

The magazine of the National Library of Scotland

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NO HOLDS BARD

Poet and playwright Liz Lochhead on her beloved bad boy Burns, his influence on her own work and what's next after 50 years of success

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No.48 Summer 2023

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At the time of writing, we're about to launch our first dual-language exhibition at our George IV Bridge building in Edinburgh. Scotland has had a rich Gàidhlig storytelling tradition going back hundreds of years. And just like parts of Europe had the Brothers Grimm ensuring fairy tales were preserved for future generations, we had our own collector – John Francis Campbell, more locally known as Iain Òg Ìle (young John of Islay).

He worked tirelessly with local communities to ensure folktales were preserved as the oral tradition dwindled in the mid-19th century. Read more about Campbell and Highland storytelling traditions on pages 22–25.

Also now open at our George IV Bridge building is an exhibition in conjunction with Waverley Care, Scotland's HIV and hepatitis C charity, marking its 50-year anniversary. We spoke to Criz McCormick, one of the researchers involved in the exhibition.

He takes us through Scotland's AIDS experience – the crushing stigma people faced in the 80s and 90s, the misinformation about the virus, the pioneering work that went into designing Scotland's first – and one of the world's first – AIDS hospices, Milestone House.

There's grief, hard work and a tremendous sense of camaraderie and love. Read his interview on pages 14–17.

Poetry features strongly in this edition with our cover story on one of Scotland's most celebrated poets and playwrights, Liz Lochhead (pages 9–13). Liz served as Scotland's Makar from 2011

until 2016 and is widely viewed as an expert on Burns. She'll tell you she's not an expert but her appreciation and contemporary interpretation of the man, his work and his many loves capture audiences in ways that only she can.

We have some significant works relating to Burns going on display this year in our 'Treasures' exhibition, so we spoke to her about the Bard. More importantly, we spoke to her about her own work and legacy in Scotland.

Shane Strachan is this year's Scots Scriever. The Scriever initiative is a year-long residency offering writers the opportunity to creatively respond to the national collections in the Scots language.

Shane has been with us for almost a year now, focusing on the Doric/Aberdeenshire dialects. He tells us, on pages 26–29, why he has chosen to use the words and voices of weavers and fishermen from the early 18th century as the material for his poetic work.

Also delving into our archives is Steven Harvie, who is with us while working on his PhD on one of Scotland's most beloved 20th-century authors, Muriel Spark.

The Muriel Spark archive is in our collections and Steven has taken great joy in going through it. Its contents tell a great story about Spark's writing process and offer more insight into her personality, including a writer's idiosyncrasies. Read all about her on pages 18–21.

I hope you enjoy these stories.

Amina Shah
National Librarian and Chief Executive



Poetry features strongly in this issue, with our cover story on one of our most celebrated poets and playwrights

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Festival of Broadcasting a huge hit with audiences

Some of Scotland's best-known broadcasters took part in panel discussions and Q&A sessions as part of the Library's successful Festival of Broadcasting, which you can now view online.

Our events featured special guests such as TV news and radio presenter Shereen Nanjiani, award-winning news reporter Colin Mackay, sports journalists Jane Lewis and Eilidh Barbour, broadcaster and writer Hugh Dan MacLennan, musician Mary Ann Kennedy and the comedian and presenter Ray Bradshaw.

Broadcaster in Residence Alistair Heather, a presenter and writer, hosted three well-attended 'Broadcast Conversations' panel

discussions – on news, sport, and Gaelic and Scots on air. He said: "I loved the Festival of Broadcasting. Scotland has such a rich history of radio and television, with innovative makers across decades shaping our understanding of the world and our place in it. I hosted a series of chats with current broadcasters. "First, we reflected on how Gaelic and Scots – Scotland's two indigenous spoken minority languages – have been served or failed by broadcasting. Our guests told us how sports broadcasting in Gaelic has helped 'normalise' the use of the

language on-air, and the Gaels suggested that if Scots speakers want meaningful broadcasting, they will have to get organised and fight for it.

Nicola Meighan, Pauline McLean, Shereen Nanjiani and Julia Sutherland

"We had an all-star and hilarious line-up for a conversation about sport.

Sky Sports' Eilidh Barbour and the BBC's Jane Lewis discussed the pros and cons of paid broadcast channels like Sky

against free-to-air broadcast on the BBC. Comedian and 'Off the Ball' regular Ray Bradshaw brought the laughs throughout.

"The final event of the week was a stoater. Colin Mackay of STV News and Laura Maxwell from BBC's Good Morning Scotland talked about news in the era of social media abuse, opened up about broadcasting during the early days of Covid and the need to challenge authority.

"It was great to see the interest in the audience and both guests were so generous with their time and their stories.

"Going forward, I'll be thinking of ways to bring the Library's Moving Image Archive into my work in history, in poetry and in writing for newspapers. It's such a valuable resource for people in Scotland and internationally.

"If you haven't already been, pop in to the facility at Kelvin Hall in Glasgow, you'll love it."



Alistair Heather



Alistair Heather, Colin Mackay and Laura Maxwell chat about news



The festival's main programme of free events took place between 28 March and 1 April at the Library at Kelvin Hall, as part of celebrations marking 100 years of Scottish broadcasting. Scotland's first radio transmission was broadcast from the Kelvin Hall on 24 January 1923 – two months before the BBC's initial wireless broadcast.

Footage from our Moving Image Archive was shown, plus our curators gave talks on everything from community television to pirate radio and women on the small screen.

At our 'Evolution of Scottish News' Broadcast Conversation, featuring STV Political Editor Colin Mackay and Good Morning Scotland's Laura Maxwell, the importance of balance in broadcast news was discussed, along with accusations of bias, facts vs fake news, working during the pandemic and dealing with abuse on social media.

Maxwell said: "It's very difficult. Criticism is often not about journalism but because I'm a woman. I'm lucky in that I don't get death threats and threats of violence that a lot of my female colleagues



Ray Bradshaw



Our newspaper collection includes the first copy of 'The Scotsman', from 1817

Thank you for helping us to save our stories

Our appeal for help to save our vast collection of historic newspapers has been a huge success thanks to the generosity of the public.

We launched our 'Save Scotland's Newspapers' campaign in December to raise funds to protect and preserve the titles in our care – some of them nearly 400 years old.

Hundreds of people have donated to allow our conservators to carry out repairs and prepare these fragile pages for digitisation.

The Library's Head of Development, Lucy Clement, said: "We've been overwhelmed by people's incredible support for our appeal to conserve our most fragile Scottish newspaper



Claire Hutchison

heritage, which has demonstrated just how much people value these historic documents.

"Thanks to everyone who donated, conservation of these newspapers is under way and we'll be putting the digitised copies online in the coming months.

"There's a lot of work to do, however, so if you haven't made a donation yet and are keen to contribute, we would greatly appreciate your help."

Centuries of Scottish history and stories were at risk of being lost. The newspapers offer a rare window into our collective past and are one of the few, if not only, chronicles of both the

defining, major events in our history and the everyday moments.

Our titles date as far back as 1641 – the earliest newspaper printed in Scotland, 'The heads of severall proceedings in the present Parliament'.

However, newspapers are not made to be kept and are printed on cheap, fragile paper that degrades quickly.

Conservator Claire Hutchison said: "Newspapers are the most requested items in our collections. But they are incredibly fragile and brittle. We're also working with local libraries to carry out conservation work on their collections. These papers have local histories that aren't recorded anywhere else."

To donate to our appeal, visit nls.uk/support-nls/newspapers



get." However, she added that the people she spoke to were always nice: "The public are lovely – Twitter isn't the public."

Mackay said that, by reporting on politics, "on Twitter I'm all

kinds of awful things to all kinds of people" and that journalists are accused of lack of balance "if you're not saying what they [those criticising you] think you should be saying".

At our 'Women on the Wireless' panel discussion, hosted by Julia Sutherland, the BBC's Shereen Nanjiani, Pauline McLean and Nicola Meighan looked at "how far we have come" from having a dearth of women's and minority voices on the radio to much more representation. They also noted there were a lot of women in leadership and production roles.

"It's taking a long time to break through that barrier but we are," said Nanjiani.

All three shared their most embarrassing moments on-air – including hiding under blankets

to muffle sounds, puffing and panting down the mic after having to sprint through the newsroom and having dead air during a problem with the kit.

All of the events can be viewed on our YouTube channel at youtube.com/user/nlofscotland

The Festival of Broadcasting was supported by BBC Scotland, ScottishPower Foundation and the William Grant Foundation.

Learn about our future events on pages 30-33 and at nls.uk/whats-on



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Something is itching with Burns at the moment... it's a wee passion

Tae a Bard

People's poet **Liz Lochhead** is feeling inspired by the life and work of Robbie Burns... can our collections help her figure out what she wants to write?



→ **L**iz Lochhead is on a quest. The former Makar has, as she describes it, an “itch” to write about her beloved Rabbie Burns. Write what, she is not yet sure. A poem? Prose? A play? About the man, the myth, the legend? Only time will tell.

But this passion project brought her to the Library to meet our Manuscripts Curator Dr Ralph McLean – an expert on our national Bard – to learn a few fascinating facts and get a closer look at some of the items in our Burns collections.

First priority is a cheese scone and a cappuccino, over which Lochhead is warm and chatty, her West Coast vernacular as rich as her verse. She has plenty of anecdotes, often about famous friends such as actor Alan Cumming, frank opinions on the political landscape and, as it turns out, an eye for a bargain, revealing that the much-admired tartan tweed blazer she is wearing came from a charity shop near her Glasgow home.

But soon the cheerful conversation must turn to the business at hand – Ayrshire’s Ploughman Poet (1759–1796).

“He was never a Ploughman Poet,” Lochhead gently admonishes with a smile and a shake of her head. “He invented the Ploughman Poet in Edinburgh [while living there in 1787]. It was a good legend, a good back story. He didn’t need a publicist, Burns. I mean, he was genuinely a failed farmer. But he was a genuinely popular poet.

“Burns did so much that everyone can get their bit of him. I’m trying to search for a bit more of mine, just for fun. That’s why I write, for fun.

“Something is itching with Burns at the moment. I’m going to write something – not scholarly, because I’m not a scholar. I’m interested in a sort of fictional Edinburgh in the year Burns was there on the make. He was making himself into a rock star.”

“I might not get anywhere with this wee quest of mine,” Lochhead adds. “I’m more interested in the

So Burns was given a kick in the backside to write Tam o’Shanter? It’s amazing stuff

poetry, that’s the most important thing. It’s a wee passion.

“What I love about Burns is the contradictions. I’ll find out a lot of interesting things [today] to inform my reading.

“I hardly ever go and do research, unless I’m sniffing around something. But Ralph is fantastically knowledgeable, enthusiastic and approachable.

“That’s what I’ve always found in libraries, not just the National Library. It’s nice to come to a library, I love libraries.

“I remember when the library opened in Newarthill [in North Lanarkshire, the former mining village where Lochhead grew up].

“Today I’m actually holding things in Burns’s hand and can see his handwriting change over the years.”

The delight on Lochhead’s face as she examines a selection of Burns’s letters is evident. Among the items brought out are a fragment of a letter the Bard sent in 1786, which Ralph collected from auction house Lyon & Turnbull that morning. In it, Burns describes himself as “just a poor wayfaring Pilgrim [on] the road to Parnassus”.

There is also an original sketch inspired by ‘Tam o’Shanter’, by the artist John Faed, with Ralph telling an astonished Lochhead how Burns’s epic poem is “technically a footnote” in Francis Grose’s ‘Antiquities of Scotland’ (1791).

“Grose was talking to Burns about wanting to do something on Alloway’s Auld Haunted Kirk and

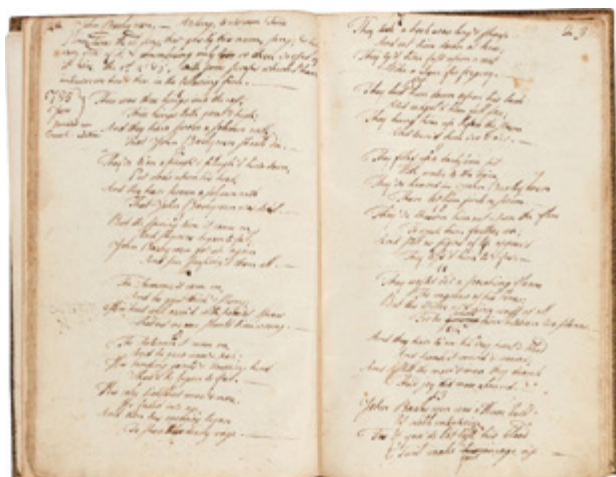
Liz Lochhead discusses Burns with Manuscripts Curator Dr Ralph McLean, an expert on the Bard





'Memo for Spring' cover photograph © Gordon Wright from the original 1972 edition; the 2022 cover was designed by Abigail Salvesen. Photo courtesy Birlinn/Polygon

Burns' 'First Commonplace Book' was acquired by the Library last year as part of the UK-wide fundraising effort to purchase the vast Blavatnik Honresfield Collection, as it is now known. Photo courtesy Sotheby's



Alloway Auld Kirk, the inspiration and setting for Tam o'Shanter

Burns said he had a few stories," Ralph revealed. "Grose said, 'well, if you've got anything, I'll put it in the book'. It appears as a footnote – one of the most famous footnotes in history."

"Incredible," notes Lochhead. "So Grose gave him a kick in the backside to write 'Tam o'Shanter'? These things are absolute treasures. It's amazing stuff."

One of the rarest items in the Library's collections is next – the fourth earliest letter by Burns that still survives and the only letter to his father that still exists, dated 1781.

Burns discusses the fear that "poverty and obscurity await me" and how "perhaps very soon, I shall bid eternal adieu to all the pains, and uneasiness, and disquietudes of this weary life".

"As a depressive he would have had these thoughts a lot," says Lochhead. "But I find it hard to imagine his actual speaking voice. There's the voice of the poems and the Scots he knew was going out of fashion. He preserved the language at that point, tapping into the tradition of the Makars, trying to keep that tradition alive.

"I'm really glad he existed... I'm personally glad, as well as for Scotland, that he gave us so much fun.

"I've got no desire to do anything but celebrate the work he did, celebrate the things he wrote. There's a celebration of the idea of a poet who didn't come from wealth but who had that fire and energy inside himself."

Burns's influence and impact on Lochhead is, as she admits herself, undeniable. His work

"definitely" showed her that she too could write in Scots – and inspired a lifelong love of performing poetry. "We learned Burns off by heart at primary school – 'To a Mouse'. It's a fantastic poem. He was quite naked and vulnerable in that.

"My cheeky reply ['From a Mouse' (2009)] was just an entertainment. I'm taking the mickey out of Scotsmen's attitude to Burns and the glorifying of the 'Jack the lad' persona.

"It's not that I want to be po-faced about it, but I don't want them to think it's a good idea to encourage that kind of behaviour.

"I'm a feminist and I'm a woman. I'm interested, still, in sexual politics because there's no solution to it. I don't think Burns is part of the problem but there's a lot of poisonous masculinity about and, let's face facts, Burns was not squeaky clean.

"He certainly was a lover, a faller in love, but he must have been a shocking husband in many ways. Not a shocking father, he knocked his pan in trying to provide."

Lochhead certainly shook up the male-dominated poetry world in 1972 with her debut collection, 'Memo for Spring', published after the then 24-year-old opened for Norman MacCaig at a reading in Edinburgh. As Ali Smith notes in her introduction to last year's 50th anniversary edition of 'Memo for Spring', here was "a poet who's a woman, and a Scot! ... it's an impact the size of a changed world".

Changing the literary landscape was not the intention of Lochhead, who is also an acclaimed playwright. "I didn't write to encourage other women to write. I wrote because I didn't see why I shouldn't," she says. "I didn't actually expect the poems to get put in a book. I wrote all the poems in 'Memo for Spring' when I was at the Glasgow School of Art. I thought I'd be an art teacher and paint. My first book happened almost by accident.

"I never felt that I didn't have any right to write things. I was pre-second wave feminism. I had heard of the Suffragettes and had noticed some things were

FROM BEYOND THE GRAVE AND WITH THE BENEFIT OF HINDSIGHT, HERE'S JENNY CLOW TO ROBERT BURNS

One of Lochhead's newest poems is inspired by Burns – 'Jenny Clow's Me Too', penned for a Burns Supper. "If you publish a bit of it," Lochhead said, "you'll have to put it in with asterisks, then the s*** will hit the fan!" Jenny, 20, was a maid to Burns's 'Clarinda', Agnes Maclehose, the lover who inspired 'Ae Fond Kiss'. Jenny gave birth to Burns's son in 1788 and died from tuberculosis three years later. Here, Lochhead shares how poor Jenny did "anachronistically, energetically, dictate the following to me"...

Great lover? Rab, you wrote your ain reviews!
Did you believe in a wummin's right to choose?
For aw we ken t'wis never in Jean's gift to refuse
Thon 'electrifying scalade'.
She micht have got up, rolled her een, an hauf-amused
Muttered 'no bad'.

Floored, there's minny a lass discovers
The brute hard-at-it buck rootin above her's
Quite shair he's the last o the rid-hoat lovers,
God's gift! --
Tho the delusion he's th'greatest o earth-movers
Be frankly daft.

An wha kens whit Jean Armour was feelin?
Mibbe aw yon 'ecstatic' yelping and squealin
In rising crescendo, had rather been revealin
No pleasure but pain?
Desertit, eight-month gone, long past concealin...
An twins. Again...

Rab, you dearly lo'ed a bit o posh an chose
Your 'Clarinda', the married Mistress McLehose
Frae amang Edinburgh's those-and-sich-as-those.
Tho you persisted --
(Poems, promises, billets doux) -- tried everythin, God knows,
Still she resisted.



A letter by Burns featuring 'Ae Fond Kiss' has been on display in our 'Treasures' exhibition



Poems are a dance, a ballad and ballet, a meter and a sound. You're writing down sounds. That's why I'm interested in doing this digital thing

→ quite unfair but I was just always interested in the poems.

My favourite poet is probably a woman poet – Anon. I think Anon was a woman.

"They were lovely to me, all the male poets. It wasn't their fault female poets hadn't been getting published or encouraged enough."

Lochhead was appointed the second modern Makar in 2011, following the death of Edwin

Morgan, and held the post until 2016.

"It was great to do it. It really saved my life," she says. "It was about six months after my husband [architect Tom Logan] died, really quite suddenly.

I didn't know whether I should accept or not. My sister said, 'well, what would Tom say?'"

A few months later, she wrote about her grief in 'Favourite Place', part of a project for the Scottish Book Trust. Unlike much of her work, which is filled with humour, there is raw heartache, especially in the ending: "The world is still beautiful, though you are not in it.

"And this will not be a consolation, but a further desolation."

"I didn't feel happy writing 'Favourite Place' but I felt honest," she says. "I just wrote the truth and sent it off. Did it make me feel better? Not particularly, at the time. But I wouldn't have written the poem had I not been asked.

"I wish people would ask for poems more often! I only wrote about half a dozen poems during lockdown. They're getting rarer but they mean more to me, to be able to do it. It's the only time I feel really happy.

"I will publish the lockdown poetry if they [her publishers] do a 'Collected Poems'. In some ways, I should wait another year. What's so special about your 75th year, really? But I do feel a certain sense of getting a move on and writing stuff I want to write. Not out of ambition, just for

Silly, camp, fause names! As letter-cairrier, I do admire
Th'attempt at secrecy. Why the hell tho did she require
Me to 'await the response' she was on fire
To receive from 'her Sylvander'.

Mair than his hauns, his pent-up desperation an desire
Did wander.

Ach, minny a swain faced thus wi nothin-doin
Indulges elsewhere in expedient rough-wooin
While some random other recipient o what's ensuin
Accepts her fate
An for the moment he disnae care if wha he's screwin
'S a mere surrogate.

He was mad wi lust for my chaste mistress, nothing worse.
Really wanted her, she wouldnae, I did. My curse?
I thought he fancied me. Quite the reverse
I fear,
Jist made for his 'guid willy-pintle' a handy silk purse
O my soo's ear.
Twenty-first century folk thought t'was their invention,
Birth-control! And granted Rabbie an exemption --
But afore Dutch caps, rubber johnnies, no to mention
Game-changin pills
There existit an obvious method o prevention
As auld's the hills...

Nae wey o avoiding pregnancy? Oh please!
Tell that tae the birds an bees
Minnie a lover and his lass took post-orgasmic ease
'Mang th' hermlless spatters
O a skillfu cocksman blessed wi expertise
In country matters.

I had to keep Mum 'boot Sainted Rabbie
Wha f***** like a poet, in Standard Habbie.
Quick, staccato an jab-jab-jabby
Then - oof, past carin
Let fly, an left me -- is yon no jist fab, eh? --
Haudin the bairn.

He made promises that meltit like snaw
Clarinda got the song, I got hee-haw
'Cept the bairn, a faitherless yin an aw --
Rab, you could've easily,
If you cared about a lass at a
Have got aff at Paisley!



fun. I just want to keep writing for as long
as I'm alive."

She is also working with producer Gordon
Maclean on a digital project, to help more people
hear poetry spoken aloud, the way she believes it
should be heard.

"I'd really like to write some decent short stories,"
she adds. Not a novel? "No, I'm too old and have no
stamina for prose.

"Poems are a dance, a ballad and ballet, a meter
and a sound. You're writing down sounds. That's
why I'm interested in doing this digital thing. I'm
very interesting in a way of doing my 'Collected
Poems' but I wish I had a few more.

"Maybe that gives me a kick in the backside
to get a decent good few more. You feel if your
'Collected Poems' come out that would be you
finished, you know?"

In Lochhead's case, it seems unlikely she will ever
slow down. And for that, as Burns said, "sae let the
Lord be thankit". *

Burns's 'Kilmarnock Edition' and letters
are on display as part of our exhibition,
'Treasures of the National Gallery of
Scotland', at George IV Bridge, Edinburgh.



Lochhead and Ralph examine the Faed sketch inspired by 'Tam o'Shanter'

Smashing stigma of HIV and AIDS

Waverley Care is Scotland's HIV and hepatitis C charity. In 1991, in response to the AIDS epidemic, the group established one of the world's first hospices for those affected, Milestone House in Edinburgh. As treatment improved for people with HIV, Milestone's remit shifted from palliative to preventative care. This story is told in our Collections in Focus display, curated in partnership with Waverley Care. **Criz McCormick**, who has spent his life advocating for improved healthcare for gay people and communities affected by HIV, told us about his experiences and involvement in Waverley Care...

“When I first came out, I realised that it was dangerous – very

dangerous,” Criz said. “By just going to a gay pub I could be beaten up, I could be attacked – I’ve been hospitalised a few times. So very quickly you start to feel as if you’re all in the same boat.

“I realised that there was no information. I was desperately trying to find some about HIV and there was nothing accurate.”

Criz quickly realised that many of his friends his age were just as scared and as worried as he was.

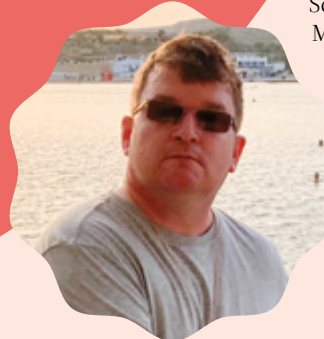
“Then the first person we actually all knew died,” he said. “We went to his funeral and at first

the family told us that we couldn’t come in. Then they said that if we did come in, we all had to sit at the back. Then they wouldn’t let us put any flowers out, and they ripped up the cards we had given.

“We started to realise... that was Frank. Then Billy, he was hospitalised. The nurses looked as if they were wearing hazmat suits. He deteriorated because of lack of human contact. He was a very tactile person. One of my friends became a nurse because of that, to try to educate from within. My response to it was,



Advocate Criz McCormick in 2005. Next page: Criz in 2011. Photographs supplied



Scottish AIDS Monitor, that was trying to combat misinformation about HIV and AIDS. Criz began advising them about young people's experiences and perspectives.

He acknowledged that many people have

differing accounts of how the organisation was established, saying: "Scottish AIDS Monitor was formed by Derek Ogg in his kitchen in the 80s with basically him saying, 'We've got to do something about this – there's an awful lot of misinformation – we need to make sure the information we have is accurate, then we [gay men] need to tell each other through social diffusion, and we need to get other people on side.'"

"Other people" meant those who knew how to navigate the system – people experienced in law, finance, healthcare, and people in positions of influence who could encourage the NHS to take the epidemic seriously – that it had the potential to wipe out significant numbers in Scotland. Collectively, they advised the NHS to provide free condoms and lubricants, as well as needle exchange services.

"We take these things for granted today – that it's perfectly reasonable," Criz said. "At the time people were genuinely horrified. They saw a needle exchange as encouraging people to inject. They saw free condoms being handed out as appalling, in encouraging this promiscuity."

Information was shared through leaflets, posters, activities and events. Then Waverley Care began planning for the development of



'I have to change things. I can't do it, or be a part of this'.

"For evil to flourish, good people do nothing. I've been involved ever since."

To this day, people living with HIV still carry the burden of decades of discrimination and misinformation about the virus. Criz's own quest for facts about

HIV led to him working at Milestone House.

As a teenager, he joined a youth group seeking information but they had none to share.

He then joined a gay switchboard, which existed to inform and support callers, but they were also light on facts.

However, they were aware of an organisation in its infancy,



At the time people were genuinely horrified... they saw free condoms as appalling, encouraging promiscuity

→ a palliative centre. People living with HIV were consulted on the services they wanted.

This approach was decades ahead of its time – person-centred care was not always considered at the time.

“Again, you would think that’s a completely rational thing to do today,” Criz said. “At that time, late 80s, it was considered extraordinary to do that – no one else was doing that.”

“Milestone was doing it before Milestone was built. They asked about the design, the shape, the colour... everything. It was very much led in that way.”

A creche, for example, was among the things that people asked for. It was difficult to manage HIV and a child.

Milestone provided a space for people to place their child and know they would be safe among people who would not judge.

“If you were the child of someone who had HIV you were treated appallingly at school and nursery or wherever,” Criz said.



Waverley Care’s Milestone House transformed from a palliative care to a treatment centre in the mid-90s, amid an improvement in the treatment options offered to those affected by HIV

“You were given your own cutlery, a separate plate.

“The misinformation about how HIV was spread continued well into the 90s and beyond.”

Through his work with Scottish AIDS Monitor, Criz started volunteering at Milestone House.

“There was always a brilliant atmosphere,” he said. “You wouldn’t think there would be because obviously people were dying. But there was a fantastic

atmosphere, especially when we had fundraising events, or when somebody would come up with a new idea.

“There was a freedom and a support for how things were done. But there was this other thing – whether you were gay, lesbian, straight, transgender or whatever, the reality of the situation was we were all in the same cause. So it brought us together, whereas before we had maybe been a wee bit separate from each other.”

Milestone House provided services such as massage and aromatherapy. Criz encouraged group activities with the residents – be that ukulele, candle making or workshops about making stained glass windows.

“Food became very important,” he said. “Visits, activities. They [the residents] noticed very strange little things – children’s laughter. The creche had its own benefits.

“Every room had a window out to the garden. Gardens became very important as well for walks, being able to make contact with nature. We had an open-door policy – anyone was allowed in at any time. I know that for people who were at the end of life, Milestone made a vast difference. The techniques we used were copied. Things like occupation,

keeping people’s minds and hands busy with activities, whether that would be creative or whatever.

“Sometimes it’s the very small things – a clean sheet that’s smooth without any creases on it. It might sound as if it was a very simplistic thing, but if your skin hurts, it becomes the world to you that somebody’s conscious of that. And that they’ve actually made your bed properly so it’s comfortable for you.”

When medication arrived in the mid-90s, there followed a dramatic shift in the care offered to people with HIV.

Milestone House transformed from offering palliative care to a treatment centre.

“One guy was virtually skeletal – he took the medication and, I am not joking, within a matter of weeks, I actually walked past him because I didn’t recognise him. He was so different. He’s still alive today,” said Criz.

Stigma and misinformation around HIV and AIDS remained, however. From the mid-00s, Criz delivered training to staff in bars – mostly gay bars – in Glasgow, Edinburgh and other areas as part of his job as a support worker for Gay Men’s Health. The idea was to give bar staff enough information to correct any derogatory remarks they



The gardens at Milestone House help to encourage contact with nature



Whether you were gay, lesbian, straight, transgender, whatever, we were all in the same cause. It brought us together

Annie Lennox © Kathy Hutchins/Shutterstock

overheard, or to point people to sources of accurate information and sexual health resources.

Over the years, medical advances in HIV treatment have meant people cannot pass it on through sex, often referred to as U=U (undetectable=untransmittable), and people diagnosed with HIV can live a long and healthy life.

HIV prevention has also developed, with a medication called PrEP available to people at risk of HIV which prevents infection. A medication called PEP is available to those who have been exposed to HIV which also stops HIV in its tracks.

“PrEP’s been a game-changer,” Criz said. “The figures have plummeted.” Criz is one of the researchers who advised Waverley Care and the Library

on this collaborative display, recording oral histories, ephemera and other material to tell the story of Waverley Care. At the heart of the display is a timeline – not only for Waverley Care but HIV.

“We’re at a point now where people don’t really know the details of what was going on in the 80s,” Criz said. “An awful lot of this stuff, I’m afraid, has become forgotten.”

He describes the display as “very visual”, with arts and crafts made at Milestone House – stained glass, mosaics, drawings and poetry. Also included is

the ‘Red Hot + Blue’ songbook from the benefit at which Annie Lennox (pictured left) performed for AIDS charities, as well as oral histories from individuals who lived at Milestone House.

“There’s a value to the information that people remember as eyewitnesses,” Criz said. “It’s easy to tell

the story of HIV in Scotland because there is still a lot of information out there. It’s difficult to give it a human face.” *

Criz McCormick is a Senior Support Worker at Mainstay Trust. The Collections in Focus display, ‘Blood, Sweat and Tears: Scotland’s HIV Story’, runs until December 2023 at our George IV Bridge building in Edinburgh. The collaboration is supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund.



ABOUT WAVERLEY CARE

Waverley Care is Scotland’s leading HIV and hepatitis C charity and everything the team does is guided by the experiences of the people they work with – from shaping the services being offered to how the charity helps influence national policy around sexual health and blood-borne viruses.

A positive HIV diagnosis still has the power to impact every part of someone’s life. HIV is treatable but the stigma and shame surrounding the virus holds people back and makes it different to other life-long conditions.

Stigma and the fear of HIV diagnosis still prevent many people at risk from getting a test and knowing their status.

Waverley Care’s vision is for a Scotland where no one



faces HIV alone. The charity aims to achieve this by fighting stigma and empowering people in Scotland who are living with HIV to live full and healthy lives.

Muriel Spark and the curious work of writing

The following enlightening article is a result of **Steven Harvie's** PhD research in our Muriel Spark archive. He explores the idiosyncrasies of Spark's unique approach to her writing and research, her love of the notebooks of Edinburgh bookseller James Thin and the significance of Penelope Jardine's contribution to her work.

It is through collaborations with PhD students such as Steven (University of Glasgow), that our extensive literary archives are illuminated and the knowledge contained within them is shared for all our readers.

– Manuscripts Curator, Colin McIlroy

“**T**here is far more to creative writing than

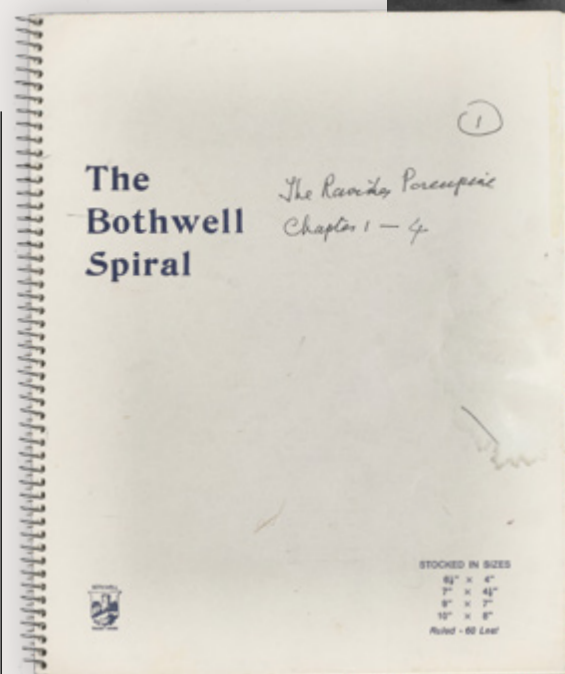
just to sit down to write and simply vent your feelings,” said Muriel Spark, one of Scotland's most prominent 20th century novelists. This was written in an essay about how the craft of poetry was a crucial step towards her career as a novelist, but the quote also speaks to the kind of work involved in novel writing, as well as the habits and idiosyncrasies unique to Spark's writing process.

For example, she wrote the first drafts of all of her novels by hand but did not settle for any old notebook or nearby paper; no, she had a fondness for a specific type of notebook ('Bothwell

spirals') that was sold only by a stationer in Edinburgh called James Thin. These spiral-bound notebooks contained 72 pages of lined paper, upon which Spark would write only on the recto (right-hand side), leaving the other side empty for potential revisions.

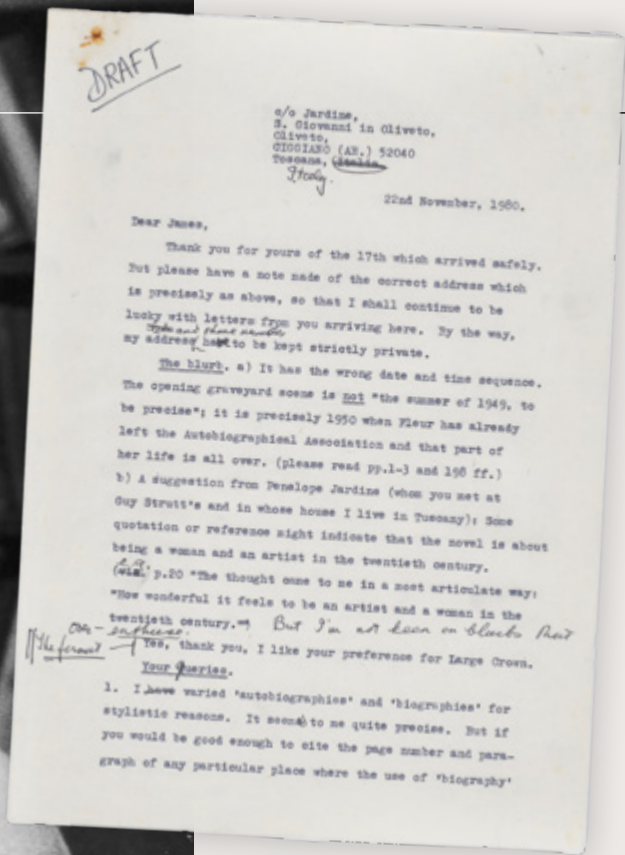
Even after Spark moved away from the UK in the early 1960s, she would still request and use these exact notebooks in whichever European or American city or province to which she had relocated. There is a receipt in the archive showing her bulk order of 48 Bothwell spirals.

Perhaps Spark's deep attachment to the notebooks derives from a place of nostalgia for her first home (Edinburgh), or the kind of superstitious, writerly quirk that attributes



Spark wrote the first drafts of her novels by hand and would use only 'Bothwell spiral' notebooks, sold by James Thin

Muriel Spark, 1957, courtesy London Evening Standard



Our Muriel Spark archive includes the author's letters, such as this one, above right, which mentions suggestions to her work by her friend Penelope Jardine

good fortune to certain materials or rituals (Spark admits to such eccentricities when she says she can only use pens that have been touched by her alone).

But equally as compelling are the practical constraints that the notebooks imposed on her novel writing. For instance, most of Spark's manuscripts take up just five James Thin notebooks and the manuscript usually concludes at the very end of the fifth notebook. There are, of course, exceptions: Spark's two longer novels, 'The Mandelbaum Gate' and 'The Takeover', required far more space and therefore paper than the others. However, for the most part, it appears that these writing materials informed if not entirely determined the length and pace of the novels.

Spark became so dependent on these notebooks that when Thin discontinued them in the early 90s, she contacted the company to enquire about the possibility of acquiring notebooks that resembled, as close as possible, her beloved Bothwell spirals. To Spark's



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→ delight, Thin responded by producing – in consultation with Spark – custom-made notebooks. “You are indeed an angel!”

writes Spark in reply to Hilary Thin (then regional director of the Scottish branch), who had been liaising with several companies to gather the materials needed to construct Spark’s ideal notebook.

The enterprise was successful. “This will be just right,” says Spark, “I am so happy and regard them as the true Spark-Thin notebooks.”

Before she began writing her latest novel inside her treasured notebooks, she would research the topics or settings explored in her burgeoning narrative.

Having written several books of literary biography and criticism on writers such as Mary Shelley and the Brönte sisters well before she became famous as a novelist, Spark was no stranger to research.

Her 20th novel, ‘Reality and Dreams’ – about a controlling film director recently made redundant – draws on an eclectic mix of cultural, political and historical environments and

contexts including the film industry, the nature of labour and employment, and the distant world of Roman Britain.

The archive shows that Spark consulted, among other things, book titles such as ‘On Filmmaking’, ‘Filmmaking Foundations’, and ‘The Film Director as Superstar’, plus books on make-up and special effects.

Curiously, the archive also contains a newspaper clipping of an interview with Harrison Ford who is, according to the article writer, “well known for involving himself in every aspect of [film] production”. The interview, published two years before the appearance of ‘Reality and Dreams’, likely contributed to the creation or development of Tom Richards, the tyrannical film director at the heart of the novel.

When Spark did start writing, another project hummed in the background, managed by her close friend and living companion, Penelope Jardine. This was the creation of ‘Character Lists’ containing not only an index of every character

that appears in the novel, but also individual lists pertaining to each character that traces their appearances and actions throughout their time in the narrative.

These lists were compiled alongside Spark’s writing and though it is unclear how exactly she used them, their value is obvious – as well as ensuring the continuity of the narrative (consistent physical descriptions for characters, maintaining a logical sequence of events), the lists also helped her discover traits in her characters that she could then flesh out: “I can sort of pick out a characteristic and this is a way you can build up a personality.”

Jardine also proofread Spark’s drafts, all the way up to the final proof copies. While Spark’s manuscript would be scrutinised by her publisher’s editorial team, she clearly trusted and respected Jardine’s opinion enough to let her also apply her keen and critical eye to the text.

Jardine is precise – in the proof copy of ‘Reality and Dreams’ she questions whether something the protagonist said early in the novel contradicts something said 100 pages later (it did not, but Spark must have appreciated the attention to detail).

Though Jardine’s editorial interventions were relatively minimal, the dedicated work she performed behind the scenes for any given Spark project (she even made suggestions for book blurbs) shows that ‘secretary’ – a word often used to describe Jardine’s professional relationship with Spark – is something of a misnomer. The kind of care and support she bestowed on Spark’s work reflects not only the duties of an administrative assistant, but the enthusiasm and thorough

Chapters of Spark’s 20th novel, ‘Reality and Dreams’, handwritten in one of her favoured notebooks

inspection of a fellow artist (Jardine is a painter and sculptor).

Writing, as Spark says, is far from simple, and her archive is a testament to that, containing as it does fascinating stories about all the different kinds of work (and play!) that come together in the act of storytelling.

Writing is, for the most part, a solitary activity and Spark was protective of her individual writing style, quick to correct any interference, accidental or otherwise, with her finely wrought compositions. As she said to – or warned – a publisher in the 1980s: “I’m famous for my austerity in proofreading”.

But the archive highlights that writing is full of collaboration – whether it is the annotations of a close friend, the provision of bespoke writing materials, chance encounters with news items or the unexpected rabbit-holes of research, Spark’s writing is borne of, and animated by, dialogues with others. *

Extracts from materials held in the Muriel Spark Archive are quoted by permission of the Spark Estate, and with the kind assistance of Penelope Jardine.



*The Painted Room
Reality and Dreams
Chap(-8) -10*

3

Spark’s archive contains this newspaper interview with actor Harrison Ford, which may have inspired a character in ‘Reality and Dreams’

