

# a common wealth of writing *people, place, passion*

## Foreword

The motto for the 2014 Glasgow Commonwealth Games is 'People, Place, Passion.' To celebrate this upcoming historic event, staff and students from New College Lanarkshire's Learning Centre in Low Moss took a virtual tour of Commonwealth countries to learn more about the places with which we share the bond of Commonwealth.

We visited African tribes, spent time in the bustling streets of Bombay, India, stood on the sandy shores of the Caribbean, travelled throughout European Commonwealth regions and explored the experiences of the indigenous peoples of the Pacific. And all without ever leaving the Learning Centre!

For the duration of this project, we were privileged to be joined by Katy Hastie, a Creative Writing student from the University of Glasgow, who shared with us her knowledge and enthusiasm for the Commonwealth. The project commenced with a historical overview of the British Empire and the birth of the Commonwealth Charter, before we examined the rich and diverse culture and customs of the people who populate Commonwealth countries.

Each week classrooms were a vibrant and bustling hive of activity. Many regular attendees were joined by numerous new learners as news of the project spread. The knowledge acquired was used to inspire this collection of creative writing on subjects such as identity, morality, myth, precious places and more. We would like to thank Celebrate It, Katy Hastie, Learning Centre staff and the students who embraced this project wholeheartedly, contributing work to this anthology.

**A Common Wealth of Writing** is the Low Moss Learning Centre's legacy to the 2014 Glasgow Commonwealth Games.

*Sarah McKee*  
New College Lanarkshire

## Commonwealth Project HMP Low Moss

Over the course of 10 weeks, in the run up to the Commonwealth Games, the Learning Centre in HMP Low Moss delivered a cross curricular timetable to encourage learners to consider the wider context of the Commonwealth by exploring the history, cultures and customs of the different countries of the Commonwealth.

As students became more immersed in the project, a significant body of work, including poetry, fiction, non-fiction and visual art form emerged. Those students who took part in the project have stated that they discovered new things about the world, about their own country and about themselves.

*This is conveyed in the work featured in this anthology.*

I would like to take this opportunity to thank staff in the Learning Centre for their dedication and professionalism and also the men who took part for their focus and commitment to the project.

*Michael Stoney*  
Governor, HMP Low Moss

### Commonwealth Poem

*Cold weather  
Orange tan  
Malt whiskey  
Magic  
Old firm  
Neds  
William Wallace  
Evening Times  
Arthur's Seat  
Loch Ness monster  
Tunnocks Tea-cakes  
High street*

*Great scenery  
Adam Smith  
Medals  
Edinburgh  
Sheep*

*Glasgow Queen Street  
Low Moss (HMP)  
Alex Salmond  
STV  
Gonnae no dae that!  
Och aye the noo!  
Winning*

*2 gether  
0 losers  
1 host city  
4 ever remembered*

*Sean C*

# Africa

The writing in this section was inspired by African ceremonial objects, as we considered their significance, before picking the personal artefacts that tell our own stories.

We similarly reflected on the role masks play in African culture before writing our own portrait poetry about the masks we wear and the truths they conceal. We also read about 'The Throne of Weapons', a sculpture created from weapons decommissioned following Mozambique's civil war, and thought about the negative things we too want to change into something more beautiful.

## *What I've Learned*

I've learned that Britain ruled two thirds of the world at one point and used slave labour to develop most of these countries.

I have learned a lot about how the Commonwealth started many years ago that there are loads of countries involved, some of which I've not heard of and that Britain has terrorised.

## *I Want to Change*

*Bullets into babies*

*Tears into triumph*

*Fear into freedom*

*Loss into life*

*Hurt into happiness*

*Jealousy into generosity*

*Grudges into gratitude*

*Negative into positive*

*Problems into opportunity*

*Rudi N*

## *If You Want to Know Me*

### *Photographs*

If you want to know me then take a look through some of my photographs from over the years. Some of them have been taken by my mother, some by my wife and some by me. Each one tells a story about certain times in my life, some good, some bad. Some I don't want to remember, some I can't forget.

*Chris W*

### *Harmonica*

In the 1940's my Grandad moved from Cork in Ireland to London to find work. He didn't take a lot with him but one thing he did bring was a small mouth organ that his own dad had given to him. He could not play it at the time but on his travels he learned to play it. He eventually passed it on to my dad when he was a young boy.

Since then I have had it passed to me. As a result I have learned to play the very same mouth organ. When the time comes I will pass it on to my son and tell him where and how I came to have it and the background behind it. This will tell him that his ancestors were musical and that we were once Irish and how our family travelled and moved over time in order to work and survive and live a life that we now take for granted.

*Gary G*

### *Bracelet*

If you want to know me...then I have to let you know that I am a sentimental person. I always keep things that remind me about an important fact about my life.

I keep in my possession a golden bracelet that I bought thirty years ago. My wife has exactly the same golden bracelet that we bought at the same time.

*Luis H*

## *If You Want to Know Me*

*If you want to know me  
Look at this piece of timber  
It was once a large oak tree  
Providing those around shelter  
Standing tall like a pillar in  
the wild*

*This is what I am provider of fuel  
Giving you the means to build  
a shelter  
Warming the place you can  
call home  
A light of your life now  
and always*

*Now look and see a matchstick  
maybe  
If you snap me I'm as sharp  
as a tack  
If you need me I will always  
be there  
Filling your heart with warmth  
and peace  
You know me well - your  
Grandmother*

*Christopher K*

*If you want to know me  
Examine with suspicious eyes  
This rucksack which I wear on my back  
Some lonely eastern worker, stitched  
by hand  
Suspect and deprived  
Out of sight.*

*This is what I am  
On the outside of the sack  
Two legs and two arms to grasp  
A mouth as a zip  
The skin is the colour of hard sand  
Inside the sack  
My Quran my heart and soul  
My compass my course  
My map my veins  
My photos my eyes  
My journal my mind*

*Manufactured one side of the world  
Used in another  
Travelled the land - rugged and worn  
Discreet and effective - useful but  
discarded  
A life of its own  
A wanderer – a roamer of the lands  
This is what I am*

*Naz U*

## *If You Want to Know Me*

*If you want to know me  
Examine with eagle eyes  
These trainers, Nike Air Max 95  
Made in China by some poor  
underpaid factory worker  
This is what I am*

*Air bubbles in the sole for  
maximum comfort  
Like a cuddle to console  
Reliable, made to last  
This is what I am*

*Kieran C*

*If you want to know me  
Examine with vigilant eyes  
This resilient rock  
Which fell from a great height  
And made a thunderous roar  
Separated from a mountain  
Through the deterioration of time  
An extension of Scotland herself  
This is what I am  
I stand stoic against the adversities of  
the seasons  
I am tranquil and composed  
As the world modifies and mutates  
around me  
Scotland born and bred  
This is what I am*

*Peter M*

*If you want to know me  
Examine with suspicious eyes  
This flick knife  
Which once was five separate parts  
All put together like many others  
In a factory in Spain*

*This is what I am  
A sharp and distrustful edge  
Out of nowhere sprung into action  
A wretchedness past  
With sorrow still to come  
This is what I am*

*Angus C*

## *If You Want to Know Me*

### *If you want to know me*

*Examine with astute eyes  
My personal book collections  
Written by all shapes and sizes:  
colours and creeds  
Scrawled and scripted: penned  
and published  
By iconic, insightful men and women  
From inside Greek amphitheatres  
to Roman villas  
Russian winter palaces to white clapboard  
farmhouses in apple pie American  
Midwest*

### *This is what I am*

*A gargantuan Russian novel-on-legs  
A good man who made some  
bad choices  
Coveting a future of utopian change  
and academic delights  
Having suffered pain and hardship  
Who once upon a time made others  
suffer the same  
But old habits die hard, especially  
in prison  
Some walnut brained people try  
to drag me back to Hell  
Now I am too strong to be led astray  
Perovading aspirations of University  
upon liberation  
While, in life, showing my son  
the way  
This is what I am*

**Kris M**

### *If you want to know me*

*Examine with inquisitive eyes  
My extensive CD collection  
These should show what makes  
me smile  
Reminding me of where I was  
and who was with me*

*Each of the CDs are the same  
as the next*

*Made up like us with the same  
materials*

*It's the context that differs and  
makes us smile*

*A rollercoaster of feelings, ups  
and downs  
and everything in-between*

*That's what they say we are all  
made equal in the eyes of God  
Same blue-print, eight pints of blood  
and free-will for all*

*It's the music on the disc that  
sets us apart  
In us the music, the soul and also  
the heart*

**Christopher K**

## *Mask*

### *Dalai Lama*

*Brownish eyes  
Charcoal, snowy hair  
1.75 metres tall and emaciated  
Nondescript other than a squint ear  
Disinterested, insouciant old man  
But...  
Appearances can be deceiving  
I am Himalaya  
As purple red as a Beaujolais wine  
I change  
I transcend  
I can unleash you  
I will unblock you  
I am a Himalaya*

**Andrew B**

### *Caramel*

*Brown eyes, curly eyelashes  
Short, dark brown hair  
Average height, broad shoulders  
Small scar beside my nose  
You look at me and see someone thought-  
ful, considerate, serious, still  
But...  
I am caramel  
I am orange as a burning flame  
I am moving, rising  
I am a performer  
I can do anything I set my mind to  
I will be positive  
I am caramel*

**Rudi N**

## Mask

### Volcanic Burst of Colour

Brown eyes  
Thinning brown hair  
Medium height, athletic build  
I have a scar under my mouth  
You look at me and see someone  
quiet, shy, nobody  
But...  
I am a volcano  
Colour of Northern Lights  
I bounce  
I dance  
I can  
I will fascinate you  
I am a volcano

Mark T

### The Night Sky

Brown eyes  
Brown but greying hair  
Medium height, getting fat  
I have my dad's bushy eyebrows  
You look at me and see a convict  
But...  
I am still a person  
Dark as the night sky  
I scream  
I fight  
I can survive  
I will get through this  
I am still a person

Robert H

### Scarred Star

Blue eyes  
Fluffy brown hair  
Big, broad shouldered  
I have scars on my wrists,  
from a distant past  
You look at me and see someone scared,  
lesser, an unimportant man  
But...  
I am a star  
Yellow as the sun  
I survive  
I shine  
I can bring you into the light  
I will shine bright  
I am a star

Allan B

## Mask

### Rock

Blue eyes  
Kinky, dirty fair hair  
Tall, athletic, powerful  
I am my father's image  
Although I carry my own scars  
You see a Maher, typical of my kin  
But...  
I am a rock  
Bold, dark grey  
I can pulverise all I touch  
I will live up to my reputation  
I am a rock

Peter M

### Sea Creature

Small, blue cloudy eyes  
Grey hair  
Medium build, with experience  
Old style Roman nose  
You look at me and see someone who's  
been around for some time  
But...  
I am a sea creature, I like to travel,  
coast to coast  
I am blue like the ocean  
I love to change  
I choose difference  
I can adapt  
I will be myself  
I am a sea creature, I like to travel,  
coast to coast

James M

### Mask

Large blue eyes  
Sparse, cropped hair  
Medium, stocky and broad  
Luckily no facial scarring  
Some people look at me and see a con  
prone to violence  
But...  
I am an academic coveting  
transformation  
I am as black as space  
I survive  
I overcome  
I can shed my old skin  
I will leave behind my old persona  
I am an academic

Kris M

## *Mask*

### *Magician*

Walnut brown hair  
Brown eyes  
Short and thin  
Second jaw line, spectacle of a scar  
You look at me and see someone  
average, timorous  
But  
I am a magician  
A rainbow of colour  
I change  
I glow  
I am good  
I will win  
I am a magician

*Jason B*

### *Tiger*

Greeny, blue eyes  
Thin, blondish hair  
Tall enough, stocky and strong  
I have the face of the young man I am  
When people look at me they see  
one of the troops  
But...  
I am a tiger in a locked cage  
Silver as prison bars  
I rage  
I roar  
I can escape  
I will succeed  
I am a tiger

*John M*

### *Fossil*

Brown eyes, small pupils  
Black hair, very short  
5ft 5inches, 10st 11lbs  
Beauty spot left of nose, little scar  
left of eyebrow  
People look at me and see  
someone young, just 21 years old  
But...  
I am a fossil  
Grey like metal  
I keep stories from the past printed  
on my heart  
I can be still  
I will keep steady  
I am a fossil

*Adil I*

## *I Want to Change*

### *I Want to Change*

Knives into knights  
Spears into spades  
Battles into beautiful blue birds  
Swords into strength  
Killing into kisses  
Guns into globes  
Weapons into wealthier nations  
Fear into freedom.

*Allan B*

### *I Want to Change*

Pain into softness  
Hurt into happiness  
Fear into hot weather  
Poverty into saving lives  
Wealth into smiles  
War into freedom  
Violence into peace  
Drugs into hugs

*Adil I*

## *I Want to Change*

*I Want to Change*  
Swords into silver  
Genocide into gold  
Pistols into paper  
Killing into knowledge  
Hate into honour  
Fear into freedom  
Sanctioned into sanctuary  
Evil into euthenics

*Jason B*

*I Want to Change*  
Hate into heart  
Power into peace  
Anger into forgiving  
Tears into smiles  
Tough into together  
Pistols into plants  
Crime into sunshine.

*James M*

## *I Want to Change*

*I Want to Change*  
Machetes into confetti  
Growling into howling  
Scars into cookie jars  
Hatred into something sacred

*I want to change*  
Baseball bats into cute little cats  
Rage into a performance stage  
Violence into a minutes silence  
Abuse into chocolate mousse

*Kieran C*

*I Want to Change*  
Domestic abuse into victories  
Swearing into songs  
Bullying into best friends  
Punishment into peace  
Verbal abuse into vanilla ice cream  
Fear into freedom  
Pain into passion  
Anger into artwork.

*Allan B*

## *I Want to Change*

***I Want to Change***  
*Rain into sunshine*  
*Madness into music*  
*Evil into equality*  
*Cuts into kisses*  
*Guns into good times*  
*Poverty into partying*  
*Prison into poetry*  
*Bruises into blushes.*

***Mark T***

***I Want to Change***  
*Anger into acting*  
*Tears into teaching*  
*Pain into pleasure*  
*Horror into harmony*  
*Riots into writing*  
*Fear into fishing*  
*Guns into giggling*

***Frank S***

## *I Want to Change*

***I Want to Change***  
*Drug deals into diplomas*  
*Crack pipes into books*  
*Smack heads into pupils*  
*Misery into pride*  
*Prison into a place to learn*

***Vernon M***

***I Want to Change***  
*Guns into generosity*  
*Knives into knowledge*  
*Screams into scholarships*  
*Oppression into opportunities*  
*War into peace*  
*Tears into laughter*  
*Fights into fun*  
*Misery into marvel*

***Robert H***

# Asia

Our creative writing on Asia focused on India, looking back to the days of the British Empire to examine the exotic country's 'jewel' status. We looked at the work of Bombay born British writer, Rudyard Kipling, thinking about the advice a father might give his son when writing our own versions of his celebrated poem 'If'.

We also created our own variations of Kipling's 'Just So' stories, fantastical fables with moral messages set in the animal kingdom.

## What I've Learned

**I found out how trading between Commonwealth countries started and why.**

**I learned about Britain's role in the slave trade.**

*If you lose your way, turn your life about  
It is common to risk for your dreams  
If the crowds accept your worth  
Serve them with your virtue  
If all is a disaster  
Make no deals with imposters  
If friends are unforgiving  
Hate not and have heart  
If they are blaming or doubting you  
Your trust is broken  
If you have spoken the truth  
Then you'll be a man, my son*

**Jamie E**

**If**

*If you ignore the lure of those who goad you  
Not rising to the bait that's often cast  
If your spirits remain high and you're not blue  
And nail your colours firmly to the mast  
If the daily routine doesn't get you down  
Regard your work as worship, that's the goal  
Pray you don't have to wear a hospital gown  
Nor take as gospel, granting of parole*

*If I could I would convince the younger me to  
be more patient with life and not to grow up  
too fast.*

*If I could go back I would respect my elders  
more and stop thinking I know it all.*

*If I was young again I would travel all over  
the world before it was too late.*

*If you are easily led, you'll find out for your-  
self that drinking and drugs are bad for you.*

*If you lose your friends you will regret it,  
you don't know how important they are until  
they're gone.*

*If I could go back I would stick in with  
learning to play the guitar.*

*If I were young again I would listen to my  
mum and dad.*

*If I was young I would realise that when older  
people give you advice it's because they don't  
want you to make the mistakes they have.*

*If I had the chance again I would never start  
smoking. It is not cool and it stinks!*

**Misc Andrew B**

*If you don't make counting days an obsession  
If you ignore the ticking of the clock  
If you can put up with constant repression  
Heartened by the fact, one day you will walk  
If you pay attention to your inner voice  
The fog will lift, the road will appear  
Positively certain you'll make the right choice  
Confidence starts to grow dispelling fear*

*If you adopt an optimistic mindset  
Engage in purposeful activity  
Careful to refrain from getting into debt  
Making good habits your proclivity  
If you turn your cell into a comfort zone  
A plethora of openings for you  
A multitude of talents that you can hone  
The jails' your oyster, options through and through*

*If you can reach the end and still remain sane  
The path may have been difficult and long  
If you know True Self then you can transcend pain  
If finding absolution midst the throng  
If you're not completely eaten by your rage  
And you feel that you've gotten back on track  
Your sentence has only one unfinished page  
No more to say, except, you won't be back*

## Just So

### *How the Skunk Got His Stink*

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. He also created skunks. Skunks were once cuddly household pets, popular with mums, dads, children and the elderly.

Everything was going well for the skunks, until one came along who would not wash himself. Ever. At school everyone called the skunk, “Smelly boy,” and teachers would not let him take part in P.E because he would not take a shower afterwards. People would cross the road just to avoid the skunk as they were sickened by his horrible smell.

One night the skunk decided to go to a disco. He got so drunk that he was as drunk as a skunk. The disco was in full swing and people were dancing and having a good time, but they soon became aware of the skunk’s presence, as he could be smelt before he was seen. Everyone had made an effort for the disco.

The boys had gel in their hair and had aftershave on. The girls had their best dresses on and had painted their nails. Everyone was clean. Except for the skunk. The skunk did not care about personal hygiene. The smell was making people feel unwell so the smelly skunk was asked to leave. But he would not go. People tried to get him out but he was so drunk that he fell into people.

His smell rubbed onto the other party goers and made them smell bad too. He fell into one girl who then spewed. Everyone had had enough and one boy asked the skunk for a fight. The skunk grabbed the boy in a head lock and his smell knocked the poor boy out.

God came to earth and asked what was going on. He was told about the skunk. He was not happy. He told the skunk he would no longer be a household animal, he would be sent into the wild and his only defence would be his horrible smell.

And that is how the skunk got his stink.

*Angus C*

### *How the Caterpillar Became a Butterfly*

In the beginning snails considered themselves superior to all other insects in the forest as they were the only insects who had their own shell. The snails believed they were the most beautiful of all God’s insects and often looked down on other creatures, judging them solely on their looks and appearance. The snails would gather in the west of the forest along with other pretty, high status insects and hold sensational parties.

Early one morning on their way to the western part of the forest, two snails encountered a small caterpillar. At this time caterpillars were socially unacceptable and deemed the most hideous insects in all the forest. The caterpillar asked in a soft, angelic voice, “May I join you in the west of the forest?” The snails stuck their noses high in the air, ignored the caterpillar and proceeded to the western part of the forest, unaware of God’s watchful eye looking down upon them. Suddenly, to great amazement, the snails noticed something peculiar happen before their eyes. God transformed the caterpillar into the most beautiful creature the snails had ever seen. The creature flew up into the air, displaying violet and pink coloured wings and disappeared into the sunlight.

And this is how the caterpillar became a butterfly.

*Rudi N*

## Just So

### *How the Elephant Got his Trunk*

In the early days, when the earth was still new, there was an elephant who was always getting involved in other people’s business and talking about them behind their backs.

The elephant was always listening to gossip about the other animals and spreading rumours throughout the Savannah. Then one day the elephant, who had a rather short snout back then, got up to his old tricks one too many times.

The elephant hated peace and quiet and loved drama and title tattle and so one sunny day in the desert when he saw the lioness talking with the hyena his brain began to work overtime. He told the lion, who was very jealous, and carnage ensued.

The lion brutally killed the hyena in a fit of envious rage, blood and guts were spilled across the sand. This is why, to this very day, lions and hyenas still do not get on.

Eventually God intervened to stop the madness and gave the elephant a long nose to go with his nosiness.

And that is how the elephant got his trunk.

*Nicholas C*

### *How the Baboon Got His Bottom*

At the beginning of time when God created the world in seven days and seven nights, baboons did not have their bare bottoms on display as they have today. Instead they were cute and cuddly like all the other monkeys. This was until this one very cheeky baboon came along who would never behave himself and would call everyone names and tease them all the time. All the other animals in the jungle hated the baboon and would avoid him at all costs.

This made the baboon very bitter and his bullying towards the other animals got worse. He would pick on one little tiger cub in particular. The baboon would break wind in the young cub’s face and then laugh at him. One day the baboon was chasing the young tiger cub through the jungle to play his revolting trick on him, but the little tiger cub was too fast for the naughty baboon. He was so fast that when he ran up the cliff edge that was over-hanging the river he could not stop in time before he went over the edge and into the deep river below. Unfortunately the poor little cub could not swim and was drowning in the water. Thankfully however, the young cub’s mother heard his cries for help whilst he was trying desperately to stay afloat and she raced towards him to save him from the water. She got there just in time and pulled her cub out of the river to safety, but all was not well as the poor cub had broken one of his hind legs when he hit a big rock on his way into the river.

When all the other animals heard about what had happened to the cub they were enraged by what the bad baboon had done. They all agreed they were sick of his antics and so they prayed to God and asked that he teach the baboon a lesson. Shortly afterwards God came down to the jungle to see the baboon and said, “Why are you causing so much trouble and bullying the other animals so badly?” The baboon cheekily replied, “I’ll do what I want and there is nothing you can do can do about it!” He quickly turned around and bared his bottom to God in a terrible act of defiance. To humiliate the baboon and teach him a lesson, punishing him for his cruelty and cheek, God said, “From now on your bottom will stay on show for everyone to see all of the time.”

And that is how the baboon got his bare bottom.

*Kieran C*

# The Caribbean

The sugar we consume with abandon, once brought to our shores via slavery, inspired our creative writing on the Caribbean.

We also examined the ‘uncanny’ aspects of the Caribbean, thinking about the witches and monsters that haunt the islands to stimulate our own writing on the subject of the supernatural.

## What I’ve Learned

I have learnt about the history of Rastafarian culture and Jamaican political leader Marcus Garvey.

I learned about the sugar harvested by the slaves in the Caribbean.

I learned that the Caribbean is made up of over 7000 islands.

## Ghosts

*Show me a ghost and maybe I’ll listen  
Tell me a true story and I might open my eyes  
Until then it’s just scaremongering, rumour and lies*

*To me it’s just fiction, made up stories, untrue facts  
Spirits and poltergeists, headless horsemen and ghouls  
Are just for the believers, the listeners and fools*

*They’re religious ponderings or even cultural beliefs  
Claiming wondrous things, or a controlling deed  
Created to make you scared, trusting or to heed*

*Visions and stories, and tales that will tell  
Of the dead who arose, or an act of destruction  
Even the good book, we are told, claims resurrection*

*“It’s true,” they will tell you, “I saw it myself!”  
But it’s just another story to keep you entranced  
Made up from myth and gossip, passed on and enhanced*

*Tales of eerie green fog, and distant groans  
Even haunted houses, with footsteps in the dark  
Are simply just words, put together for a lark*

*Just like this!*

**Donald M**

# Ghost Stories

## The Legend of the Lost Noodle

*I live with an evil ghost,  
Why it lives with me  
I don’t know.*

*But it must be French  
Because it’s naked all the time.*

*One dark and stormy night,  
I heard a noise upstairs  
But I found nothing.*

*When I returned  
My pot noodle had been eaten.*

*I still have nightmares about it.*

**Angus C**

## Rose Hall Sonnet

*A long time ago the mansion was built,  
Deaths occurred there, but who carries  
the guilt?*

*Ghosts which haunt this place would  
open eyes*

*Eerie silence broken by piercing cries*

*Chandeliers on the ceiling, strung up high  
European antiques seem to have eyes  
Ornate silk wallpaper that seems to stare.  
A cold chill clutches, strangeness in the air*

*Sounds so inviting, they call it Rose Hall  
Alone here I realise I feel so small.  
Suddenly the name is no longer soft  
A strange sounding voice calls down  
from the loft*

*Did she kill them, what is the history?  
I’ll be cursed if I solve the mystery*

**Angus C**

## The Monster

*The monster is called Scott  
And he looks like my dad  
The monster lives on the streets  
And eats rubbish from bins  
The monster comes out at night  
And loves alcohol  
The monster hates children  
And can be killed by a kitchen knife  
to the heart*

**Scott G**

## Ghost Stories

### **Eyeball Jack**

*Eyeball Jack  
Is a tall, dark shadow  
Who lives in an old abandoned church.*

*Eyeball Jack  
Comes out in irregular, unplanned  
intervals  
And loves to terrify his victims.*

*Eyeball Jack  
Hates Christmas Day  
And can only be killed by having his  
eyes gouged out.*

### **Angus C**

### **Old Boy**

*Old boy looks sweet, like chocolate milk  
Old boy lives in the darkest places  
Old boy eats marijuana  
Old boy comes out at night when the rest  
of the world is asleep  
Old boy loves violence  
Old boy hates being sober  
Old boy can be killed by his own faith*

### **Adil I**

### **The Plug**

*The plug has been pulled in the deep of the ocean the sink hole for earth the devil's creation to pull down men who stray from their course and suck up their souls for use of his own force round and round the whirlpool goes. take a look around to see which way the wind blows, there's no use in fighting there's only one way, that's the end of your day.*

### **Jason B**

## Sugar Slavery Diamantes

### **Sugar**

*Sticky, sweet  
Energising, satisfying, seasoning  
White, granulated, Black, segregated  
Working, farming, harvesting  
Chained, degraded  
Slavery*

### **Colin M**

### **Sugar**

*Addictive, satisfying  
Growing, harvesting, packaged  
Sold, mixed, punished, captured  
Whipped, undermined, hated  
Conquered, chained  
Slavery*

### **Naz A**

### **Sugar**

*Delicious, sweet  
Decaying, sticky, tasty  
Black, captured, crystal, grain  
Fearful, heart-broken, degraded  
Brutal, forced,  
Slavery*

### **Andy C**

### **Sugar**

*Sweet properties, bad nature  
Glistening, caramelising, sweetening  
Sticks of cane, African slaves, many crops, lots of pain  
Overworking, growing, sweat pouring  
Manufactured by force, treated unfairly  
Slavery*

### **Angus C**

### **Sugar**

*Sweet, ripe  
Honeying, softening, delighting  
Petite, lustrous, broken souls  
Working, drudging, slogging  
Forced, impelled  
Slavery*

### **Adil I**

# Europe

The deserted city of Famagusta in Cyprus encouraged us to think about our own 'ghost cities' and create pieces of personal writing about the spaces we frequented in our youth.

In addition, the widely held Maltese belief in the 'evil eye' made us think about superstition, which we wrote about in a series of Haikus. Furthermore, the experiences of the Guernsey islanders under Nazi occupation for the duration of World War Two also inspired us to consider and write about what it might be like to live with the enemy

## What I've Learned

This project broadened my mind.

I've learned about the ghost city of Famagusta, Cyprus, which has been completely abandoned since 1974.

## The Light Bulb Factory

Once a fully functioning workplace the light bulb factory must have paid the wages of hundreds of workers but now lies empty, abandoned with windows smashed and doors off their hinges, metal shutters in place to try to stop people entering, well most people that is...

Someone once told me that the place was full of asbestos and that's why it was closed, but even this could not prevent me and my friends from entering the dirty old factory, our safe haven, where we could skip school and get up to mischief with no worries of the police catching us!

Kieran C

# Ghost City

## The Convent

There's a convent called St Michael's, the old St Michaels school in Dumbarton. It was a listed building so when the school was knocked down they left it untouched. Me and my friends used to hang around inside it when we were teenagers, playing catch.

There was a bit downstairs we used to call 'The Dungeons' which was supposed to be haunted. It was a dark and damp place, it had a dusty smell and everywhere you went you could hear creaky noises.

The wind whistling through the broken windows made it draughty. It was a really spooky place.

Nicholas C

## The Cardross Monk

I've spent ten nights as St Peters at various times. My pals and I would be ghost hunting and drinking and there would always be some girls! We'd bring food and wine. Sometimes we'd come in through the golf course but I knew hundreds of ways to get into the old building. It was a very damaged building by this point and there was mould everywhere. There weren't any lights so we always brought candles and a big lamp with us. When the rain fell through the ceiling it would make the floor stink.

We never did see a ghost on any of these adventures but the whole atmosphere was very creepy. We would all sit quiet for a while and then the owls would start making noises and this would set the girls off. Sometimes we heard a tapping noise and this made the girls even more paranoid and we had to calm them down. We'd heard stories of a headless monk who haunted the building but we never managed to see him.

I've been up there in the daylight and there's nothing scary about it. Now there's a big fence and it looks like high flats but perhaps the monk still wanders the building?

Kenny M

## Tenements

The old closes in my area were a great place to mess around when I was a teenager. Later on, empty and ready for demolition, they were a creepy place when you were on your own.

All the slates had been taken down by the older boys from the area and the boilers and heating pipes stripped out to be sold at the local scrappy. Taking the pipes out caused a horrible damp smell and the missing slates made it a good home for local birdlife. We used the doors to build huts and hunted around for anything of interest.

My tenements are long gone but I'm glad I lived there for a small portion of my life. The lives of the people who lived there are part of Glasgow's heritage and should always be remembered.

Anon

## Ghost City

### *Coats Observatory Seminary*

This observatory is an old Victorian building on top of the main hill in Paisley. It was turned into a school before being blocked up. There was an open window that my friends and I used to climb through into a changing room with coat hangers and people's names still written on the wall.

We climbed to the top of the observatory, having to jump over a gap that had a 60-70ft drop below. Eventually we made it to the top and onto the balcony which had a view for miles and miles. We could see Glasgow and up to the Braes.

We took a photo of the four of us posing at the top before coming back down. Now the building has been renovated and turned into posh flats. I only wish I still had a copy of the photo but I still have the memories of the climb up there and the view from the top.

*Donald M*

One afternoon I was out with my friend when we decided to head to an old abandoned seminary just outside Helensburgh that we had heard about.

As we arrived at this old worn out building we were hit with a sense of passing time as the walls portrayed what had happened there years ago. There were many drawings and symbols all over them to show the practices held within the seminary. When we took a walk around it was very outdated with asbestos on the walls and rusty iron bars. The whole outlook was like a Victorian jail with many cell type rooms at each side and a single staircase all the way up the middle. It felt like there was a very cold echo coming from the walls.

It's been a few years since my trip to this intriguing but intimidating building, but the memory is still fresh in my mind.

*Sean C*

## Ghost City

### *Ferguslie Park The Old Abandoned Church*

When I was just a young boy, back in the day, Ferguslie Park was the place to be. But these days when you walk through it, it looks like something from World War Z, full of zombies! The kids don't play on the street anymore, there's a huge amount of unemployment, people sell drugs and the rest steal from each other so no-one trusts anyone anymore.

The shops are all closed because they're always getting robbed. The buses and taxis have stopped coming through there as well. The place is like a war zone. They've given up hope.

*Robert M*

I live near an old church which has been abandoned for years. I used to be scared to go near it.

Some windows had been smashed and the few that were left got sorted out by me, my golf club and golf balls. I could smash windows from 60ft away. Once I thought I saw a ghost looking out at me from a broken window.

I never went near the place until one night me and my friends were drinking cider and ventured in. We never saw any ghosts but I did find some of my golf balls!

*Angus C*

## Living With the Enemy

### *The Enemy*

Met this enemy when I first came to jail  
Not knowing we were going to hate  
each other  
I had to share a cell with him

At first we got on quite well  
But after about a week  
He started to grate on me  
And vice versa

Then the arguing and the  
fighting began  
And the accusations of stealing  
Even the sound of his voice  
annoyed me

Eventually I got a single cell  
Then sentenced  
Then moved on

I don't need to see the enemy again

**Chris W**

### *Living with the Enemy*

Growing up in Glasgow's gang culture  
Is really hard sometimes  
You create enemies from an early age  
And by the time you turn 16  
You've got a list the length of your arm.  
But with all these boys from different  
schemes

Committing offences in their own areas  
Inevitably we're all going to end up  
Under the same roof

HMP Barlinnie

**Kieran C**

### *Suddenly Things Changed*

Two years old  
Can't remember much  
Far back as I can  
All fine  
Suddenly things changed  
No explanation  
My older sister disappeared  
From the family home

**Andrew C**

### *Enemy at the Gate*

The enemy came up to Hadrian's Wall  
"We're here to civilise you," they said,  
On their heavy horses, clutching spear  
and sword,  
"Go away," said the Scots,  
"You will want us dead."

Four hundred years we've been  
subjugated by you,  
Years of theft and murder, with your  
swords we were slew,  
The time has come to reclaim our land,  
It's time for this ill-matched union  
to disband.

**Joseph R**

### *Past Love*

The enemy arrived  
Not as an enemy  
But as a friend  
Nice smile, blue sparkling eyes  
A smile to die for in fact  
But over the years  
The cold set in  
And when the enemy left  
I was sad and scared

**Scott G**

## Superstition Haikus

Talk of ill to come  
Wish it away by touch  
Wood stops misfortune

**Kieran C**

Bat in women's hair  
Brings death to them within a year  
Take cover at night

**Kieran C**

Ear is burning hot  
What untruths are being told?  
Please leave me alone

**Gary G**

Black cat in my path  
God has made me feel his wrath  
He gets the last laugh

**Gary G**

I spy a magpie  
If see one I salute  
Good luck comes my way

**Andrew C**

Shoes on the table  
Are not a good idea  
Or live in fear

**Chris W**

The wedding arrived  
A black hearse went passing by  
Everyone there died

**Angus C**

Black cat on the road  
Running or passing you by  
Will bring you bad luck

**Jamie E**

# Pacific

The prestige associated with the 'moko' in New Zealand's Maori culture made us think about the stories behind our own etchings, both funny and sad, and we wrote pieces of flash non-fiction to tell the tales of our tattoos.

The tragedy of the 'Stolen Generation' of Aborigine children, forcibly removed from their families and placed with white settlers in Australia, moved us to write flash fiction about the imagined experiences of a child taken from all that was familiar

## What I've Learned

I learned how badly the Aborigine people were treated.

I learned that Australia was once a prisoner colony and took prisoners from British territories and turned them into a labour force.

### White Devils

*When the white gods came  
They took me with them to hell  
There I was given no name  
And a room called a cell*

*The white gods were cruel to me  
They shouted and beat  
Called me 'Aborigine!'*

*So beware child in the middle  
White gods are really the devil*

Thomas A

### Tattoo

*Three stars on their way to Mars  
Fast paced, driven in cars  
Each one a distant memory  
Of a past life  
Hurling through time and space  
Reaching a different time and place  
I reach another constellation  
A galaxy far, far away  
Three stars on their way to Mars  
Scarred for life  
What a beautiful life  
The burst of a gaseous nebula!  
A twinkle in the eye  
Three stars, waiting to die*

Allan B

## Stolen Children

### Compassion or Fashion?

I was removed from my family at a very young age. I cried every night for my mum. Now I am 43 and still years later I feel lost.

Today I took on an Aborigine child. He will be a good addition to the work force. My service to the community.

Garry F

### The Nameless Slave

Taken from parents, culture, community. Too young to remember, knows only her master, who abuses her daily. He doesn't know of anything but pain and suffering and working fourteen hours each day. She has never been happy, she doesn't even hate her master because she thinks that this is all life is.

Barry T

### The Abusive Man

In 1942 a young girl was snatched from her Aborigine family home and adopted by a white family.

Her stepfather was an alcoholic who would often abuse her whenever he came home drunk. When the young girl turned 16 she murdered him in cold blood.

Kieran C

### Taken

Late one summer evening when the bad men came for me, my father was out hunting and my brother and I were in bed sleeping. They broke down the front door and beat my mother unconscious and ripped us both from our beds. I've not seen my family since.

Colin M

### Stolen Children

I was snatched and taken to an orphanage and told we were there to be educated. I could not get my mother's screams out of my head and longed for the day I could hear her voice.

I was sent to a farm to work as help and could not get used to being stolen from my heritage. I was five years old when I was taken so I still remember my old family traditions.

Gary G

### Forever Lost

I remember the worst day of my life. I don't think I could ever forget. Every parent's nightmare. The very day those British animals took my angel away from me.

They snatched her up from the street, and I have never seen her since. I miss her so very much.

Andy C

## Tattoos

### Watching

I have watched many people getting tattoos and seen many of them regretting these days or even minutes after they leave the studio. I have seen this happen in Tenerife a lot through drunken mistakes, because of drunken bar games or even being dared to do it by your mates.

### James M

### Almost

One day after shopping, as I loaded up my car I noticed a tattoo shop across the road. Curiosity got the better of me and I went over to have a look. I spoke to the girl in the shop, paid a £20 deposit, left and never returned.

### Robert H

### Scorpion

I have a tattoo, a little scorpion. I like scorpions because my zodiac is Scorpio. The tattoo is on my chest. It was quite painful. I would eventually like a big tiger head tattoo. I was born in 1986 and it was the year of the tiger. I love tigers!

### Vidas G

### Four Tattoos

I have four tattoos and I don't regret any of them. The first one reminds me of my 'stoner' days back in 1992, the second is linked to my first love in 1993. I later had one done of my beloved football team which I could never regret and finally last year I had my wife's name tattooed on me.

### Jason B

### J

My tattoo depicts the letter 'J' which was the first letter of my friend's name. The design reflects the wreath I had made for his funeral. This was how his name was saved in my phone. The colours represent nostalgic music.

### Rudi N

### Faith

I don't have any tattoos as they are against my religion and forbidden. I wouldn't have a tattoo because I wouldn't want a symbol to stay on my body for the rest of my life. Plastic surgery is forbidden too. We believe that the body that God has given you should not be tampered with.

### Adil I

## Tattoos

### Laura Fighting for Life

When I was drunk in Ibiza I stupidly got a girl's name tattooed on my upper thigh. I didn't find it painful at all as I was full of lovely Spanish beer. When I returned home I had to go through three sessions of laser treatment at £50 a pop.

### Sean C Scott D

### Cross Cost

I don't know why I got my tattoo. It's a small Celtic cross. I had CFC added to represent my favourite team, Celtic. My girlfriend was supposed to get one but chickened out. My tattoo didn't turn out as I wanted. I plan to get it tattooed over or removed.

### Nicholas C Kenny M

The tattoo on my right arm has words that cover all aspects of my thinking. 'Winners never lose, losers never win.' But maybe I've become a loser just being here explaining what it means. If you have to explain yourself, you haven't lived by the words: 'Ding! Ding! Round one!'

When I was 15 I lived in Yorkshire and my friend Cobber tattooed me when he was drunk. The tattoos on my fingers got me a doing from the police but they don't mean anything. The army would not let me in because of my tattoos. My tattoos have cost me a lot.

The motto for the 2014 Glasgow Commonwealth Games is 'People, Place, Passion.' To celebrate this upcoming historic event, staff and students from New College Lanarkshire's Learning Centre in Low Moss took a virtual tour of Commonwealth countries to learn more about the places with which we share the bond of Commonwealth.

A Common Wealth of Writing is the Low Moss Learning Centre's legacy to the 2014 Glasgow Commonwealth Games.

