

A watercolor illustration of a house with a white gabled roof and orange-brown walls, built on a wooden pier or stilts. The background is a mix of blue and white washes, suggesting a sky or water. The style is soft and painterly.

Koestler Trust
arts by offenders ■ ■ ■

Home of the Soul

**KOESTLER
AWARD-WINNING
WRITING FROM
SCOTLAND**

INTRODUCTIONS

STIR Editorial Team, HM Prison Shotts

This year the Koestler Awards received over 8,500 entries, with Scotland's entries being at an all time high. To highlight the quality of work Koestler approached us, the STIR editorial team, to collaborate, create and design this booklet to celebrate and showcase the writing coming out of Scottish prisons.

With such a high standard, judging was a difficult but exciting process in deciding who would feature within these very pages. After much deliberation 'Home of the Soul' came to be; a wonderful collection of the talented and creative voices who represent Scotland.

www.stirmagazine.org

The Koestler Trust

The Koestler Awards generate thousands of entries from across the UK's criminal justice system and secure settings. We engage participants in a wide range of artforms including fine arts, design, music, writing and film. In this anthology we reveal some of the ingenious written pieces inspired by the Koestler Awards in Scotland.

The Koestler Awards support entrants by giving them feedback on their work, along with the chance to win an award. Our exhibitions share their potential and talent with the public. By fostering engagement and achievement, we help improve our entrants' skills, confidence and employability, which can aid rehabilitation and contribute to reducing reoffending.

This anthology was produced in collaboration with STIR, a magazine featuring writing and artworks by prisoners in Scotland, and edited by a team in HM Prison Shotts. This anthology will be distributed to prisons throughout Scotland, as a STIR magazine supplement, as well as to audiences visiting *183 More Sleeps: The Koestler Scotland Exhibition* at Summerhall, Edinburgh, 7 - 29 November 2015.

The project is supported by the National Lottery through Creative Scotland, with additional support from the Robertson Trust and the Souter Charitable Trust.

Our thanks go to the editorial team at STIR magazine, staff at New College Lanarkshire, HM Prison Shotts, Summerhall and Traffic Design, for making this project a reality.

www.koestlertrust.org.uk

from MY CHILDHOOD

I used to love it when we moved on the road. It was wonderful, especially in the summertime because you did not know where you were going. You could end up anywhere, just wherever my Mum and Dad wanted to go. That was good. Then again, sometimes it was terrible. I've seen us just getting to a place and my Mum wouldn't even have had time to put the kettle on for tea, when the police would arrive and say, 'Move on, move on!' I remember my folk, my father saying, 'I fought for this country and we cannae even get peace to stay on the side of the road. What did I fight for?' I can understand where he was coming from. It used to be annoying sometimes when we were made to move all the time but now and again it was nice. The police used to say that they had had a complaint about us but I don't think that was always true. It was just the excuse they needed to move us on. That's what we had all my life.

We used to believe in ghosts. We would build big fires outside, piling on the sticks and we would tell stories. I remember my Granddad [...] would tell stories about ghosts and all that. The entire old travellers used to do that and the kids were fascinated and used to listen. We called the places where we stayed 'camps' and we still do. We would go into a certain camp and talk about the ghost of this woman or man. We believed in ghosts. We were brought up that way, a very superstitious people. That's the way it was. The ghost stories were fantastic and frightening and we kids sat listening as if we were hypnotized.

[HM Prison Castle Huntly](#)

from **QUARRYBOY**

Well, to me, the quarry was all kinds of everything; my castle, my playground, my battlefield, my wizard's wicked wand-wave. It was my bolthole from all that family affection and cosy delirium. I went with all my rosy-cheeked friends; of course, being a sad, lonely, little shit, their numbers verged upon the invisible, so it was just I and my shadow.

The quarry had two parts, an operational part where they blew-up (or down) the cliff-face to extract stones or massive boulders. I used to love the sound of the warning siren, though at first, never knew it was a prelude to a massive 'bang', a toe-tingling rumble, and a whole world of thick, billowing smoke!

The second part of the quarry was abandoned and unused. Its cliff-faces were a patchwork of all-conquering grass and other green stuff. The floor had become a permanent shimmering grey pond, with thick, squelchy muck under the water. Which, of course, after a thankfully small fall, one discovered after having shoes, socks and shorts filled with the grey, slimy gunk. One looked like an appropriately startled mud-mummy!

The unused side of the quarry was where I played, dreamt and vandalised. I'd skim stones over the turbid pond, roll old, abandoned car tyres over the cliff's edge and watch them bounce, spin, then splash explosively into the water. Once, I tried to send an old dumper truck the way of the tyres, but muscles and knowledge of mechanics seemed vague, the dumper truck was left to rot in peace.

HM Prison Castle Huntly

ICE LOLLY

old oak tree up high
leaves falling, drifting downward
ice lolly melts

HM Prison Shotts

Image: 2 Boys,
North Ayrshire Council
(Criminal Justice Service)
Watercolour on Paper



THE TENEMENTS

from The Jimmy Plays

SCENE ONE

Maw Jimmy, Jimmy,

(no reply!)

JIMMY!

Jimmy What is it Maw?

Maw Come own in, a want you to go a message fur me.

Jimmy Oh maw am playin fitba weah the boys.

Maw Niver mind yur fitba weah the boys Jimmy. This joob is mare important.

Jimmy It's a job maw?

Maw Aye it's a job Jimmy!

Jimmy Is there ony money in it fur me?

Maw It depends, there could be!

Jimmy What's the job?

Maw It's a job only you can dae Jimmy.

Jimmy AWE MAW! One oh they jobs!

Maw A want you to go doon tae the one eyed blue parrot pub and tell yir fayther tae git his arse up here pronto, and tae bring whit's left o his wage packet!

Jimmy Maw that pub's dangerous, it's a dive. A dinnay feel safe gawin doon there!

Maw JIMMY, yul be awright, the chucker oot is yur big Uncle Boob. Whose gonnay bother you when big Boob's there?

Jimmy Oh maw, it's a Rangers pub!

Maw That's awe rite Jimmy, jist don't tell them you support, (Partick-Thistle.)

Jimmy Snow that maw, it's jist, ma burds a Celtic fan, if she finds oot a wiz in a blue nose pub, she'll gee me a hellafa time!

Maw Look Jimmy, fureget aboot yir burd for the minute, it's mare important you git that auld Fayther oh yours up here weah some money, before he drinks it awe! We've goat tae eat, and av goat tae hiv ma fag money for awe week as well. So git doon there an bring him back and there could be a tenner in it fur you.

Jimmy A TENNER Maw? Don't say anither word, am own ma way.

Maw I, Jimmy's a good wee boy really, yiv jist goat tae know how to work him. A bribe way a little money, always does the trick fur my wee, sweet, Angelic Angel.

The little B##tard!

SCENE TWO

Jimmy A've goat him Maw, he's only a wee bit drunk.

Maw Thanks Jimmy.

Now father, how much money have you got left?

Fathir Ah Mother gesse a break! Ah work hard oh week, surely am entitled tah a couple ah beers oan a Friday?

Maw I, that's fair enough, but you hiv tah rememeber tah bring yur wages hame first. No gone doon the pub weah yur pals drinking away ma housekeeping money fur the week?

If it wisnae fur wee Jimmy here, gone doon the pub tah get you, we wid still be sittin here without a penny to oor names, because you're doon the pub showin off tah yur pals how good a guy yea are!

Fathir Awe Mother, whit yae worried aboot? Am here noo, ave goat yur money here in ma pocket.

Maw How much have yeah goat left?

Fathir Plenty Mother, a goat a bonus this week, a wis gonnay tell yeah about it when I goat hame!

Maw I, am sure you wur!

Fathir Honest Mother, ah wiz, anither couple a drinks and ah wiz up the road anyway.

Maw Well yur here noo, so show me whit you've left, and I am warning you father, it better be plenty!

Fathir No need to be like that Mother. Honest you'll no be disappointed, wait tah yea coont it.

Maw Three hundred and ninety five, four hundred, four hundred and five pounds, where did you get all this money father?

Fathir I told you Mother, you widnay be disappointed!

Maw No am no disappointed, but I'm a bit suspicious how you've goat all this money efter bein doon the pub drinking weah yur pals? And still hiv mare money noo, than whit yur full wage are?

Fathir Mother I told you, I goat a bonus, and a bloody good bonus at that.

Maw Well am no gonnay argue weah you, as long as ave goat ma housekeeping money am mare than happy.

Right, am off doon the toon, it's been a while since ave HUD a we bit extra money to spend, and thanks tae yur fathers bonus am sitting pretty. Jimmy, here's that fiver a promised you.

Jimmy Eh, maw it wiz a tenner yeah promised me.

Maw Oh I that's right. Silly ME! Here it is. Noo don't you go and waste it oan rubbish, o-right son.

Fathir What aboot me Mother? Have a no tae get any pocket money?

Maw You've had enough drink fur one day. But because you brought a big bonus home with you, and to show yea am no a bad person, here' twenty quid, that should keep you gawn fur the rest of the day, ok?

Fathir Ok Mother.

Maw Well cheerio; I'll see you when I get back.

(Door Slams)

HM Prison Glenochil
*Catherine Johnson Artistic
Ambition Platinum Award*

OUR TWO WEE DUGS BARKING IN HEAVEN

From a distance they look the same
In an instance they sound the same
Though both having a different name
They were brought up in the same wee hame

Wans slightly fatter n aulder
She shakes about like she couldn't be caulder
The smell a chicken sure gets her attention
She sits at the door to devour her portion

Yins a wee show aff who sings for his mammie
He liked nothing more than a good kid-on rammie
He would never listen when up the park
A wee softy though he was scared a the dark

There through it all, seen us all come n go
These two wee duggs were the stars a the show
Great for a cuddle n braw for a kiss
Special wee duggs we won't forget this

One was called Oban n one called Troon
If you look up to heaven, they're looking doon
They're mammie loves them deeply that's a given
Oor two wee duggs barking in heaven

HM Prison Shotts

DEPTH

something sinister signals,
circling lone crow,
silhouette overhead,
spoils morning glow.

termagant with bucket,
inquisitives in tow.
lessons in life,
determined to show.

two coloured sandy,
two coloured snow.
four fluff balls,
far too slow.

gone in an instant,
never to grow.
four wet kittens,
lying in a row.

HM Prison Barlinnie



Image: Feeding Time Again?,
HM Prison Edinburgh
Paint on Canvas

BINGO

The bingo yins parked oan the step again
Clashing about the latest sanctionesses
Stoap it! Leave her alane!
Culture is the vulture.

Fag ash smears the different colours of cotton
Laughin' loud as they ridicule the skint.
The cheek ay them, they're rotten.
Tissues fur issues.

Facial hair n plooks compete fur space.
Yon arises tae attend tae the cries n flies
That yin picks wine ower her weans
No seen no dream

HM Prison Shotts

THE FOXFORD SHRIMP

Tagged oval silver
A tail of red breast feather,
Wound to perfection
Like lucky white heather.

A body of seal's fur
Fiery-brown and black,
Oval silver ribbed
From the front to back.

Cheeks of jungle cock
A hackle of rich ginger,
A red whipped finished head
Perfect for a *Springer*.

HM Prison Castle Huntly

*The Foxford Shrimp - an Irish
fishery 'fly' used for salmon fishing.
Springer - First salmon of the spring.*

Image: Sharp Mind,
HM Prison Kilmarnock
Acrylic on Cardboard



HOME OF THE SOUL

The lazy blue sea looked delicious in the grey morning light, as it rolled out quietly like a giant blue carpet, licking the blinding white sands, crisping the naked rocks. The first salt smell of the sea. A hot wind blowing through the high green forest, tossing the treetops as they reach to drink from every passing cloud.

The long lift of the brown moorland, coppices of rowans and birches. As the sky darkens to twilight shadows lengthen, there's a velvet stillness as the spent waves spread themselves out listlessly. This dazzling vista is the true home of the soul.

HM Prison Dumfries

THE DUKE AND I

A drink too many
I escape the drunken cacophony,
finding solace with my old friend the Duke
updating him of my conquest and failures.
I light up,
the warmth of the embers radiates against my lips,
under the moon drenched streets
like an old black and white film.

I'm alerted to a presence;
the distinctive smell of a Blue Lagoon chippy invades my nostrils.
Too much vinegar, just the way I like it.
The man retreats into the civilisation of Argyle Street.
A concoction of cheap perfume and alcohol dominates now,
accompanied by the echo of heels
six inches (I could tell)
drawing ever closer to the Duke and I.

They belong to a tall, slim woman;
a pink feather boa half-heartedly drowns her face
like a flamboyant snake.
She stops, with fag in hand and searches her purse,
expensive taste.

'Need a light' I call, all gentleman-like.
A husky voice bellows back,
'No thanks Sweetheart, I found it',
I realise my mistake.

A drag queen.
Only in Glasgow.

HM Prison Shotts



from **THE IRON INN**
a stage play

First let me introduce myself.
I'm Geena. But sometimes I often wonder – who actually am I? I'm an actor, I'm a hairdresser, I'm a sister, I'm a friend, I'm a 'lifer', but I'm also a daughter, of a mother with breast cancer. In here, I have this face (demonstrates a cheery face, 'Hi ya!'), then I've got this face (demonstrates, a serious sincere face, to the 'Screws') 'Aye sir, no sir!' but I also get these faces back (scowls at the audience).

Then I get this face, all fake smiles (demonstrates). But in my head, I know I'm intelligent, thoughtful, and funny, coz let's face it; you need a sense of humour to live in one of these places. And speaking of these places I've been in here 11 years, so you could say that I know the system, I know the screws. I could tell you everything about it and them, and if anyone knows when they are republishing the rule book, gees a shout, coz I want to know if there's two versions published, the normal 'standard' issue rule book, and the '[...] house rule book', because if there are any more rules and regulations in here it's going to be as long as the Bible... anyway here's a sneak peak into our 'local' the Iron-Inn.

HM Prison & Young
Offender Institution
Cornton Vale (women's
establishment)

Image: Untitled,
HM Prison Kilmarnock
Pen on Paper

RED MICE

Inspired by Bukowski's poem 'Bluebird'

There are red mice in my head
they want to get out
but I am too clever for them.
I say be still,
you shake my nerves
and almost cause exposure.

There are red mice in my head
they want to get out
but I feed him cheesy dishonesty and
poisonous lies.
And the shopkeeper and the
mice-catchers
and the weightlifters
never know
that they are there dying inside.

There are red mice in my head
that wants to get out
But I am too clever for them.
I say be still, be still, I need to focus
You want to confuse my mind?
You want to spoil my thinking?
You want to jade my memories?

There are red mice in my head
that wants to get out
But I am too smart for them.
I only free them at dawn
when the sun shines,
when everyone is busy
I say, I feel your presence,
I know you're here,
Don't be disappointed.
Then I put him back
but they are squeaky squalling
And have my heart weeping.
I haven't let them down
We accompany each other in
troubled times.

[HM Prison Low Moss](#)

from SPACE EXPLORATION: THE FUTURE OF THE HUMAN RACE

If every star in the night sky is a possible sun like our own, at the centre of its own solar system with multiple planets orbiting it, then there are endless possibilities for inhabitable planets and possible inhabitants of such planets. We know the universe and everything in it was created at the same time, consisting of all the same basic materials and processes that us and our planet were made of. To think anything less is nothing short of blind ignorance.

If man could put aside their petty differences and work together on a global scale, we could focus our combined intelligence and resources on the challenges we all face as a species, to ensure the survival of the human race. For the sake of mankind we should all think more of ourselves as one man for all men and not always one man for his self. We should all be looking to the stars with such sentiment if we are to ensure the long term future of mankind.

After all why else are we here?

Surely not just to burn out and disappear!

[HM Prison Greenock](#)

JUNKTOWN

Welcome to junk town. Plug in and change your mind. Wash your hands. Hygiene is a... coffee pot. Just add fuel. Smoking seriously harms you. Probably that or that bad cheese you ate. A craving only lasts three minutes. What's for dinner? Food poisoning... Changing nappies #unhappy.

It's that type of fudge you need to have. Every little helps. Aw that stuff like stuck you know like stuck in yae. Say it with...Rice Krispies. Mouthwash, jukeboxes and gasoline. Irreverence is my disease. Money is nature. That's why Judas wept.

Silly pointless, self-obsessed. The rise of the v-loggers. Can you take it all away? Up to 60% off. Do you think you could minimise? Piracy will never die. From air-bed to world domination. On the trail of forgotten typewriters. It's so special and unique. I can give you five good reasons to punch a dolphin. There are dying ogres and pixies too. This is not like the future but I sense it's right up there. Moon pic... what a time to be alive. But you can't water a camel with a spoon. Swallow but nothing's forgiven. Balderdash: noun. 100metre race for the follicly challenged. The grey chapter. You can plug it into your phone. Switch that sound that we didn't know was there and turn it into a distant hum. There's no leaving now. Look up!

[HM Prison Barlinnie](#)



Image: Mismatch,
HM Prison Perth
Acrylic on Board
Gustave Courbet Highly
Commended Award

SOPHIE HILL

In her home town in the city,
A British soldier stood,
Watching people walking past,
As long as she possibly could

Reluctantly she stepped away
And boarded the last train
Leaving for her barracks
As her parents stared in pain

In her mind she saw again
The posters in her town
Urging her to join the fight
And serve her Queen and crown

She didn't have another job
She couldn't face the dole
She'd signed up for the Army
Excited at her role

She'd gone through basic training
Took everything in stride
She's pushed through her pain limits
And instilled a little pride

A medic's what she wanted to be
To save her comrades' lives
Helping people's brothers, sisters
Husbands or their wives.

When she'd passed her training
She'd taken all on board
A first class Army medic
Vast amounts of knowledge stored

Ready for what lay ahead
Even though she had no clue
Whatever problems she would face
She'd know just what to do

Then came the call to Afghan
As it had for those before
Another bloody chapter
In an endless futile war

The fighting happened every day
No man was left behind
But in this strange environment
The blind just led the blind

They went out in a vehicle
To make a show of force
Until a strange new object
Made them all change course

Someone went to check it out
To see what it could be
Cautiously approaching
He fought the urge to flee

The look of fear upon his face
The shattering of glass
The windows of the vehicle broke
From the force upon the blast

She'd trained for all this terror
So she ran out of the door
Towards the injured soldier
As he lay upon the floor

The soldier felt so useless
As his gun he could not use
He wasn't fighting Taliban
Just a package with a fuse

Left bleeding on the roadside
Hit by whistling stones
That left him there upon his back
With badly broken bones

A tear ran down his blackened cheek
The blast had burned his skin
He wished that he was still at home
Surrounded by his kin

The medic moved beside him
As he began to groan
She told him that he'd make it
And that he was not alone

She patched him up as best she could
He began to lose all fight
She told him to keep talking
But his eyes had lost their light

She had to hold in all her tears
As she tried to bring him back
No one could have done a thing
From the cowardly attack

Too much damage had been done
Her head lay on his chest
She kept on saying sorry
That she'd really tried her best

Her Captain pulled her off the ground
Away from blood and bone
A crimson river formed from death
He lay there on his own

The body was recovered
By her comrades all around
This wasn't meant to happen
This was the point she drowned

Every time she closed her eyes
She saw it all unfold
The carnage burned within her skull
The horrors all retold

She never wanted to look weak
She kept it all inside
The horrors that she'd seen that day
She did her best to hide

She blamed it all upon herself
The guilt it took her fast
She should have saved his life that day
Not lost him to the blast

Once her tour had finished
And she went on R&R
Back home with her family
She headed for the bar

Drowning out her sorrows
She knocked back more and more
She knew she'd reached her limit
As she spewed across the floor

By the time she hit her bed
Too smashed to even think
Her brain was numb to nightmares
Because of all the drink

The same thing happened every day
Her family saw her fall
They couldn't prise out anything
About her tour at all

She felt it was her duty now
To deal with this alone
It was her guilt to carry
So she kept her grief unknown

Even if there was someone
That could have understood
She'd still have searing memories
It wouldn't do her any good

SOPHIE HILL (CONTINUED)

The distance grew from everyone
From family and friends
She hid away from all the noise
And prayed that it would end

She suddenly was ripped away
From the daydream in her mind
The last train to her barracks stopped
Her strength she tried to find

Deep in thought at what had passed
The whole train journey through
She tried to shake it off because
She had a job to do

It was time to go back now
To where it all began
To the nightmare in her head
Of Afghanistan

Her R&R was over now
She headed back to base
Her mind had given up at last
Gone without a trace

She arrived a different person
No emotion on her face
Her body there in Afghan
Her mind another place

A call came through the radio
A suspicious package lay
The troops they gathered up their things
And went out on their way

They assessed the situation
And they scanned the area too
But the medic had to act now
And she knew just what to do

She walked towards the package
Her stomach like a stone
She made her peace with God above
And acted on her own

She lay down on the package
As she murmured one farewell
To her family back in Scotland
And her comrades there as well

A muffled soft explosion
As the ground began to shake
Her body blown across the floor
Too much force to take

No one heard her cry or moan
They never heard her shout
Her aim to keep her comrades safe
In her mind there was no doubt

Civilians started gathering
As the helicopter came
To carry off this brave young lass
A pawn lost to the game

No doubt the Taliban looked on
To cheer this all day long
One infidel less to interfere
Where she did not belong

To sacrifice herself that day
Took courage, strength and will
No one will forget the name of
Medic Sophie Hill.

[HM Prison Glenochil](#)

MY WEE MAW

She's a navy workin' down a hole
She's the twenty pack of consulate menthol

She's ma wee Maw

She's the Johnny Walker blended whisky
She's the china tea set and the green tea cosy

She's me wee Maw

She's 'my Yiddish mama' on an old 78
She's the best leg of lamb on the perfect plate

She's ma wee Maw

She's that extra fiver to see you alright
She's 'Dave Allan on Saturday Night'

She's ma wee Maw

[HM Prison Shotts](#)



Image: Life of Betty,
Kibble Safe Centre
(Secure children's home)
Mixed Media Sculpture
Pat & Bill Gordon U18s
Special Award

THE KOESTLER SCOTLAND EXHIBITION

Open daily 11am – 6pm
7 – 29 November 2015

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#183MoreSleeps



Image Above:
A Sharp Exit,
HM Prison Edinburgh
Paint on Paper

Cover Image: Beach Pier,
North Ayrshire Council
(Criminal Justice Services)
Watercolour on Paper

Koestler Trust
arts by offenders ■■■



SUMMERHALL



LOTTERY FUNDED

