

Cave Writings

A Project by Fife Writes

Issue 1B, 29 December 2020

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Fife Writes would like to thank our Patron Tom Hubbard for the idea of this project.

Fife Writes would also like to thank all contributors to this collection of inspired, cutting-edge and witty creative writings.

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1. Caves by Richard Brewster

Deep in the jowls
Or is it the bowels? Of the Earth
A cave in Venezuela
Two mile deep
The walls so steep
That nobody who's tried can scale her

Out of the sky
On a rope comes a guy
Flying on a prayer and a wish
Abseiling in style
For over two mile
At the bottom of the cave, he finds a fish

And the fish is so white
From lack of sunlight
How it got there is a mystery it's true
In black for generations
No pigment, no sight, no distant relations
Did it abseil to get there too?

A carpet of bats cover the walls
The deafening shriek of bat calls
Can you turn down the noise if you pardon?
The real bat cave
Intones Attenborough Dave
All that bat shit would be good for my garden

Moving to Fife
Another cave another life
Just along from Dysart Harbour
Are the caves of East Wemyss
No bats, no rare fish. Just dreams
Discussed o'er a braw fire and cans of lager.

And you think that's not fair
These caves I compare
At least we can look at the sea
Our caves are aerobic
And not claustrophobic
And we'll even get vitamin D

2. Down Under by Susan Grant

Wonderland! Waves lap
Against arching limestone walls
In a magical underworld,
The dark sapphire velvet
Of it, known to
Maori
Of the long ago.

Through caves of drip-formed
'ctites and 'gmites,
now linked as pillars,
a river flows below the ground.
Drift on it in silence
under a ceiling of glow-worm stars
as myriad as The Milky Way.
Not white, but luminescent green
they trail their prey-trap filaments.

If awe had had a sound
it would have been the beating of my heart.

3. The Home of My Ancestors by Tricia Levack

To the home of my ancestors,
A place far away,
To the land of Kintyre,
I'll travel one day,
To be with my kinfolk,
To stay where they are,
Where they once walked the earth,
Are now buried there.

Yet alive in my heart,
They will live once again,
To their future descendants,
They will speak through the pen,
Of a writer who loves them,
A branch of the tree,
Roots of the earth,
My family.

Magical beings in a mystical land,
Where mermaids are seen by a Ballinatumie child,
Herding cattle along the Corphin shore.
Cave-dwellers, story-tellers, fortune tellers,
Living in Keil Caves,
Where Columcille himself once lived.
Singing songs around the fire,
A community sharing their dreams.

Alive in my heart,
They will sing once again,
To their future descendants,
They will dream through the pen,
Of a writer who loves them,
A branch of the tree,
Roots of the earth,
My family.

4. Midwinter Morning by Jane Cook

Night's cave rounds off the square white edges of our house.

In black I slither out of bed.

Leaving you latent, I inch by instinct through the mirk,

Alone, along the landing. Hands and feet

Remind me of the way. Toes grip the stairs.

Down seven, turn, down six.

I cross the kitchen floor and light the wick.

The room rotates around a fleck of flame.

I do not open blinds to splash rude light outside

Where snowdrop bulbs lie dormant in brown earth.

There are no sounds. The birds

Are still asleep. I am deep dug into this moment,

And feel the weight of winter burrowing

Down low in the hollow of the house. And yet

I eat my porridge, feel the slow release

Of summer energy and dawn's wan light

Breaks through the far glass door,

Beckoning. It pulls me out once more.

5. Cave Camera Obscura by Kenny Munro

Creative painted caves reveal a secret world where

Ancestors made their homage-marks away from snow

Many humans expressed themselves, bonding with their tribes

Evidence of rhythmic language in hand-prints beat each time

Remember Leakey's dream-time dance - a ceilidh?

Aspiring to communicate with light beyond darkness

Optical Octavian magic moves through the smoke

Bringing Khayyám's oil-lamp picture-show to bear as

Skylight cuts through gloom to the sound of chanting

Comrades come and go as phantom figures transform life

Unbelievable Mesolithic movies celebrate seasons of fertility

Revived now as a theatre of imagination which explores the Earth.

Art made in those frozen times was and is our future salvation.

6. Cave Art by Susan Grant

The Dhorlin.

This shingle causeway rises
as Campbelltown Loch tide falls.

Access to the Isle of Davaar,
in local parlance, "no very faar",
is open to walkers.

Mindful of the tide turn,
they scrunch across the strip
to reach the island's flat shoreline.

On turning right, this soft green surface
soon loses itself, first among stones
and rock slabs, then boulders.

Strides become scrambles
towards the cave,
first after the other six.

In there, on a canvas of rock,
created in secret,
courtesy of a 19th century dream
and the hands, eyes and skill
of Archibald McKinnon,
is the painting - a large, colourful
crucifixion of Christ.

No gilt frame, just a stone surround.
Not in a regulated gallery air,
but musty and sea damp
with slime on the walls.

It may not have the gravitas
of Giotto nor the drama of Dali
but this picture has impact,
a reverence of its own.

Art from the heart.

Unable to linger
because of the tide table,
backs are turned, steps re-traced.
The vision, held in the mind's eye,
will always haunt the memory.

7. The Den by Jacqueline Fox

We flounder a little,
laughter and coy smiles,
not hurried, like the season,
careful to pace ourselves,
against the tides of time,
commitments and judgements,
experience and hope.

Her anecdotes amuse me,
carried like a gull, on the gusts-
warm fish & chips in paper,
beach strolls,
vinegar tinged air,
acid and reassuring.

Our laughter resonates,
within me, within we,
deepening a moment,
remembered forever.
Like her sea-salt kisses,
warm, gentle, reassuring.

Time has not wiped away-
wishful fantasies, now conjoint.
We hide from winter,
and others, in our splendid isolation,
in the comfort of our den,
a lovers tryst.

Safe, warm, loved,
as the wind howls,
and ice reflects-
on the fringes of branches.

Cocooned, we raise a glass,
gratitude and cheer,
with gentle breath,
the years end, is near.

8. Mind Cave by Heather Dickson

I've locked myself away,
From the outside world,
I've surrendered,
To the darkness,
Of my mind,
I'm picturing,
Myself,
In a dark,
Cave,
Alone,
Only a fire to keep,
Me company,
I'm isolating here,
In the cave,
Of my mind,
Until,
The outward storm passes,
It might be a day,
A week,
A month,
Or even a year,
The fire will need rekindling,
But I'm tired,
I don't want to move,
Out of the darkness,
Of my mind,
Maybe,
One day,
I won't need this cave,
To get away from,
Everything,
Maybe one day,
The cave,

Will be happy

9. Torr Righ Mor (Bog hillock of the King) by Susan Grant

Mindful of the adder warning
we trekked the narrow path
through thigh high summer bracken.
We felt we were walking history
as we made for The King's Cave.

Despite claims made by Cove,
and the reckonings of Rathlin,
The King's Cave on Arran
takes on an authenticity
for was not Kintyre,
where Bruce had trained his horsemen
on the Gauldrons shore beyond Machrihanish,
an easy reach across Kilbrannan Sound
from Saddell?

No spiders hung or swung
that August Day but we imagined
we heard chain mail clink,
swords clash and cheers at Bannockburn.
However, real enough, inside the Cave,
wall carvings of coiled snakes, cancelled
with strong diagonals,
brought us back to now.

On our return tramp, more heed
was given to the adder warning.

10.Caves by Tricia Levack

The Caves of Altamira

I thought about the Caves of Altamira, Spain, and the cave paintings and what they meant to the people who lived there, trying to understand their reality and drawing figures on the wall to pass on their culture and learn about each other. I painted my interpretation of some of the cave paintings and have painted some modern paintings; these are my equivalent 'cave' paintings that I have done over the years; and how the paintings have a healing effect on me; especially since lockdown, the home has become more of a cave to hide in, to find new ways of living, making sense of the new reality.

A New Kind of Cave

Since lockdown, I paint more, sing more, play ukulele more, Zoom more, act more; I've done so much in the last ten months, than I have done before, crammed into the months as if in a desperate need to complete all the things I long to do. All activities, I feel, leads to healing. It is a healing process to make sense of it all.

There are so many activities that I've enjoyed that have kept me sane throughout lockdown.

- singing in the Great British Home Chorus with Gareth Malone
- playing the ukulele online
- acting for television course on Zoom
- taking part in singing Auld Lang Syne for a Christmas video for Glasgow University
- painting watercolours for the Book of Kells and getting my painting in the Fife Arts exhibition at Glenrothes, Rothes Halls <https://onfife.com/museums-galleries/fife-art-exhibition-2020#>
- contributing towards various charities, to feel a part of the community
- being able to see other people's caves without even moving from my seat.
- writing a piece on Caves for Fife Writes – belonging, feeling a part of something bigger than the cave.

I think about Plato and his Shadow Play and how some people only know the cave; that the shadows on the wall, cast from the light of the fire, are their only reality, and others long to be free, to know what lies beyond the shadows.

The Caves of Goreme, Cappadocia, Turkey

Today, you can escape in your own cave with Booking.com and what beautiful caves they are. The Hittite community lived there 1800-1200 BC and now they are luxury hotel rooms with the highest specification. I wouldn't mind spending some time there.

St. Serfs Cave, Dysart

Photo of the entrance to the cave : -

http://www.scottishchurches.org.uk/media/sites/images/10547/src/10547_1.jpg

I went to visit the cave many years ago, when it was the open day, so you could go in and see it. There was a lot of excitement at being in the cave. It was said that St. Serf took refuge here in the 8th century and made retreat here (desert), Dysart. The retreat is in the grounds of the Carmelite monastery.

Wemyss

And, of course, there are the Wemyss caves and a Save Wemyss Ancient Caves Society <https://wemysscaves.org> who are trying to protect the Pictish cave drawings.