

# Cave Writings

## A Project by Fife Writes

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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

**A**ncestors made their homage-marks away from snow

**M**any humans expressed themselves, bonding with their tribes

**E**vidence of rhythmic language in hand-prints beat each time

**R**emember Leakey's dream-time dance - a ceilidh?

**A**spiring to communicate with light beyond darkness

**O**ptical Octavian magic moves through the smoke

**B**ringing Khayyám's oil-lamp picture-show to bear as

**S**kylight cuts through gloom to the sound of chanting

**C**omrades come and go as phantom figures transform life

**U**nbelievable Mesolithic movies celebrate seasons of fertility

**R**evived now as a theatre of imagination which explores the Earth.

**A**rt 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](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.

## **11. Caves of Lockdown Life by Marianne Berguis**

In our four walled caves we sit alone,  
Protected from this fear of threat external.  
We shut ourselves safely away from civilisation,  
And humanities need for healthy socialisation.  
The erosion here is not of coastal grinding,  
But it's weathered from a more fearful storm.  
And as our mental health plummets down,  
Our once upbeat smiles turn into frowns.  
The force of the beating virus fuelled waves,  
Continue their infected grind of rocks and sand.  
It causes our inner structures to break and crack,  
Splitting us into lonely, solitary stumps and stacks.  
In our lockdown caves we should grow wiser,  
And use our vulnerability to help break these waters.  
The headland will call again as will the windswept sun,  
With patience and love this downdrift sediment we will overcome.

## 12.Hewn by Peter Marshall

Two thousand feet beneath the waves,  
not far from many miner's graves,  
from Valleyfield a link was hewn  
to meet up with Kinneil quite soon.

The idea was to send good coals  
across the Firth of Forth down holes.  
Lochgelly Splint seam was first class,  
as coal for steam, it'd always pass.

The Top Works in Fife was clapped out  
whilst that in Bo'ness left no doubt:  
there really was but little choice  
said quiet accountant's reasoned voice.

Seven and twenty brave mining men  
dropped each shift into a dark den.  
Their hard job was precise each day,  
to excavate a permanent way.

There always was bump-man on hand  
who was most welcomed by the band.  
His job: sit quiet, ears all alert  
to tragedy of rock-burst avert.

One time he heard rock groan and knew,  
all ran fast once whistle he blew.  
when he peeped weeks later, again,  
hard clatter soon, rocks fell like rain.

From the Old Kirk door at Bo'ness  
and from Blair Castle in Culross  
piano wire measured the drop -  
no obstacle would make them stop.

At last the tunnel was complete  
for railway far beneath wave's beat.  
In April nineteen sixty-four  
they finished that laborious bore.

They'd got it so right in level  
e'en though that's rather a devil.  
They were only three inches off  
so could with good reason scoff.

These valiant miners'd given birth  
to a dry way across the Firth.  
Faultless it worked for seventeen years  
'til Thatcher ground many to tears.

The pumps were switched off in each mine  
and now down there, fishes must dine.  
But we should their work remember  
even though coal's at low ember.