins and silks in stack after stack
and "The one that everybody wants,"
young Victoria, a Penny Black.

Regulars like Jewish barber Mr Isaac,
who slept in a chair in case he died in bed,
a roadsweeper, a priest, a High Court Judge,
levelled by a Penny Red.

You can explore in there for hours,
if there's not something you need to find
- a postcard from the Hindenberg,
- a picture Lawel and Hardy have signed.

Letters carrying long forgotten tragedies
folded up inside.
Peggy ate laburnum seeds on a Sunderland school trip,
How sad it was that she died."

The postcard that reached
"Miss Smith, lives with her Granny, Boldon",
pleas for loans and thanks
memories of when Buffalo Bill
strode through Hexham firing blanks.

Phyllis Zena in Cinderella,
the starlets who never had good teeth,
Whickham High Street in black and white,
Concorde letters glitter with gold leaf.

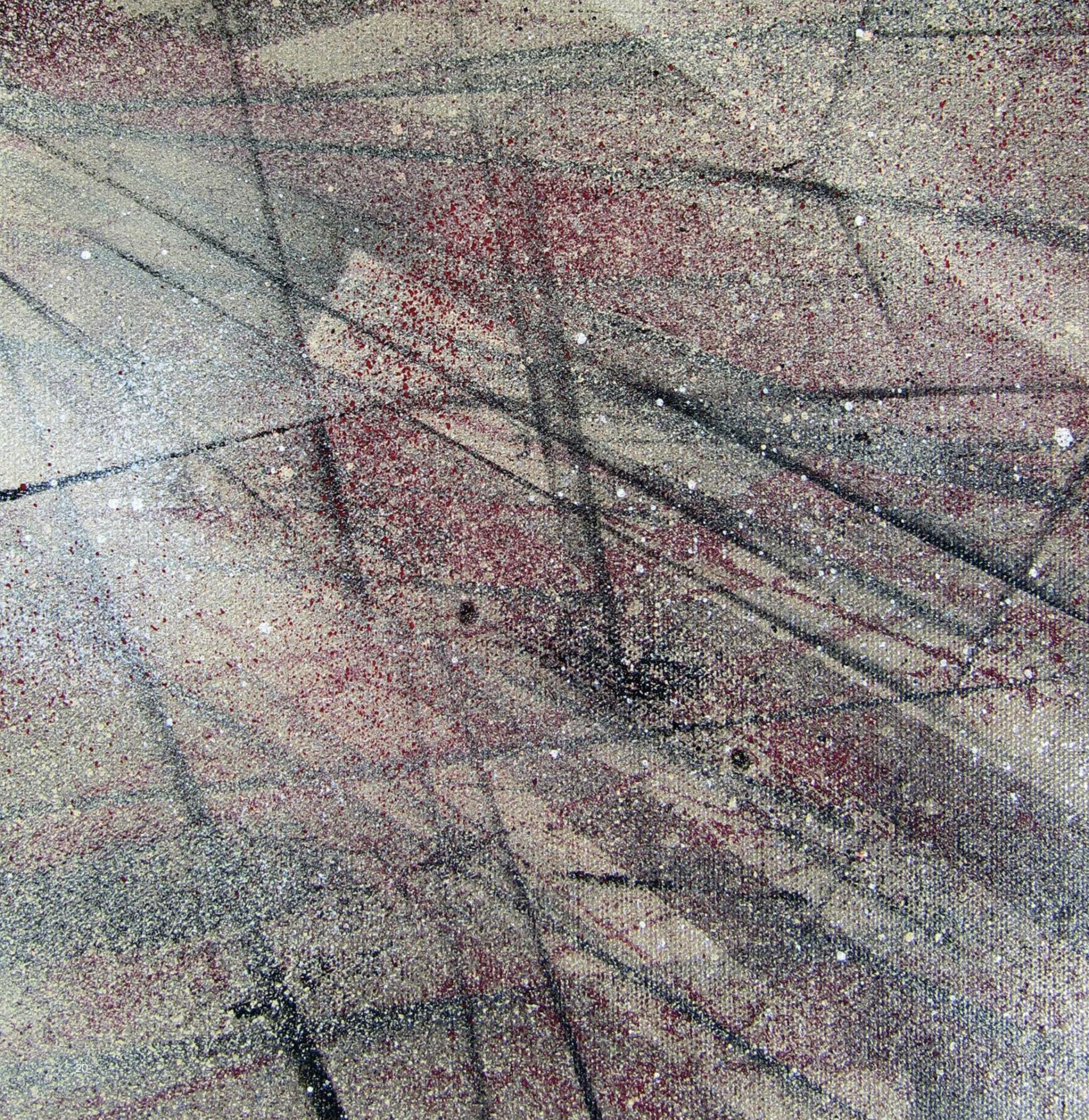
The Upside Down Equilibrist,
war letters cut by the censor's knife.
"I love you," "You are missed,"
"Will you be my wife?"

A shopkeeper berating a gossip
"People in glass houses should not throw stones,"
history becoming news again,
re-stored in collectors homes.

Coatsworth Road is an intersection
where all these stories have crossed,
the Jewish baker, the Indian, the sari shop,
a community so many streets have lost,

and Eric is Gateshead's Mr Benn,
new worlds behind his little shop door,
magic portals on paper
to a world that is no more.

Kate Fox



HELEN.

Helen Burrell is a primary school teacher who loved her job. The moment when kids 'get it' for the first time. She's a Mum of two girls and she has advanced breast cancer. Who is she now if she can't be a teacher any more? The identity of a breast cancer sufferer doesn't seem a fair exchange. She's got a purse full of loyalty cards to various coffee shops and keeps getting told she looks 'really well'. She enjoys singing in an acappella choir and also writing. She and Kate worked over cake in Gateshead and did some free writing exercises. Helen was surprised when her Dad came up. She misses him. The solidity of his hands at a time when she needs support (but is fiercely independent). Another of the exercises was about instructions for something. Helen wrote 'Instructions For Getting Through The Day With Cancer'. Tommy turned some of these instructions into bright statements of hand drawn typography; Helen's writing about her Dad's hands also inspired Tommy to create a textural piece using spray paint, 'His Hands', (opposite).

Instructions To Get Through The Day With Cancer

Start at night – yes you need a good night's sleep.
Everyone says so. But how do you switch the brain off?

Gather your sheep.
Allow them a small graze each then
guide them into the pen.

Ok, sheep settled. Comfy pillows? Check.
Water next to bed.
Check.
Oromorph to hand? Check.

PJs on, then off, on, off.
God damn hot flushes.

Hopefully you wake slightly refreshed.
Allow your hands and feet a few minutes to wake up,
otherwise walking to the loo can be tricky.

First wee of the day.
Relax.
Contemplate the Movicol for later.

Breakfast – 12 tablets and juice.
Not grapefruit, it interferes with enzymes.

Deep scan quickly. New aches?
Anything to worry about?
Fire up iPad for Google.

Check calendar – hospital?
Psych? St Oswalds?
No, just Starbucks with friends.

Put on some clothes, layers for easy removal during flushes.
High neck to hide scars. Flat, comfy shoes are essential.

Go for coffee. Answer many questions about health,
chemo etc.
Accept offers of help with kids, hospital visits etc.

Phone makes a strange noise. Oops. Doctor visit at 1pm.

Eat a bag of crisps – quick body scan shows a few pains.
Realise you haven't taken midday pills. Grab pills – head for surgery.

Sit in a separate room to wait – can't be in with the properly poorly people.

Doctor compliments you on how you look.
Third person of the day.
Begin to feel guilty for looking so well.

Pop to Sainsburys.

Buy four things you didn't need
and forget three you did.

Home – rest as fatigue hits.

Eyes close as you sit down.

Snore for five minutes until phone rings.
Shout at PPI robot.

Try again and watch Police Interceptors until 3pm.

Helen Burrell

Doctor compliments you

ON HOW YOU

LOOK

Third person of the day

Begin to feel

GUILTY

for *looking so well*

*Eyes close
as you sit down*

snore

for five minutes

until *phone rings*

SHOUT

at **PPI ROBOT**

His Hands

My dad's hand was thick and rough. His nails were short, not bitter but worn down. Hands that built things. Not brilliant things, but objects he was proud of. A shed in the garden, the bench stained with his blood from a wavering saw, a shelf lightly lopsided. He would sharpen my pencils with a knife when I'd lost my sharpener. I used to pretend it was lost because I loved watching him work. In his hands I felt safe. My favourite baby picture is him holding me in both hands. "My little crumple bum" he said. Small enough to fit in his palm. Those hands were my safe house. Always ready for a hug and a soothing pat on the back. "Come on Missus, you'll be okay". The rough, scarred texture is imprinted on my mind; a sensory memory more vivid than his voice. He had a scarred, lopsided face but his hands, to me, were just how a Dad's should be.

Helen Burrell

Loss and Pride

Loss sounds like an empty bell
or a tree falling in a forest with no one to hear it.

It tastes like my Dad's corn beef hash.
Loss looks like a monkey puzzle tree,
smells like Hai Karate.

Loss feels like Alice falling down the rabbit hole

Pride feels like an over-inflated balloon about to pop.

Tastes like a home made bun left on the teacher's desk.

Sounds like my daughter ringing to say she's got a commendation,
smells like shortcake biscuits baked for a charity night
and a loaf of bread in the breadmaker.

Pride looks like a child's face when they've got it.

Helen Burrell

JIM.

Reverend Jim Craig is the country's only arts chaplain and works from the Sanctuary Artspace on Gateshead High Street. He spends his life encouraging other people to create and express themselves but it turns out, as with many facilitators, he doesn't always allow himself the same space he gives others. In another life he might have been an artist – though perhaps then he would have yearned to be a Vicar. He and Tommy share a mutual love of capturing the overlooked and mundane through photography, so they set off on adventures around Gateshead's streets to see what they could find. Editing the photographs they produced a series of composite images which Kate then used to set off a conversation which turned out to be about the beauty of brokenness. Despite Jim's protestations about not being a poet, she found he spoke in rich simile and metaphor which she edited and has included here, along with some free writing she got him to do and which turned into a sort of artist's statement. Labyrinths also kept coming up – which inspired her poem about Theseus and the Minotaur. Artists and priests have lots in common it seems – including a willingness to visit places in the world and in the mind that others avoid.



I RESPONDED
AT IMPORTANT
TIMES IN MY LIFE

LIKE A BALL
OF STRING
HELD TIGHTLY

TOGETHER
BY MEMORIES.

Fragments

"These fragments I have shored against my ruins". – TS Eliot

I look for cracks in things that are broken.
It's like the glass slipper.
Anything can be beautiful if it's temporary.

A piece of worn out brown glass picked up on Alnmouth Beach.
I could squeeze it tight without getting cut.
There's beauty in our own frustrations.

I like design when there's not meant to be design.
Like the manhole cover.
It's designer, really pissed off cos no one notices.

The red dots on the chair in Costa Coffee.
Someone cared enough to delight my eye.

I need the camera,
forced detachment.
A camera phone is security,
a prayer book.

At first the iPhone was
an alien artefact of the future,
now it's a comfort blanket.
A way of framing the world.
Illicit. A private view.

Creativity is more revealing than nudity.

Dear Sir,
the sense you have to make in a letter
when I want to say "Blue, Black".

An audience helps you reveal the story.
Paint it up and scrape it off.
You're painted on like a front.
Everyone needs a front.
Exposing and painting off
almost like a trauma.

Scraping on and off.
Years of eczema.
Red, sore skin.
Invisible scars.
Avoiding the heat and clamminess of the gym,
the ridicule of school friends.
Creativity, the balm.

Maybe the path of brokenness
is a way not to be an adult.
The grouting on the floor tiles
could be the beginning of the path.

Wandering through the day like a holy fool.
Like St Francis.
Confessing things.
Wanting to shock them
by skipping down the street.
A man in a pub says
"I've never heard a Vicar laugh before".
If you can surprise people
you might as well do it spectacularly.
I dream up new routes home
to make it more interesting.

I need to dream and walk into lampposts.
The number of times I do it while texting.
I think of the bump as an Angel telling you to look up.

Edited by Kate Fox from conversations with Reverend Jim Craig



Broken

Broken is...everywhere and nowhere

...a state of mind

...familiar

...a safe place to start

How I relate to the world.

An abrupt reminder that I am alive and part of a larger world of emotion, and feeling and memory and pain.

A point of contact.

A place of familiarity.

I remember feelings and emotions rather than facts and objects and places.

I remember too exactly how I felt and how I responded at important times in my life like a ball of string held tightly together by memories.

Brokenness is a badge that gives you access to the people you meet and the people you have yet to meet...

...like the words running through a stick of rock – a necessary comfort in life. Something that adds texture and flavour but also makes things brittle.

Brokenness is the entrance to the labyrinth.

Jim Craig

The Substitution

Theseus feels he has no choice
but to follow the thread
into the labyrinth.

Especially when we ask him:
“Are you insured?
Have you done a risk assessment?”.

Or say:
“Minotaurs are dangerous you know,
you’ll get a disease,
you’ll pick up fleas”.

We question:
“What’s the point?
Do you know where you’re going?
Isn’t there a better signposted path
you could be following?”.

Theseus grasps the yarn
while we fuss.

Tempted to point out
he is only doing this
on behalf of all the rest of us.

Kate Fox





MOLLY.

Molly is a creative sixteen year old who goes to Lord Lawson of Beamish Academy in Gateshead. We encountered her because she's a Reading Activist at Birtley Library and has been involved in organising events to get young people into libraries. These have involved things like Anime (Japanese comics) and Cosplay (Dressing up – often as characters from films or fiction) and, as we sat over orange squash in the community room on a rainy day at Birtley Library, Molly told us about when she dressed up as the Red Queen from Alice in Wonderland. She and Kate did some free writing around the Red Queen character and it felt like Molly had a strong manifesto emerging about being free to be yourself and not be judged, so Kate merged Molly and the Red Queen's voices together. Tommy then produced a hand drawn typographic artwork that invites the reader to make their own way through 'Molly's Manifesto and the Words of the Red Queen' – creating their own statements and narratives (see p38/39). The library is a safe space but the world outside can be full of people who are less open to the possibilities of creativity. Molly and Tommy set off around Birtley High Street and the library itself with a camera and a handful of Tommy's 'little people' (and little animals!). Creating scenarios for the little people within these surroundings Tommy guided Molly to capture a series of macro photographs – seeing the world from a whole different perspective – like Alice.

I THINK I WANT TO HOW PEOPLE ALWAYS SAY SHE I THINK I WANTED LET'S ALL THEY I WOULD
THAT LIVE COME BE STOLE I NEED TO GET TO PLAY SAY IS THAT SEND
I'M IN A WORLD WHEN I'M MYSELF YOURSELF, BUT IF YOU DO MY
HUNGRY. WE CAN MYSELF IT'S A IT'S NOT HAT MY
BE OURSELVES. PROBLEM? ALLOWED. HAT MY
ENJOY IF I AM OFF TO THE BUT TO ONE THERE'S NOTHING BUT SKIP BEFORE ALL THAT WELL
WHAT YOU DO MYSELF SOMEONE WITH WORLD YOU MAY BE PERSON YOU MAY BE INTO I DIE SAY I WELL
AND NEVER SOMEONE WILL ITS ONE PERSON YOU MAY BE INTO I DIE SAY I WELL
WORK A DAY RESPECT HEAD PERSON WORLD, THIS PLACE. 138 WILL BE THAT I I CAN,
IN YOUR ME. HEAD PERSON WORLD, THIS PLACE. 138 WILL BE THAT I I CAN,
LIFE. ME. HEAD PERSON WORLD, THIS PLACE. 138 WILL BE THAT I I CAN,
NOW I AM I WANT TO LET I WANT I WANT THEY I SHOULD I THINK I WILL SEND
AN MY OWN PERSON AND IT'S TO LET I WANT I WANT THEY I SHOULD I THINK I WILL SEND
ADVENTURE BACK TO WONDER LAND MY LIFE BE ME MY IT ARE BE ALL THE
LAND MY LIFE BE ME MY IT ARE BE ALL THE HATTER
BEAUTIFUL. HOW I WANT TO. JABBER WOcky. ALL. SO MYSELF AND YOU SHOULD BE YOURSELF. FREE. UNCHAINED.



Alice

There are long corridors,
square rooms and rectangular desks
where they want you to get by without pictures
or conversations.

The signposts point two ways at once
and the white rabbit rings a bell at regular intervals
to tell you that you were already too late
by about forty years.

Screens flash up instructions for you to drink and eat,
but as soon as you pluck the currants one by one
with hesitant fingers,
they tell you that you are too big,
then too small
to reach the key.

Don't see what you eat,
or eat what you see
and both ravens and writing desks are so last year.

A virtual grin made of commas
lingers in the air.

Somebody put caterpillars
in the Sensory Garden,
though the mushrooms were banned.

The Mad Hatter's on a zero hours contract
and the Queen hands out sanctions
like sentences,
to all those who have never played croquet.

You hold a hand of cards
for a game you've never been taught.

The mock turtle showers you
with "the best that's ever been said and thought"

which you brush off
as they turn into a pile of dead leaves.

Kate Fox

TOMMY.

Tommy Jobes originally trained as a mechanic because his Dad wanted him to go into the 'real work' of the motor trade. In other lives he would have wanted to be an archaeologist or an artist. Now he's got off the treadmill of a stressful job and is much happier balancing family responsibilities with the community centre he looks after at Windmill Hills and feeling that his life has a much deeper purpose and meaning now. We talked to him while all sorts of people used the centre to talk, play snooker, watch telly, drink tea and plan projects. Tommy was really open to a sort of guided reflection on his life, in conversation with Kate, which has become 'The Road' (see next page) – a moment to escape the chaos of everyday life. To illustrate the writing Tommy projected typography on top of broken headlight and indicator covers, diagrams of car engines printed onto acetate and transparent coloured waste plastic to create a series of rich, layered images.



The Road

I'm driving off the beaten track,
at the wheel of one of those buses you see on Indian films,
chaos.
All those people just hanging on by their fingertips,
on the roof, out the windows.
I'm at ease, I'm content.
We don't know where we're going
but that's alright.

I reached a crossroads after school.
Only three signposts.
Apprenticeships, Cooncil and a hidden one.
That said "Archaeology and History".
My father was up a set of ladders
taking that sign down;
"The motor trade – that's real work".
The ladders were always being cut down.

Being a mechanic was like being on Otterburn Army Range
or the Somme,
in the trenches.
I was in the grind of it,
switched off,
alone.
I was in overdrive,
a cheetah,
it was all coming at me.

What component is missing?
What was missing from the motor of the motor trade?
For me it was purpose.

The government was a Lada estate,
full of politicians in suits and bowler hats.
The fuel in the tank is the working man.
Birds upside doon,
dead on the road,
politicians driving past with smiles on their faces.

But the community centre is the camshaft sprockets,
people are the fuel.
The groups are the timing belt,
the accelerator is the management group.
One part doesn't work without the others.
The belt tensioner is keeping everything in place.
Tensions of society, funding, bills.

I drive it
to our unknown destination.
Now, I'm a gazelle,
leaping and bounding.

One day you hope you might meet a Perfect Stranger
at the side of the road,
someone like Gandhi,
a hare at the Mad Hatter's Tea Party.
Not a grey stranger with ulterior motives
whose book doesn't match their colour.

I still ask what the missing component is.
I liked art at school,
drew a firework of colours
with a black dot at the centre.
What is the black dot?
The audience would be drawn in,
they would ask about the black dot.
Life is a kiddies painting box
and it's up to the artist to choose their own colours.

I'm still driving that bus
but you never arrive.
At the end of your own journey
another driver takes over.
The destination is a bottomless well,
a black dot on the horizon.

Tommy Jobes, with Kate Fox

I'm driving off the beaten track,
at the wheel of one of those buses you see on Indian films,

chaos.

All those people *just hanging on*
on the roof, out the windows,
the roof, out the windows,
by their fingertips,

I'm at ease, I'm content.

We don't know where we're going
but *that's alright.*





Top to the Shops

Buy four things
you didn't need

AND FORGET
THREE YOU DID

