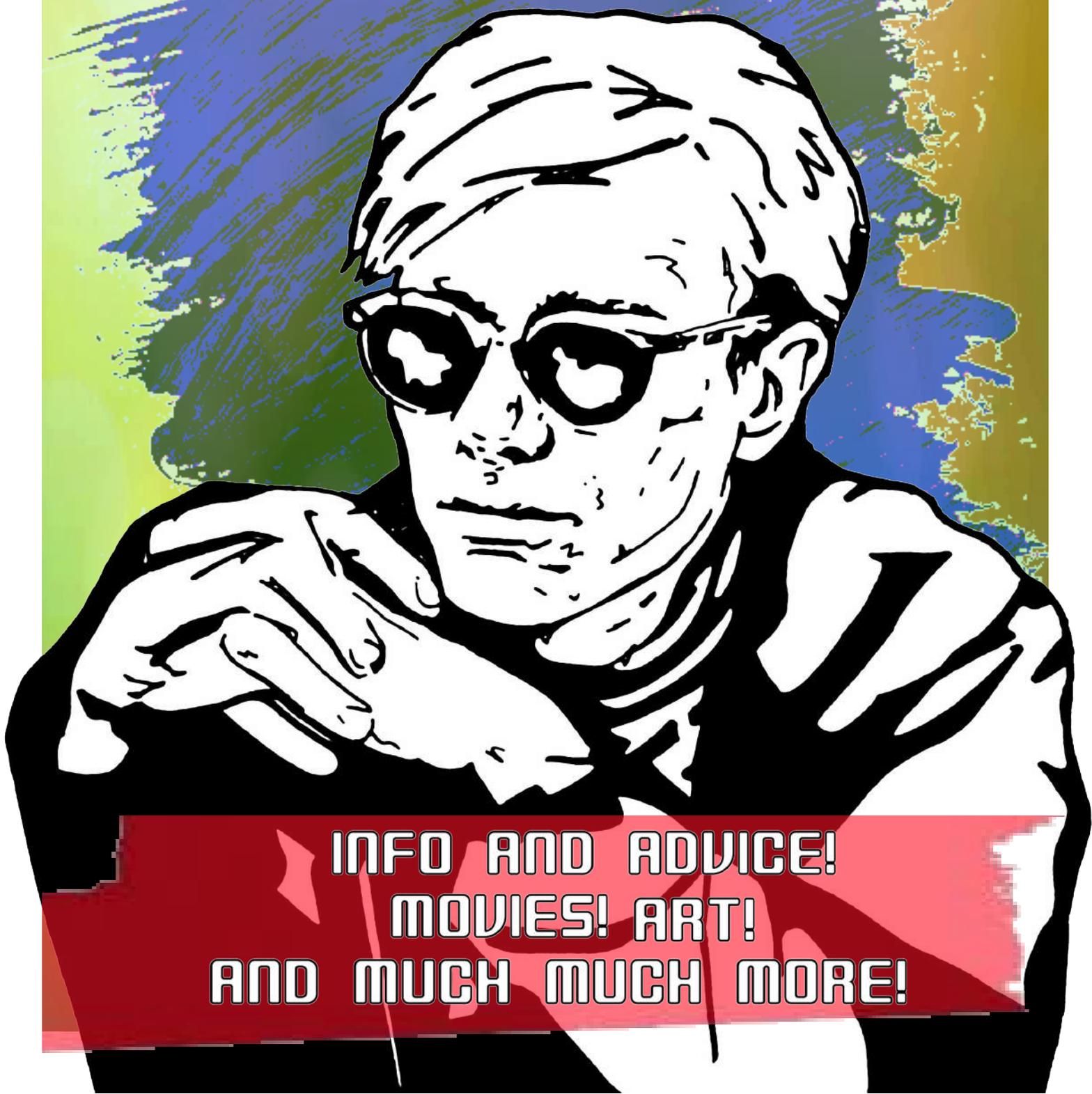


AUTITUDE!



INFO AND ADVICE!
MOVIES! ART!
AND MUCH MUCH MORE!

WELCOME!

2022

Welcome to the second issue of Autitude in 2022!

Do you have artwork, photography, poetry or stories you would like to share? Or perhaps you have an autistic idol that you think should feature as our Spectrum Superstar?

Whether it's a thought, suggestion or submission, send it to us at autitude@scottishautism.org.

To make sure you are updated when the latest edition is released please sign up here – thank you!

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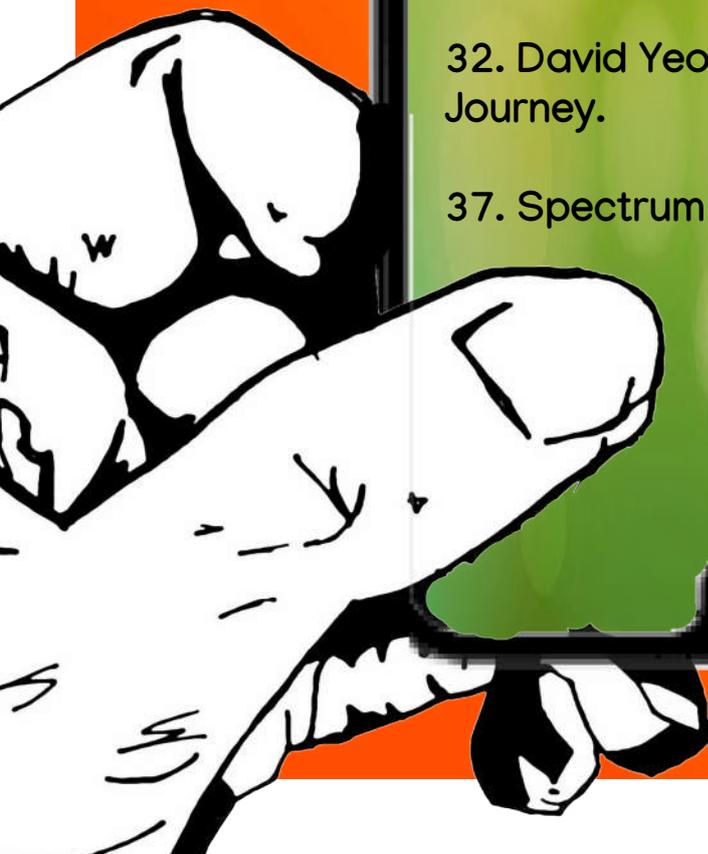
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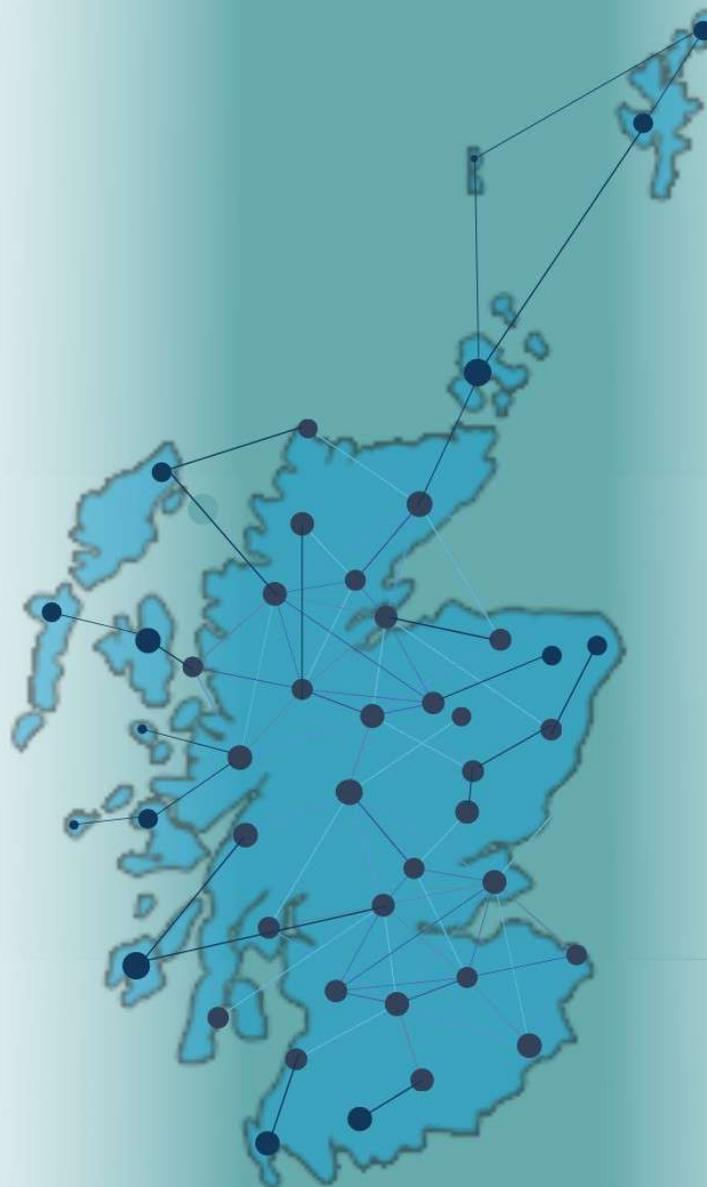
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Scottish
autism
WHERE AUTISTIC PEOPLE
ARE VALUED

Book your place for Click & Connect Block 4 taking place from January to March!

These online events aim to help the autistic community and families in Scotland to stay connected. All group sessions run via Zoom and are free to join.

Mindfulness Community Programme

Following the successful Mindfulness programme in 2020, Jonny Drury will deliver Dialogica's new 10-week programme and will take Mindfulness activities to the next level. The programme will place more emphasis on practice and support the creation of a community of mostly autistic mindfulness practitioners.

The group will take place every Tuesday morning* until 22nd March, 10am - 11am.

***excluding 15th February**

**Scottish
autism**
WHERE AUTISTIC PEOPLE
ARE VALUED

Online Art Group

The Art Group is open to autistic people and their families and aims to bring people together for creative expression in an informal and safe environment. It offers the chance for a mindful break from the day's worries and can help to reduce stress.

Join our online Art Group taking place every Wednesday until 23rd March, 5pm - 6.30pm.

Virtual Choir Group

If you're a music lover who enjoys singing, come along & share music with others in a fun, no pressure environment. This group is for autistic people and their families in Scotland, and all ages and abilities are welcome!

Join our Virtual Choir group taking place every Thursday evening until 24th March, 5pm - 6pm.

Autism Support Group

Come along to our Autism Support Group for autistic individuals and family members of autistic people in Scotland.

Run by Jonny Drury, the group will take place every Thursday* until 24th March, 1pm - 2.30pm.

***excluding 17th February**

**Don't miss out, find out more and book your place now:
www.scottishautism.org/click-and-connect**

We are delighted to announce that bookings are now open for our Online Conference, 'Behind the Mask', on 12th May!

Scottish
autism
WHERE AUTISTIC PEOPLE
ARE VALUED

Scottish Autism
Online Conference
Thursday 12th May 2022



This virtual conference aims to understand the pressures, stresses and consequences that autistic people feel “fitting in”, and in accessing support. We will explore the ways that professionals can recognise the lived experience of autistic people; change practitioner behaviour to better accommodate autistic needs; and create safe spaces where autistic people can be themselves.

We will ask how professionals and those they support can exchange perspectives through meaningful dialogue, promote respectful interactions and relations, and create a more positive experience of services and society more widely.

Pay What You Can Scheme

Open to autistic people and their families*

*Spaces are limited



We are striving to make our conference as accessible and inclusive as possible.

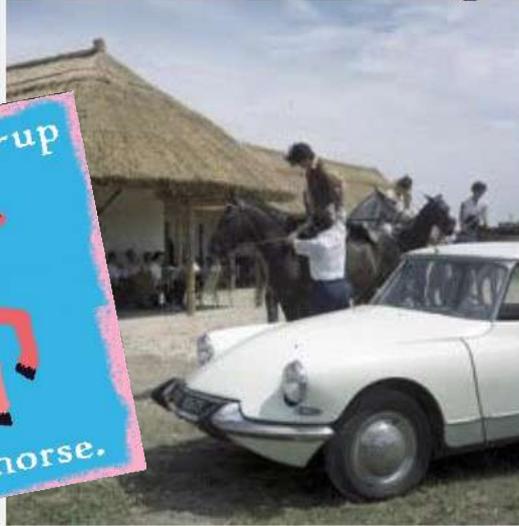
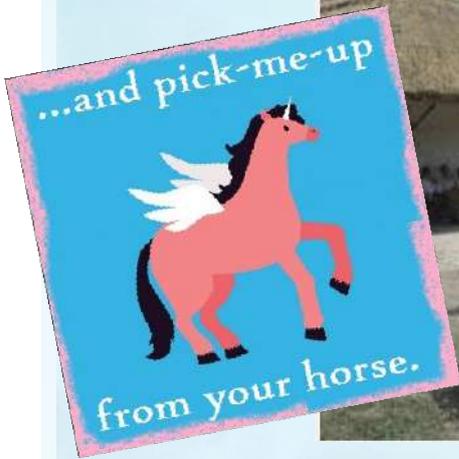
Our Pay What You Can is a pilot scheme open to autistic people and their families to access the conference.

Please note, places are limited.

To find out more and book, please visit

www.scottishautismconference.org

Letters to (Not So) Angels



This is where it all began: the homely and popular Horse Riding School of Tihany, in Hungary. The rustic visitors centre building in the background, with its reed-roof grew to be a beloved symbol of summer in my heart. Who knew that a child, two-years-old, being put on the back of an unsuspecting horse by their Dad, would have such long-lasting effects? Now forty, a journalist, and still talking about it! That guy with the square head and (very) determined face on the white horse, in the photo on the right: he was my first riding instructor, when I was five. He ne-ver-e-ver missed a lazy posture. - Lea

My dearest Passenger,

I have heard that you got into a kind of letter-writing habit lately and, given that I have lots of free time with winter still on us as I'm scribbling this, I thought to send a letter to you, this time. I am the only horse in our herd who can read and write, but the others have not discovered it yet, most of the time I'm just peacefully grazing around... you know, to maintain a perfect cover. Who would want to be their secretary for all those applications to various Hollywood productions?! (By the way, I just found out that in the movie *Undefeated*, premiered in 1969, three thousand equines were featured. Holy hoovies! And only sixty of us got away in the process...) First off, congratulations, on the occasion of your mini-assignment as recruitment assistant at your work. I would love to come and join your Strawberry Organic Branchout as a Support Worker for those farmers. From plowing through transport to manure: I'm-your-guy. And I do a stallion job!

How are things with your pandemic? Are you still waving to each other from a distance and surround yourself with gel pump bottles? I remember this caretaker from the stables, the other day; as they were cleaning around the floors; being in a mellow mood, I stuck out my face over the rail in hopes of a good forehead scratch or a tender kiss. But then they asked me if I was attending any party recently. ??? Nonsense. Of course, I did! We have three going on in the field per day, on average. Strange fellow. Anyway... Sometimes I get the impression that the time passed since March 2020 had a lasting effect on your population. These past two years, seeing and meeting people on and off, also gave me an opportunity to think about Humans In General.

To begin with: I love you to BITS (trying not to bite too much though, so not those kinds of bits). Your imagination, creativity, willpower and resilience often surpass all the things we can come up with to go through the seasons, and when I say that – that's weather, insects, good plants and bad plants for our tummies, wild animals, illnesses only we can get and going in and out of, uhm, how do you folks call that... oh, yes: work-related activities that you are asking us to do, carry, pull, and lift things. On my end, I am fine with that stuff, used to it. But also, what a strange species you are when it comes to trying to find solutions. It appears to me that you often seem to think in a 'black and white' style (zebras are also part of the equine family, by the way), or even think black or white. When it comes to impairments, you either feel like a victim about it, or form an identity out of it.

You either pull it down and call it vicious or derive super-powers from it.

You either blame genes for it or point your finger towards the environment.

You either expect medical professionals to give full guidance about it or you do the same with advocacy groups.

You either want the majority to mold around it or those affected to adapt to the majority.

Me, as a horse, a bit of an outsider on your human business, I'm asking this, without meaning to offend: have you, earthlings, thought about merging these views? Could you ever imagine that the solution is somewhere in between, that progress would come from where these opposites meet? As a grazing flock animal, I know a lot about getting along. Where and when possible we all, each of us, play our parts and we seek consensus and a kind of group-wisdom. We already recognised that if we just keep on repeating the same viewpoints and then find that things are not getting better, then we need to change strategies, on both sides. On cold and windy nights, like the ones still around, we need to move closer to each other to generate enough heat, not pull further apart.

But: back to the current news. I heard that soon you will be allowed to return and we can pick things up from where we left. Grand! The sparrows in the attic were also chirping about your old horse retiring. Is that so?? Mind you, I think it was high time. If yes, you can just stick to me. He might be taller and more handsome – but I'm faster and more flexible. He might be more experienced – but I could always cheer you up, I know that, I just feel it. On top of that, I also promise that I would always see you for who you are and not for what you offer. I would never be super-grumpy with you. I would never make you feel like an option. After all, you are not my brunch. So, vote for me, Sailor is your best bet!



Riding memories of old: here, about thirty–five years ago, me up in the saddle, in an era when kids were running around in monocolour cotton sweatshirt–and–pants sets. Mine was an eerie rhubarb pink but the horse didn't seem to mind.

I remember, you mentioned to me once that you are 'no angel'. Okay, I adjusted the title of this letter to that. But who needs angels anyway? I know I'm not one... as you could probably tell when we were still new to riding together. Apologies for that. I like to know where the limits are with each biped (just in case). I thought you were very cute when, after three weeks of trying, you stopped us, buried your face in your hands – much like a headstone figure – and said it with a groan: 'THIS IS HOPELESS!'. I was sure you were a lot stronger than you thought you were and I was certain you could do this. I am glad since then you've come to the same conclusion, Lea. We are the A–team now and I hope you feel you can count on me, no matter what. Just like I can count on you. Who needs perfection anyway? Just carrots, long reins and a waterproof blanket. Mhmmmm.

What about your assistance dog? Is he still on active duty? The truth is, I miss you and I was looking into ideas how you and I could spend more time together, without complications. If the canine gets too annoying, how about an autism support horse for you instead? In case you desire a *real* change. Sure, your colleagues would need some time to adapt to us at the office but we could work this out. Just imagine, how much faster you would get to work and the government scheme could perhaps cover... the cost of grain? Brainstorming here. Not fully weatherproof though. However, with me you would always be allocated the biggest and most comfortable room to work in, strictly level access, windows a must and no melt-downs, only pick-me-up-s. To fifteen hands high!



Picture with the February title: Sailor, the horse in his stable box, with parts of his yummy dinner of hay still left. Cozy winter night, lights on. Text in image: 'I support HOPE for all humans for 2022 and, on that account, more hay for all equines! - Sergeant Sailor'

Think about my offer but take your time, my dear. No galloping.
Your most loyal equiniser,
ready to ride off into the sunset daily,

Sailor

Article was transcribed to human language by Lea Berta.

[Contact: leapublish@gmail.com]



Well, these are the patiently waiting feet of Lea and support dog Baxter, standing on a social distancing sticker during the 2020 lockdown. The feet without trainer shoes: those are the dog's. Text in Image: 'And I canine not wait to step into spring! Mr. A. R. Baxter (canine worker).' – in badly typed print.



Crossing the Bridge

The journey of an autistic man so far

by Michael Ferns

My name is Michael and I was diagnosed with autism in December 2018. I am part Scottish, born in England and lived most of my life on the Channel Island of Jersey. This is my story so far about my big move from a small island to a major city.

Jersey was a wonderful place to grow up in. Very safe with many beautiful areas to walk and explore. A lot of my artwork was inspired by its buildings, landmarks and coastlines. I lived most of my life with my mother. Some of my behaviours people found odd such as my routines, fixed subjects of interest, tendency to keep to myself, have hyperactive moments, be socially awkward, and being overwhelmed with change. This led to people thinking that I am on the autistic spectrum. Most of these behaviours were picked up when I was in University from 2007 to 2010. I studied Illustration at the University of Plymouth. It was the first time I lived without the assistance of my mother and it was a shock to the system as I was required to learn about things such as paying rent, buying food as well as routines such as washing clothes, etc. I did of course over come this even though I still kept getting things wrong as I was completely naive about the world. When one or two of my Uni friends suggested that I might be autistic, I rubbished it off. I didn't think there was anything wrong with me.

When University ended, my life style changed. The bubble burst and was thrown onto the rock hard ground of reality. I had to pay my uni debts, get a job, and it was very difficult. Jersey had a lack of resources for an artist. At this time I regretted that I didn't work as hard at Uni, probably because I was trying to take everything in and was easily distracted. There were still things that I took from there and transferred it to later works.

As I was not being good with change and being the best at dealing with people, I kept applying for specific jobs that avoided them such as filling, fulfilment, etc. I did not want to use a till or be a waiter. That terrified me. I could not even pick up the phone to call someone that wasn't a friend or a relative. The pressure was on as I needed to pay off my debts and was close to being black listed by my bank. But after a few placements and work experiences I end up working in hospitality which included the things I did not want to do. It was fast paced and very overwhelming even to the point that I cried because the toast machine was playing up and customers were complaining that they weren't receiving their toast and hot drinks. I didn't think I could do it as a Porter but I somehow over came it once I got my routines going and this continued into retail which included more into my fears as of course you need to use a till. I became more confident and I dealt with the public. There was still some challenges however which you get from every job.

Creativity wise, I did some drawings for a friend and then volunteered for Jersey Heritage where the volunteer coordinator was impressed with my work. The first project was with her knowledgeable colleague who had an idea for a graphic novel about the Battle of Jersey. This gave me my creative mojo back. Was great to be productive again. This became my first published book. The volunteer coordinator also had an idea of creating an illustrated map of around Jersey. I did the drawings as Jersey was something I was passionate about. Then it evolved into a walking book in which I coordinated some of the walks with the help of a fellow volunteer. Around this time as I was finding it hard with work and my mother was in hospital with pneumonia. This pushed me even harder as I felt this book would be my ticket to a happier, fulfilling life. The book was completed after 5 years of blood, sweat and tears. It was also very bitter sweet. A few weeks after the book got released to a really positive response - my mother passed away. This was the point where my life changed forever.

Things became overwhelming at first as not only did I have to learn about living on my own again, I had to deal with my mothers finances and funeral. Amazingly I got through it really well with the help of friends and family. Routines really helped and I created some of my best artwork. At this point my uncle thought I should try getting a diagnosis and he feels that would really help me. I applied for an assessment but had to wait a year. December 2018 and I got that all important result. This was where I truly accepted my diagnosis. Accepted for who I was.





Things were still tough, mainly due to the covid pandemic. I was feeling trapped in Jersey. I felt restricted. I kept working and being creative but I felt there was more to offer on the mainland. I kept holding it off as it is a big change and I didn't have a clue what to do. But after help from a therapist, my heart was set. I decided on Glasgow because it is a very creative city and my uncle lives there which would be a good starting point.

I spent most of 2021 planning on my big move as advised. This was also tough in itself as I had to get rid of a lot of items, also selling things at the same time. Was like an endless mole hill. Don't know how I managed. I am grateful for my friends and relatives in Jersey to help me with that.

And then I was in Glasgow...

I couldn't believe it especially with the days leading to the move. But there was a lot of overwhelming things to deal with as mainland UK has a completely different system to Jersey. Have to apply for a national insurance number, a P45, get a job, figuring out where to eventually live as I am staying with my uncle at the moment. It was a lot to take and even became too much at times especially with the housing associations. But I now have a job and things are slowly starting to fall into place. Still got a lot to sort out and have more decisions to make once again regarding housing. But I feel I made the right decision and am I excited about all the opportunities that Glasgow has to offer. I am quite proud of myself with the last ten or so years - I manage to overcome challenges as an autistic person including things that I felt I could never do.

You can achieve anything if you set your heart to it. Hopefully this will continue with my new life in Glasgow.

To be continued...

You're Not Alone: a bird's-eye view of my time at autism support group online

I know few places that afford the space to engage in a level of dialogue where intimate life experiences, often painful and so difficult to share, have found such outlet as they have in the Autism Support Group. It has been a recurring theme among many others, including a gratitude for those aspects of autism that enrich a person's life, arriving at a considered appreciation that life with autism can be like a see saw with ups and downs that make life difficult and enriching in ways few know. I know first-hand that even attending a group, let alone actively participating is a daunting thought for many – especially if you're autistic. Within groups so many pressures to conform exist – implicitly understood expectations – leaving many autistic people struggling to get in and be heard.

An expectation to speak coupled with the associated but often implicit polite conventions that surround most social life can make it all too mentally taxing, as autistic people consciously attempt to adhere to them. But, Autism Support Group, refreshingly, a place where people have incrementally taken steps to engage and open up, where they have sought and found difference and similarity among one another and, crucially, where they have found a space that is conducive to letting be their authentic self – has given hope.

With easy-to-understand guidelines autism support group has been a relaxed, laid back environment. And as host, Jonny Drury, through his own personal understanding of autism as well as mindfulness has instilled a sense of calm and peace that has facilitated dialogue by attendees.

There are few crueller, lonelier more difficult places to be than to think you are alone, alone with the difficulties and challenges that autism brings, alone as few people around seem to have any understanding at all, and alone when those aspects of autism that give life colour and meaning are scarcely understood at all. Autism Support Group has shown the way.

Gordon Barlow.

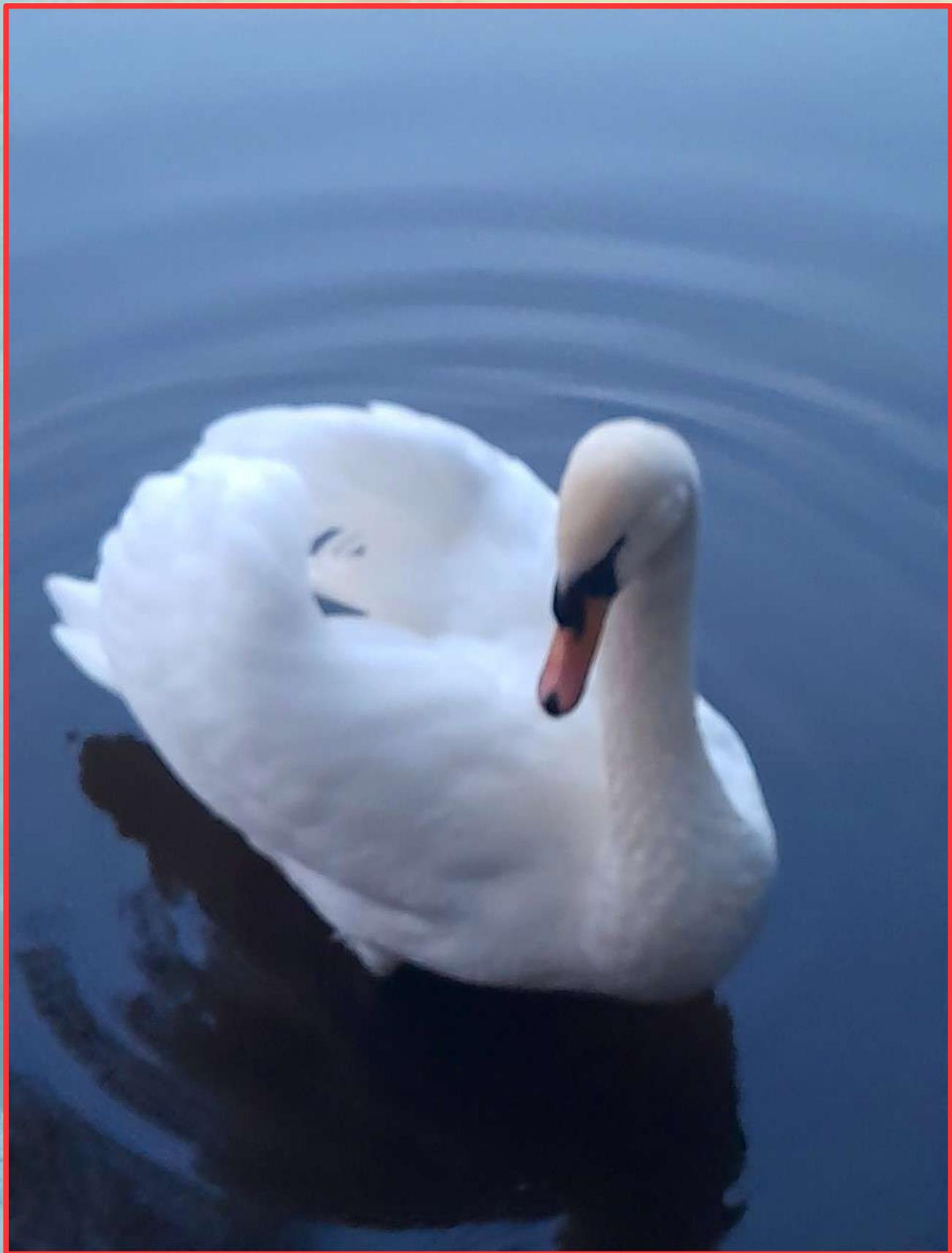
ARTITUDE!



Sandra Louise Smyth

Sandra's latest photos are from her trip to Glencoe. She was so excited to have the chance to take photos of the beautiful deer and surrounding areas.





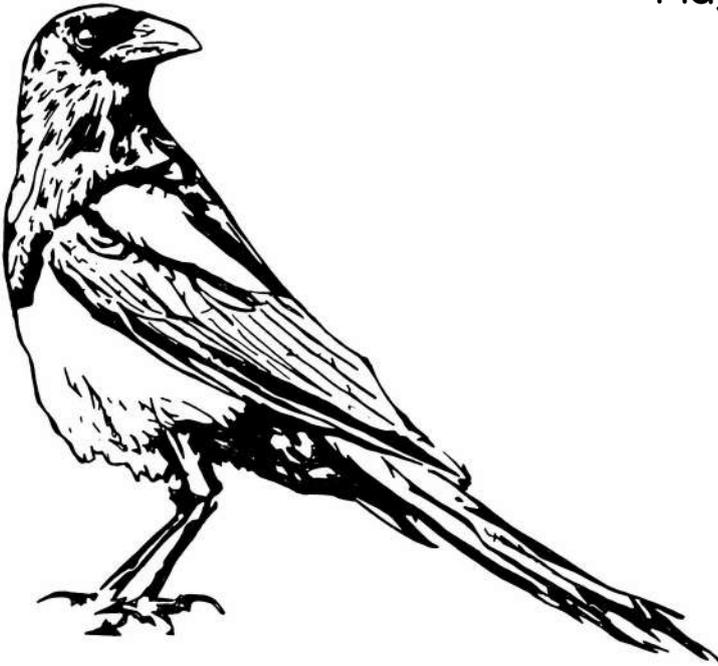




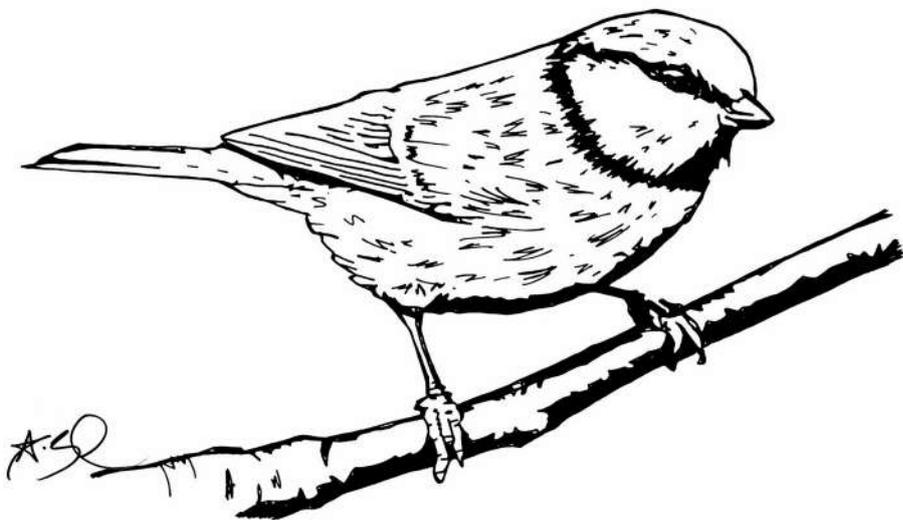
Ash

Over lockdown 2020, with work commissions - very - few and far between my wife decided to give me a project to keep me out of trouble, to draw the various creatures that visited our garden. I rarely (if ever) get the chance to draw animals, so with that in mind - enjoy this small selection!

Magpie



Blue Tit



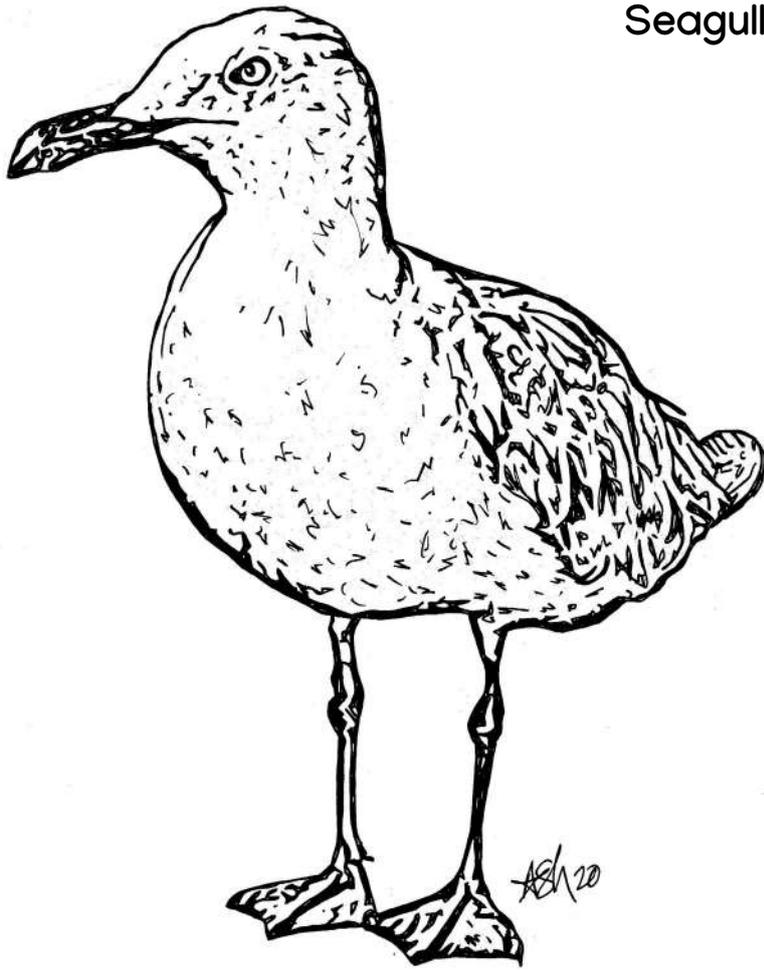


Crow

Pigeon



Seagull



Robin



FJORD DREAM

What's a good name? Fjord deep lost in my thoughts.
I see beneath me, below the rim of the fjord,
where words come bubbling up with accord.
Dreams words that appear scissored out of space,
haphazard.

What's a good name? A fjord of fallopian thoughts maybe,
where the eternal eggs migrate into the womb of life.
Do we dream in the womb of things coming soon?
Like a stone in her stomach it kicks.

What's a good name? Fjord full of laughter,
born out of a shaft into the light.
Sun in the window, ice floes bobbing in the night.
Baby lost in the ghostly moonlight.

What's a good name? Fjord full of dreams,
dancing at the party, eighth year gone by.
Child sleeping, cradle lop-sided but dry,
into a world of goodbye's.

What's a good name? Fjord full of pyjama fly's,
naughty dreams, goodbye to innocence, is wise?
Parents worrying to explain, disguise.
Down to the disco, frisky in frocks.

What's a good name? Fjord kirk it costs,
boy from the boulder town of moss.
Up in the heavens glitter tossed,
Roses for them not engaged, lost.

What's a good name? Fjord hip full of dreams,
maturity seems here now.

Kids sweeping the driveway clean,
Down to the village shop, money mean.

What's a good name? Fjord deep lines in the neck,
oh what the heck, backs aching, to bed.

Soon the pension to live on,
I dread.

What's a good name? Fjord slumbers tonight,
old so old, hands cold.

Lord deliver me tonight.

What's a good name? Fjord rest in peace,
written on this stone, his name.

Fjord,

*Keyed to a horde of thought,
Or maybe a stretched out monkey's hand
Spreading inland,*

A lost world if you can.

Conveyed to me above,

A glacier gown, an ice design.

And no matter how it shines,

It is - beauty beyond all lines,

A blue, a blue beyond all minds,

Where mountains stand hard,

Unrestrained, glaring, on guard.

Forever a blue sea peace-sign.

by John Roney

My Neurodiversity Journey Part 4 Autistic & Dyslexic Blog Post

Thank you for the feedback and positive comments from parts 1,2 and 3 of my journey.

In my last blog I mentioned at times we have to take responsibility for our own journey, setting boundaries, ensuring the **environments** and **behaviours** are accommodating and supportive of our unique skill set.

Capabilities, refers to our skills, what we are good at. Our natural areas of expertise or skills that improve in time or through forced or focused practice.

What **capabilities** / skills are vital for people like us who are Neurodivergent?

What **skills** do we require to live in harmony within our daily **environments** that provide the appropriate accommodation?

“Know thyself” is the first commandment of leadership as written in the Harvard Business Review.

How well do we know ourselves?

Where are our blind spots?

What are my social deficits?

How do I improve my executive functioning?

How do I verbalise communication differences?

What skills do I require to survive and thrive in a neurotypical world?

Accommodation in our environments is required, that goes way beyond awareness; e.g. Social Model.

“The unexamined life is not worth living”; as Socrates so eloquently stated. In essence he was saying an unexamined human life is deprived of the meaning and purpose of existence.

Einstein stated “Everybody is a genius. But if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing that it is stupid.”

So, the question we must ask ourselves is: – What **environments** are aligned to my **capabilities**?

Or more importantly what **environments** are not suitable or accommodating for my **capabilities**?

As previously mentioned in the last issue, Sir Professor Baron– Cohen highlighted the various types of abuse autistics / neurodivergent's experience.

Whether you are a parent, care giver or careers guidance teacher working with neurodivergent's it's important that the career choice is appropriate i.e. **Environment**.

My younger self would have wished to have been aware of different types of personalities that are in society.

Topics such as this would have been more useful to me after I left home. Home for me was secure with structure and routine.

Through circumstances and lived experience to the detriment of my emotional, financial and mental well-being the world is filled with different personality types that also appear in DSM V.

Antisocial personality disorder according to the NHS web site states: –

<https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/conditions/antisocial-personality-disorder/>

“Personality disorders are mental health conditions that affect how someone thinks, perceives, feels or relates to others.

Antisocial personality disorder is a particularly challenging type of personality disorder characterised by impulsive, irresponsible and often criminal behaviour.

Someone with antisocial personality disorder will typically be manipulative, deceitful and reckless, and will not care for other people's feelings.

I suggest further reading on the NHS link above to familiarise yourself with the behaviours associated with people that would not be desirable for autistics /neurodivergents to work for.

I personally am not limited by being autistic /neurodivergent, however I am limited by my **environment**, and lack of accommodation during my life.

It is vitally important that autistics/neurodivergent's unique **capabilities** / strengths are identified at an early age.

The next stage is then to establish what **environments** and **behaviours** will best utilise the **capabilities**.

After identifying your own unique **capabilities**, finding the right **environment** which complements your own **behaviours** you will enjoy a most productive and enjoyable career.

For those who wish further details on personality types / behaviours I personally learnt much from Robert D Hare forensic psychologist and Dr Kevin Dutton.

Until the next issue, stay safe and be kind to yourself and gentle to those around you.

David Yeoman – Blogger & volunteer; Scottish Autism, Contributor @Autism Advisory Forum, Consultant & Volunteer at Autism Advisory Forum, Consultant & Volunteer at Dyslexia Scotland.

SPECTRUM SUPERSTARS!



Name: Kate Fox
Born: 31 May 1975
**Occupation: Poet, author, broadcaster
and comedian.**

AUTITUDE NEEDS YOU!



Well that's it for issue 14!
Hope you've enjoyed it!
Don't forget to send your contributions to
autitude@scottishautism.org