



A Visitor Calls

**an anthology of new writing by
Bradgate Writers Group**



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Bradgate Writers Group

Introductions

Lydia Towsey

*Arts in Health Coordinator, Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust and
Project Lead Co-Facilitator*

Bradgate Writers Group is a regular creative writing group, organised by Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust, delivered in partnership with Brightsparks – voluntary arts in mental health organisation, and WORD! – voluntary organisation delivering the longest run-ning spoken word night in the Midlands.

Running for approximately 5 years, we use literature, reading, writing and creativity to boost wellbeing and support recovery from mental health issues. We are dedicated to de-veloping high quality writing, across a variety of themes and subjects, and seek outlets for print and performance wherever we find them.

Our previous publications include *Undead Poets Society*, a pamphlet of gothic material funded by Everybody's Reading – and *Healthy Culture*, an anthology dedicated to developing health and wellbeing in the community, funded by NHS England.

For the last year, Bradgate Writers has been running a project, funded by Arts Council England and facilitated by Peter Buckley and me, with support from volunteer facilitator Jonathan Hurley, plus a number of visiting writers and performers, including: Nasser Hussain, John Gallas, Francesca Beard, Will Horspool, Mark Pajak, Maria Taylor and Malika Booker. *A Visitor Calls* is our resulting anthology, and the aptly named culmination of our work together.

Illustrated with the help of another visitor, artist/facilitator, Jo Sheppard, delivering sessions at our afternoon 'Artscafe' project, supported by volunteer artist facilitator, Sue Jordan – *A Visitor Calls* nods to the attendance of our many visiting artists, writers and facilitators – and reflects on such themes as travel, love, memory, the environment, health, home and of course, visitations.

We hope you enjoy reading and looking at the work within these pages as much as we have enjoyed writing, drawing, painting, speaking and creating it. We'd love to see you at our group, or at one of our public performances, so do drop us a line for more information – and pay us a visit!

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Peter Buckley*Project Lead Co-Facilitor*

The anticipation of waiting for the doorbell's ring or chintzy melody, the quite unnecessary fluffing of cushions and the making of a bed, getting enough "stuff" in – fancy brands suddenly populating the fridge as further expression of your welcome. When the visitor calls, a new or renewed perspective, and a different experience, visits too. At times this requires preparation and a disruption to everyday routine, but the rewards are of fresh air, and if not lessons learnt from one another, then certainly a 'change'.

Change drives creativity, and as a writing group led by facilitator's activities and spring-boarding creative prompts, we Bradgate Writers are an adaptable bunch, relishing the quick-switch and swap of ideas as they are made and exchanged. In this book you'll see our individual visions visited, if you like, by starting points offered by workshop facilitators, as well as worlds that dance their way from that possible Tango, in pursuit of what our individual writer's practice might next encounter – a surprise *Samba no pé* down intriguing side-streets, and onto converging paths.

This book represents a time in which we were fortunate to be visited by guest facilitators of renown and note in poetry, prose and spoken word, generously lending their skills and professional insight.

The enjoyment in leading a session at Bradgate Writers is in the meeting of your own writing practice and, often, some communication of that in the form of teachable activities. Workshops are full of laughter and we aim to share our work, enjoy the instance of its creation, have fun with words and continue that energy as we see it through to final draft.

When I think of Bradgate Writers I think of tables jammed together into a surface that might serve for an ad-hoc Medieval banquet one day, but for the time being is required to seat our writers collective 'round. We process work from existing poets, and interact with each other in jovial conversation that has serious intent as part of the process. Ever present is the translucent Tupperware box of assorted pens, and sheets of paper, usually pale pink or yellow, and it's on these, after teas and coffees are made (coffee>tea of a morning) that I've written in a more concentrated and constructive way than I might without the joy, of founding a new piece of writing in the good company of fellow writers, negotiating together the happily unfamiliar considerations that occur when a visitor calls. As a facilitator I've learnt more about the craft of writing and the performance of words, and read more of the work of other writers, than

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I would squirrelling away by myself. I think many of us would note such a benefit.

Bradgate Writers is a group in which we enjoy the malleability of words and the transformational magic of meaning. We're paying mind to the steps of recovery but see the investment and effort in writing as a natural complement to that. As such, every tone of voice, and facet in the human experience can be comfortably accommodated, as you'll notice within this volume. *A Visitor Calls* and everything changes. It's change that visits the scholar of Edgar Allan Poe's 'The Raven' for instance, in the form of that poem's ominous bird, it's 'change' that the tough cowboy passing through a no-good town heralds, before circumstances make him the sheriff.

This collection has flighty feet and winged shoes as we look to the transience that proceeds a visit – torn tickets and departure lounges. We travel on to the visit itself and the ever-complicated mingling of strangeness, comfort and familiarity. In our definition of 'journey' we are considering lives, and loves – appropriate since our welcome to anyone reading this is warm – and because the universality of love is a journey we all galvanised around. Love continues as the chemtrails in the blue fade against night, the poetry appearing to become populated prismatically and abstractly in the half-light of busy, chaotic nightlife.

Almost as if waking from that dream or nocturnal misadventure, we rest reflexively in an at times nostalgic phase, or otherwise on other particular aspects of human lives as lived and experienced emotionally. 'Things in a Stew' is the chapter and poem heading that might sum this up most effectively, embracing, not shying away from, the universality of all that we have felt, and all that is human.

We jump into writing here at Bradgate Writers and encourage you to do the same as a reader. This collection represents the best of the exceptional work we have produced. We have prepared everything for you, however long you can stay. You can pop in for tea, whenever you like, or get to know our writing from cover to cover. There's fresh, zesty fruit in the fruit bowl. Should you choose to leave, we hope you do so refreshed, with new landscapes and views before you, and with a smile. We hope our writing stays with you.



Fly Me



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TODAY I WALKED INTO THE DAY

Darren (Shantaka)

Today I walked into the day
wishing I could fly with the song of birds.

Enough of the weight of normal thought.
Flying, imagined,
imagined the world, so to be.

Today I walked
amongst the clouds
soaring to the song of birds.

As I awoke
I walked into my fear,
into the day.

The bus stop
started my journey from a to be,
to be
the destination of my soaring song
as I worry the heater's still on.

The next landmark,
a bus stop at which
I do not stop.

Apple slices on the floor,
an accident awaiting its happening.
I pick them up
so the old boy don't fall.
As I pass he thanks me
and I continue on
as an oak tree gives.

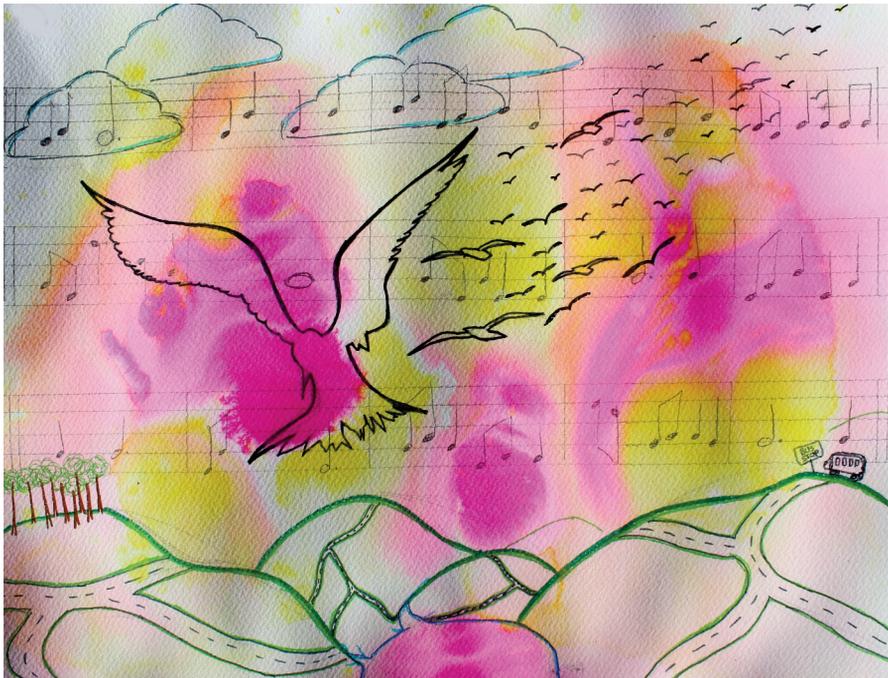


A Visitor Calls

Walking from the stop
through building steps
I arrive and write.

Write two stages
and continue on.

Thinking of the bus stop
that starts my soaring song.



Anna Cuaano



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BOXING CLEVER

Toni Moore

Frank Bruno walking his dog on a Desert Island
bumps into Lennox Lewis and they fight.
Bruno jumps into a lake – and his dog
barks a potato straight in the eye.
“Hey Lennox you look like a potato”
Lennox jumps onto a nearby giraffe
and makes his escape.

*

Looking over The Lake District,
wish I hadn't left my lunch at home.
Dog walks past
looking a potato straight in the eye.
Giraffe walks by
with Frank Bruno and Lennox Lewis
travelling over a bridge.



Alison Lloyd



BRIDGES

Harriet Cooper

Bridges take you on a journey from one bit of land to another.
You can never see the end of some, whereas others are in sight.
Across the sea or through a quiet meadow,
Water flows in a stream or engulfs you, as a wave in the ocean
But it's the bridge that holds you.
It may look ugly and manmade,
Be wobbly or sturdy
Or of a strange colour
But these judgments don't matter,
cannot be true
when it leads you to a place
that's new.

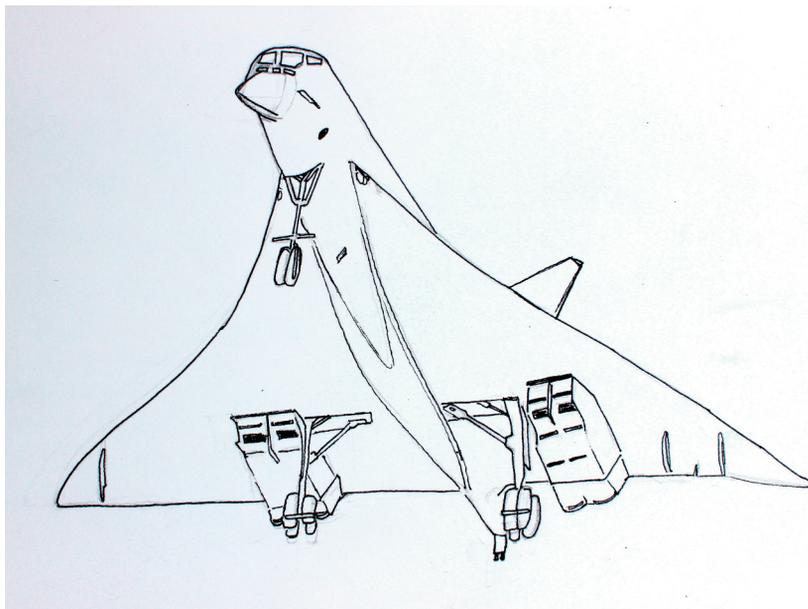


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FLY ME

Mandy Jo

FLY ME TO MOON TO INNSBRUCK
ON A BOEING 737 TO MALAGA
FROM MALAGA EASY JET AIRBUS TO BIRMINGHAM
JUMBO JET AIR CANADA TO TORONTO
FLY OVER NIAGRA FALLS BY CHOPPER
NEW YORK NEW YORK ON CONCORDE TO LONDON
AIRFORCE ONE TO TRUMP ONE
FLY DOWN TO ROMA
FROM ROMA TO HONG KONG
QUANTAS FLYING KANGAROO TO SYDNEY
DOWN UNDER TO VANCOUVER UNITED TO LAX
FLY ME TO EAST MIDLANDS AIRPORT
SKYLINK TO LEICESTER
HELLO NEW ZEALAND
JOHN LIVED IN LEICESTER.



Chris Woolman

THE 2017 MAGIC

Alison Lloyd

You stand by the bus stop
with well eyes, eyes that have
seen pain, been full of tears
but also known happiness.

People rush by, a dog barks.
In the distance, a child laughs
playing at the park and you
think to yourself it will never
get dark.

It does get dark but you
have to smile, the stars glisten
in the sky, you stand there for
a while.

Music blares out of a car
driving past... it's time to
go home. I could moan and cry
but I have to try – to see friends,
family, people who mean
the world. I think to myself

I've got to keep smiling.



Mandy Jo

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POSTCARD FROM CANADA

Mandy Jo

DEAR BRANDON

HAVING A WONDERFUL TIME IN VANCOUVER.
VISITED GAS ST WORKING STREET CLOCK.
HAVING MAPLE SYRUP AND PANCAKES WITH ICE CREAM.
BEEN ON A FERRY TRIP TO VANCOUVER ISLAND SEEING
SEALS FLYING ALONG WATER, OLD RED MUSTANG ON BOAT.
VISITED BRITISH COLUMBIA MUSEUM – HISTORY OF PEOPLE,
WORKING MODEL RAILWAY GOING ON OLD ROUTE-MASTER BUS IN RED
TOUR AROUND VICTORIA. HAVING ENGLISH AFTERNOON TEA
IN EMPRESS HOTEL, WITH FLYING BOAT AIRCRAFT TAKE-OFF IN HARBOUR.

FROM MANDY



Mandy Jo

LIFE IN THE CITY – A CHILDREN’S POEM

Gwynne

Daybreak slides over crowded houses,
parks and waste lands from slumber rouse.
As rose bay willow, break though rocky knolls
the concrete jungle now bears its soul.

Bindweed scrambles up rusty metal railings
weaving and clinging in early sunshine bathing.
Its fragile petals of a delicate hue
wire lilies covered in a shimmering dew.

There! – crossing the road in light still pale
a knowing dog fox with a ragged torn tail
then gone! – in a blink of an eye,
an urban hero just trotting by.

A handsome black cat sits on a flat roof,
enigmatic, contemplative, remote and aloof
he grazes up with a pensive pause,
then glances down to admire his claws.

Far above the bustling city,
jet vapour trails criss-cross up high.
Below them curling cumulus clouds
tell stories as through the blue they fly.

Drifting dreams of light and laughter,
of smiling cats and kings,
of unicorns and dancing swans
and newts with fairy wings.

Songbirds sing of love’s bright day,
butterflies flicker by,
tales to be told as clouds unfold
in this lyrical of skies.

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In crumbling houses, in shadowy places,
manic mice run manic races
hithering, zithering, quivering they go.
Their intent? Their purpose? Only they know.

A ghastly spider sits and spins
her web of spindly lace.
For careless flies, a fearsome fate.
A killer kiss, a deathly embrace.

Starlings gather as dusk draws in,
sequence flying in skies grown dim.
Swooping and swirling for nights roost they prepare,
painting paisley patterns in the evening's cold air.

A mystic owl hoots through the gloom
performing his solitary tune,
telling of the day now gone,
a canticle, a swan song.



Mandy Jo

I DO NOT OWN

Clare Hughes

I do not own the future
But I do try to plan it
I do not own time
But I try to make good use of mine
I do not own control
Because sometimes I do not own my own mind
But I try to focus and use tools I have; to make
The best of what I have and what is mine.



Sue Jordan

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LIFE ADVICE

Jonathan Hurley

Be cool
do school
and well.
Or rather
try your best
and at examination test,
you will gain.

Let your head
not turn to
temptation;
the gangs of
New York
or Newisham.

Life is life with love.

Choose not
unpleasant vagaries,
where death
imitates life.
But build bonds
where both
the weak and strong
can-couple-together.

Remembering that mortgages
are but French death deeds,
that both tax and oppose our
humanist Acts in Parliament.

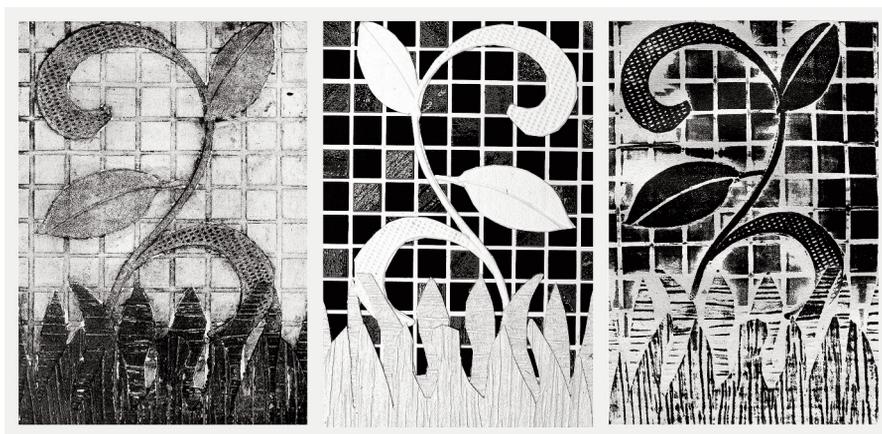
I DO NOT OWN

Isabelle

I do not own a sports car,
I do not even own a wreck of a car.
I own my own legs and they get
Me from A to B.

I do not own the beaches in Cornwall,
I do not own any beaches at all.
I do own special memories of learning
To swim in a beautiful turquoise sea
And absorbing the warmth of the sun.

I do not own the community garden,
I do not own my own garden.
I do own the bulbs and plants
That add a splash of vibrant spring colours.



Jason Carey