



Street Stories

by Rachel Shore and Damian Jozwik

An art and photography project
documenting the lives of members at The Wellspring, Stockport.

The Wellspring is a drop in centre for homeless and disadvantaged adults founded in 1991.

It is open 365 days a year, serving free meals to approximately 100 people each day.

Centre workers have helped over 700 people sleeping rough into housing.

Centre users are able to access an onsite nurse and doctor.

Community Drugs and Alcohol Teams provide support to help people overcome addictions.

Courses in Maths, ICT and English are provided each week, as well as regular Art and Women's Groups.

The Wellspring is a registered charity and relies entirely on donations to provide these essential services.

To find out how to donate please visit the centre or www.thewellspring.co.uk



Funded by Awards for All



The story behind Street Stories

The art group was established back in 2002. I had just completed a Diploma in Creative Therapies at Stockport College and had noticed an advert for a centre worker at The Wellspring. Interested in what The Wellspring was all about, I decided to offer my services and proposed a weekly creative arts session. On arrival at my initial visit to The Wellspring, then situated in a rundown shanty like scout hut, I could not help noticing an underlying atmosphere of friendship, warmth and acceptance. Thankfully my proposal was agreed and the creative arts group came into existence.

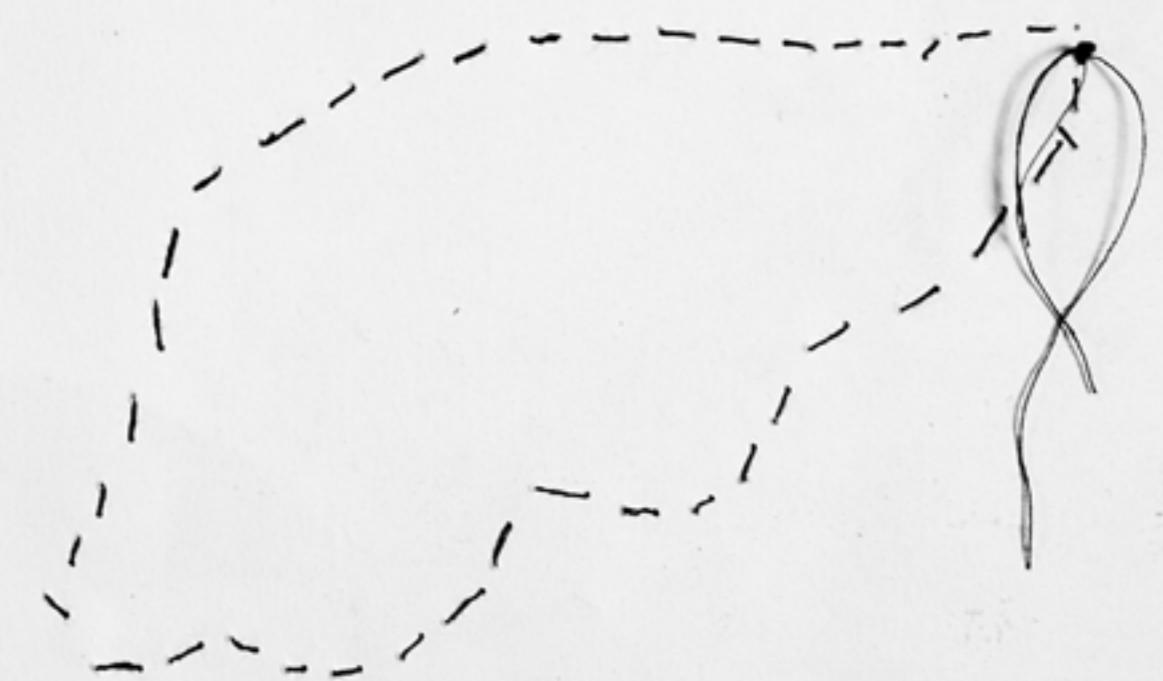
The main purpose of the group is to allow individuals some creative freedom and the opportunity to experiment with artistic mediums and techniques. Over the years we have explored many creative avenues such as mosaic, poetry, graffiti, life drawing, ceramics, collage and painting, to name only a few. The group has always been informal in nature and individuals have dipped in and out of the sessions. I have always strived to make the group as non-judgemental and as non-threatening as possible, and the focus has always been on creativity as a process and not the final product. Picking up a pencil, for some the first time since school, and attempting to draw something takes courage and encouragement. Some people who have artistic abilities have demonstrated a real commitment to their talent and continue to challenge themselves to this day. I have frequently been inspired and amazed by the masterpieces created.

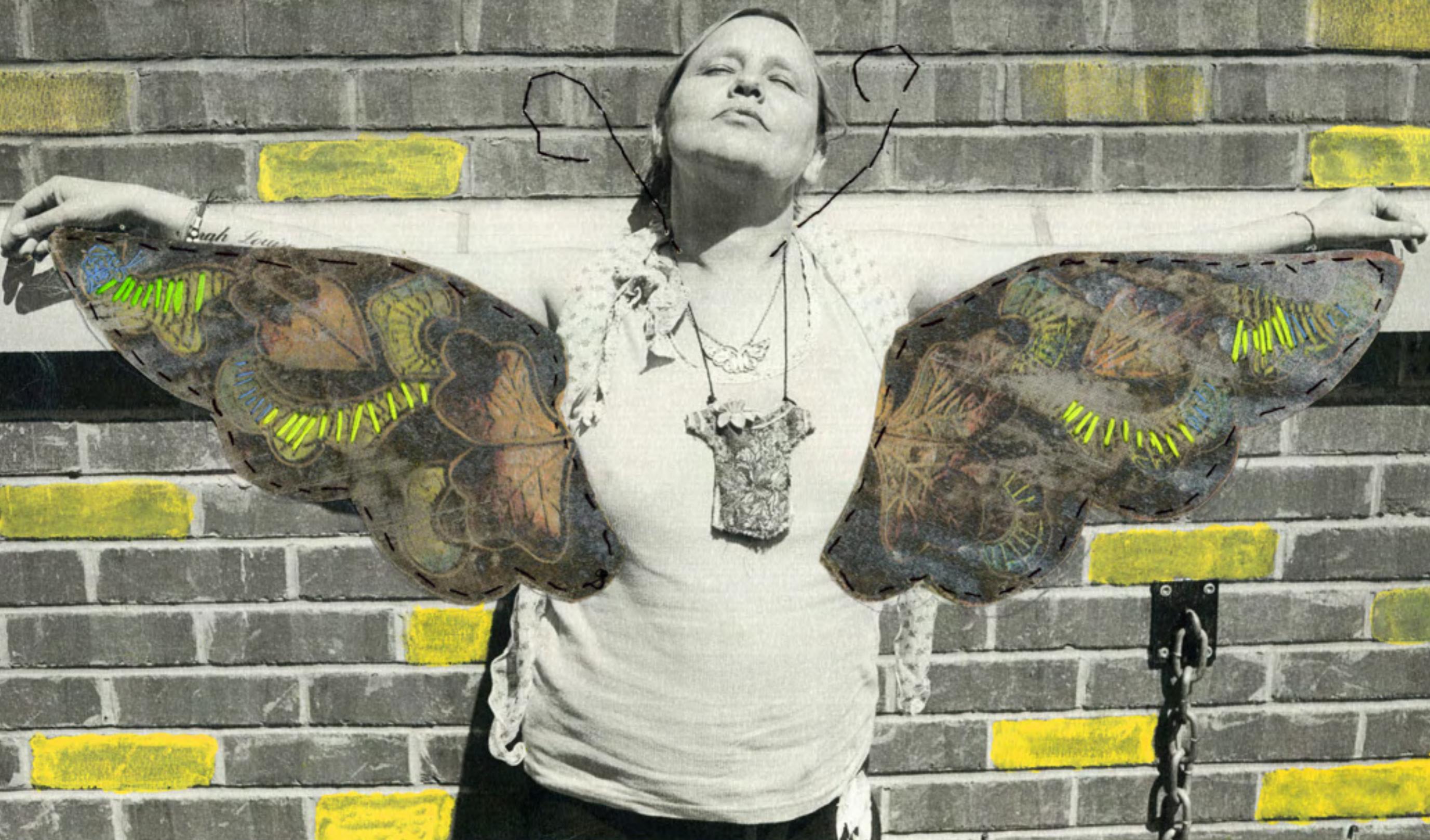
In 2010, I devised Street Stories with the intention that it would be beneficial for participants and the wider community on a number of levels, and in 2011 I was successful in securing Awards for All funding to facilitate the project. The completed artwork and stories aim to document the centre users' experiences of homelessness, their backgrounds and experiences of social disadvantage. This I hoped would give participants a platform to tell their story while also learning artistic skills, engaging in therapeutic activity and working towards achieving a shared goal. Working alongside photographer Damian Jozwik, participants were encouraged to combine photographic portraiture with art techniques to create a visual statement of personal significance.

The resulting artwork and stories within this book can be used as an educational resource within the community, to inform audiences of why people become vulnerable to homelessness through such reasons as mental health problems, substance abuse and family breakdown. I hope this may challenge stereotypes and stigmas. It is my vision that it may also serve to promote The Wellspring and the valuable services it provides: supporting individuals in need and helping them to maintain a secure living.

I am truly grateful to everyone who has given their time and energy in making this project possible. In particular the centre users who have participated in sharing their stories, I continue to be humbled by their honesty and candidness. I have heard the argument that in using The Wellspring's charity and free meals, people are more able to spend their money on alcohol and drugs, or opt to "drop out" from society. I argue against this as people make these life choices for adverse and profound reasons, and I feel that without the safety net The Wellspring provides these people would possibly take greater risks, turn to crime or become further isolated. I believe one of the most valuable aspects of The Wellspring's provision is in providing the opportunity and space for socialising, inclusive to all regardless of their background.

It is my hope that The Wellspring continues to reach out its net to those in need of catching.





Sandra Davies The Wings of Freedom

My picture is about me feeling free and powerful. I am happy and confident when I visit The Wellspring.

The idea of the butterfly came from my Aunty Dot, who died 22nd of December 2010. She gave me a necklace that has inspired me to somehow put it within my piece of art.

My Aunty Dot was very important to me, I looked after her 2 weeks before she died. She was like a second mum to me. She used to tell me I was like her daughter, she had time for me.

I was brought up in Withington, Manchester. I could tell you all sorts about my childhood but I get too upset.... Let's just say I come from a dysfunctional family, it wasn't a happy childhood. I went to Bostock Hall residential school for 10 years because I had learning difficulties. I was a slow learner but the school helped me, I found it hard to go back home in the holidays.

I have alcohol problems due to having a tough upbringing and a lack of confidence. The reason I drink is I suppose I can't cope with reality.... I have suicidal thoughts and I self-harm. When I'm in pain I'll take it out on myself. I feel worse when I've not been drinking. I shake and can't sleep properly, it's horrible waking up shaking. It's a pretend life. Alcohol is evil.

All my money goes on alcohol but I manage somehow to pay the bills. In the future I'd like to get off alcohol completely and help others with their drink or mental health problems.

I go to church on Sundays. I've met loads of lovely people, I find peace there, I feel whole in there. I have a dog called Shine, she's the light of my life. She makes me happy, she's my little daughter, she smiles at me!

I want to be happy, 100% happy. I've never been in that happy land.

“Coming here and going to church gives me strength. Wellspring is a comfort to me as I can talk to staff about anything. The staff are wonderful and doing art work helps me feel more confident.”





“I wanted to bring my dogs into my picture because my dogs Toby and Sindy, are my life. They sleep with me, they have a bath with me and sit on my knee when I’m watching telly. I decided to collect things from around my flat to put in the picture as well, it’s like bits and pieces from my life.”



Darren Jones

Dogs, Drugs and Doorways

I was in care most of my childhood. It was buzzing in care. I remember having good laughs, spraying the staff with the fire extinguishers! I remember we went in the kitchens and got big gateauxs and pinched food, we used to get on our bikes and crash into bushes. We had a laugh.

I was kicked out the home for playing loud music and nicking the cake and stuff. I was made homeless. I was rough sleeping in Manchester for a while, going into doorways and empty houses, sleeping on buses when they were parked up at night. At one point when I was homeless I lived on a farm and some church people looked after me and bought me a scooter. It cost about £1000 with insurance and everything.

Then someone nicked it in Manchester. I was in someone's house having drugs they just came and carried it off. I found it, it was set on fire. I've got a drug history, heroin and crack. When you're homeless you get into things like that. When you're on the street you get into following other people.

I went into hostels after that, I went in homeless hostels over Stockport and Manchester. It was good in the hostels. I got on with the cleaners, they really looked after me.

I come down to The Wellspring. We get loads of food and drinks, it's free. You meet new people and you get to do courses like art. You can see the doctors and nurses.

I was referred to come to the art group by Probation. I did a theft at Christmas, stole a computer.

I've done a drug course, but I breached my order and I didn't turn up to some of the courses I was supposed to be doing. To make up my hours I agreed to come and do this art class.

In the future I want to move on to get a job, make a life. I got 5 months left on probation and that's it.



Bowden Wilde

I got married at 25 and had two children; I was a joiner by trade. After 5 years of being happily married my cousin from Australia came to stay; I found them in bed together. He ran off with my wife! She took the kids, she said I could see them every year, that didn't happen. I last saw my kids in 1996. When she left I had a breakdown. She left me in debt and I lost my house.

I tried to commit suicide. I drank some beers, a whole bottle of brandy and necked 50 paracetamol. My sister found me flat out on the floor; I was in hospital for 7 days.

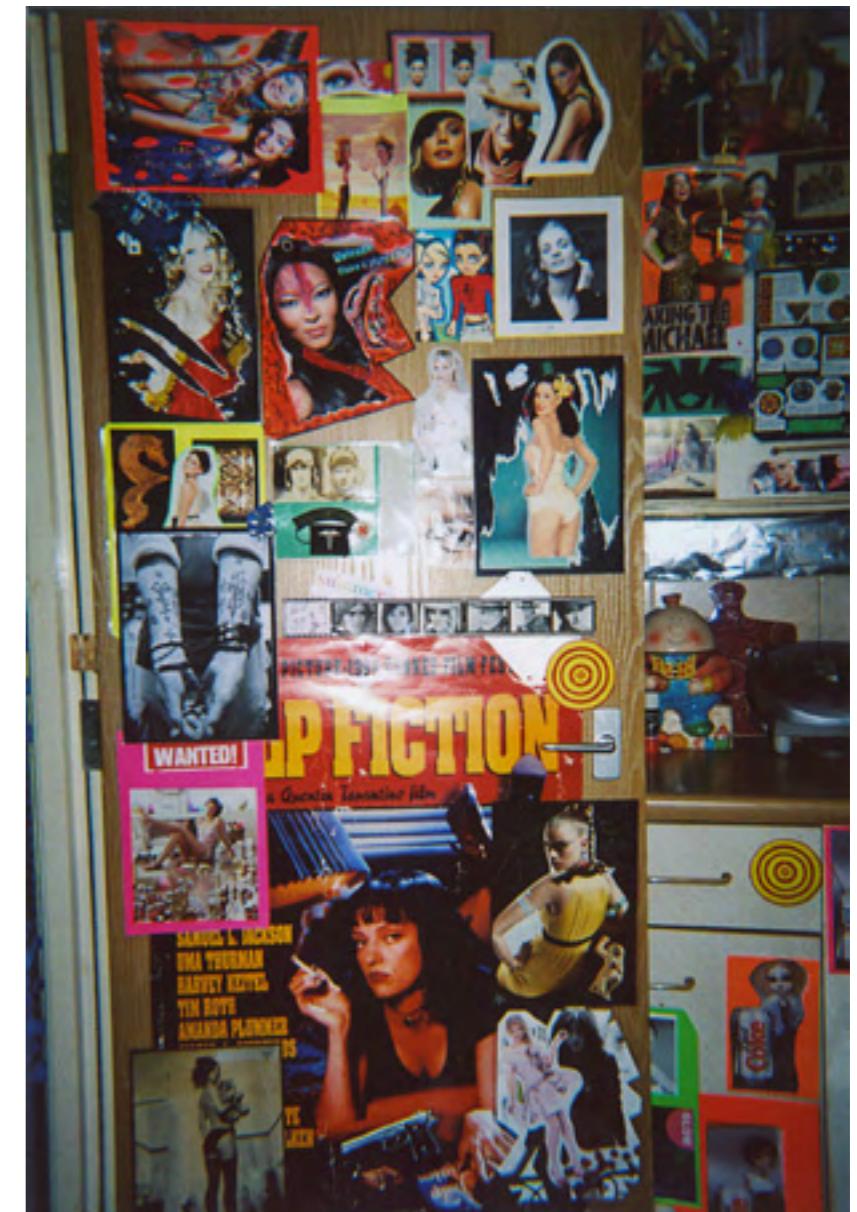
I slept on the streets, in the car, in the woods, everywhere. My sister took me in and I slept on her floor for 7 months. I went on detox last February. When I got out a nurse had to come round the house and breathalyse me to check I wasn't drinking; I had to take tablets. I had to avoid going anywhere with alcohol. I didn't drink for 8 months; I saw things differently. Just before my birthday last year I caught myself looking for that green bottle. Cider. It was like losing a friend and I wanted it back.

The Wellspring is the most fantastic place. Ok, there's drug addicts, dossers and alcoholics in here but most people are the salt of the earth. You can talk to anyone.

I have a housing association flat now. I've decorated the place with pictures, photos and made stuff out of rubbish. It's like a gallery.

“My art is important to me, it feeds my life.”





Angel Delight

In the hands of the law

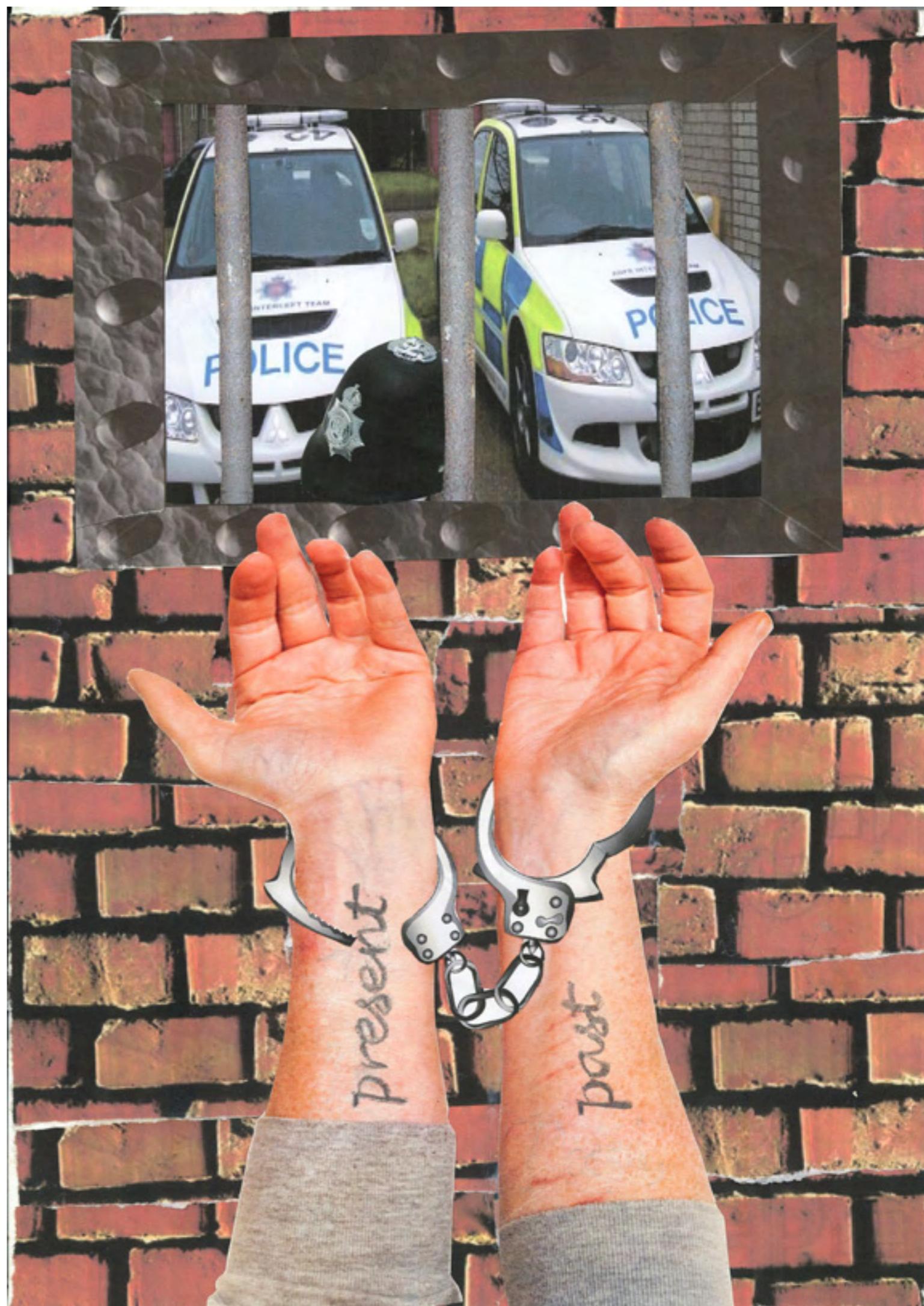
My picture is about the last 7 years of my life. Since 2004 I have been in and out of police custody and jails.

My last sentence was in 2009. I was in Styal, it's not very nice in there. They don't understand your needs, I attempted several suicide attempts while I was in there. I have cut myself with razor blades on my legs and arms.

My children were taken away when I was 30, that's when my criminal life and drug taking started. It started with a £10 bag of speed, but then I was soon spending over £120 a week which is roughly a quarter of an ounce a day. I've been hospitalised so many times with overdosing and heart problems. I have been arrested for various offences, like Section 5 public disorder, Section 4 racist abuse, police assault and possession of Class B drugs. I've never actually been homeless but have come very close to it. There have been weeks when I've had no money for electric, gas or food because I've spent it on speed.

The Wellspring for me is not just about a meal and a drink, it's about mixing with people with the same background and not being judged by staff. The staff are very supportive. They try to point you in the right direction. In the future I want to come out from rehab and go to college to become a drugs worker. I want to help others like I was helped.

"I want to be free from this life. In the picture the handcuffs are beginning to come off. I have started to make better choices to be free of my old life, of prison and drugs. One day, when my children are old enough to come and find me I want to be clean from drugs and be able to explain to them what I've been through. I want a better life for them and for myself. I want a brighter future."





Derek

Van Gogh Man

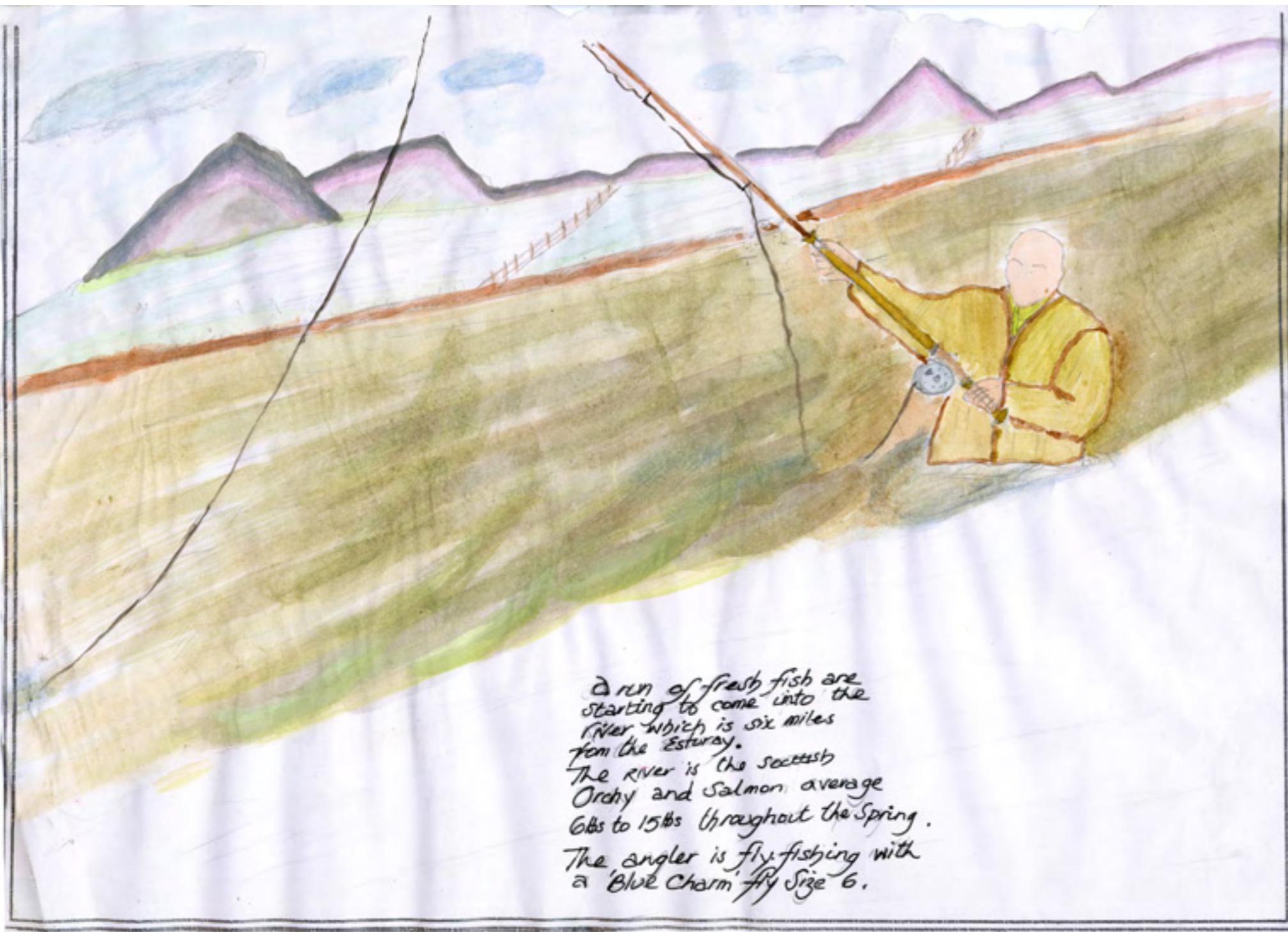
I was told about The Wellspring by an art teacher friend of mine whose daughter used to do charity work here. She told me about the Wellspring art group, saying, "You can always please yourself with what you do." I always feel relaxed at The Wellspring.

I'm completely relaxed when I'm doing my art, and if I'm not happy with what I've done I'll tear it up and start again! Art plays a big part in my life, my whole house is filled with artwork, I've got artwork on every wall. My daughter goes berserk because I want to put stuff on the ceiling. I like to go from one extreme to the other: abstracts, landscapes, watercolours, collage and acrylics.

I enjoyed doing my self-portrait, I looked at a Van Gogh portrait and have attempted to copy his style of painting.

I started doing art 2 years ago because I had gone off fishing, which I used to do a lot. I got bored with it. The thing that really started me was watching Bob Ross, an American artist on TV. He makes it look so easy. That got me hooked.





Ernie

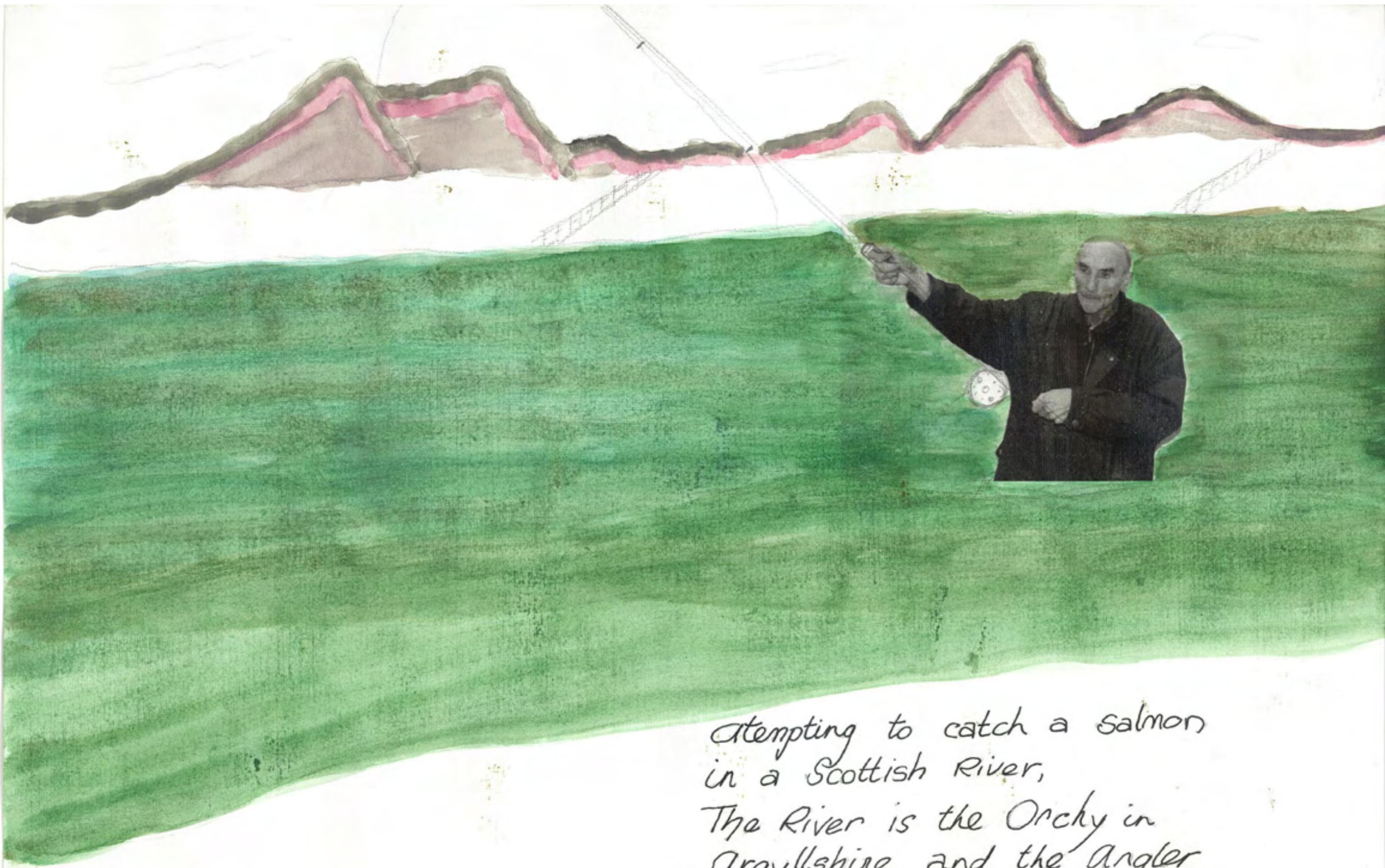
Fly-fishing

It started in 1990, I was 50 at the time. I lost my mother. We lived together; I had always lived with my mother. So when this happened I decided to move to Scotland. I have always loved fishing; Scotland has wonderful rivers and fishing. With my inheritance I bought a little cottage. I only lived there 12 months. The weather was really bad and things started to go wrong, pear shaped. So I came back down here.

Selling the Scottish cottage was very complicated, it took years to resolve. In the end I lost 50% of its value. So then I came to East Didsbury to share a flat with a friend. That didn't work out so now I've ended up sharing with a relative in Oldham.

A friend first introduced me to The Wellspring. After paying gas, electric, council tax, food and water you have nothing left to enjoy life with. My Mum used to say, "Wouldn't we be rich but for our bellies." The Wellspring is a lifeline. The people treat you with respect. If you have a problem they help you through it. I attended maths classes with Jan Lovett here and then I started the art classes.

"Making this picture brought back memories of fishing, it's the only hobby I have. I can't afford the bait, the licence and everything else. It's the nearest I've got to the real thing for years!"



Attempting to catch a salmon
in a Scottish River,
The River is the Orchy in
Argyllshire, and the angler
is fishing a Blue Charm fly.



Ged Jarvis

The Journey so far

It began for me back in 2003 on a Saturday afternoon. I arrived at The Wellspring not knowing what to expect. The Wellspring then was set in an old scout club building. The building had seen better days and was in a bad state of repair.

I made my way nervously to the food counter where I was served hot soup, sandwiches and a drink. The room seemed very warm and noisy, the windows were steamed up, above me on the wall a television crackled and flickered.

During the months that followed I joined and completed courses that The Wellspring ran. I also became part of the Management Committee and a members' representative. Over this time The Wellspring has had its ups and downs: new people joining would make it very busy and for a while it struggled to cope.

Years went by and then finally we found the funds and the land to put a new building on. 2009 was a great year for The Wellspring, the new building was completed. It is at least 4 times bigger than the old place and everything is brand new.

I enjoy myself here. I hope and wish it continues to go on its journey, through its problems with its head held high. In my heart I know it will survive to help many others along the way.

Let the journey continue.

I'm 43, single, gay, independent and very stubborn in my ways. Over the years I have had serious mental health issues which include psychosis and bipolar disorder. I also have serious physical health issues which are predicted to be life threatening. Medical professionals believe I won't see my 50th year.

I am of the opinion that you should trust no one and that the only god in this world is that of the individual. Religion is for losers and those that can't stand on their own two feet when times get tough.

I have this habit of saying things as they are, not as others want me to say. I'm of the belief that the truth really does hurt but lies will hurt for a lot longer, go much deeper and do more damage than the truth can ever do.

You either like me or hate me...to be honest I don't give a sh** either way.

In the words of Gloria Gaynor, "I am what I am."

THE WELLSPRING



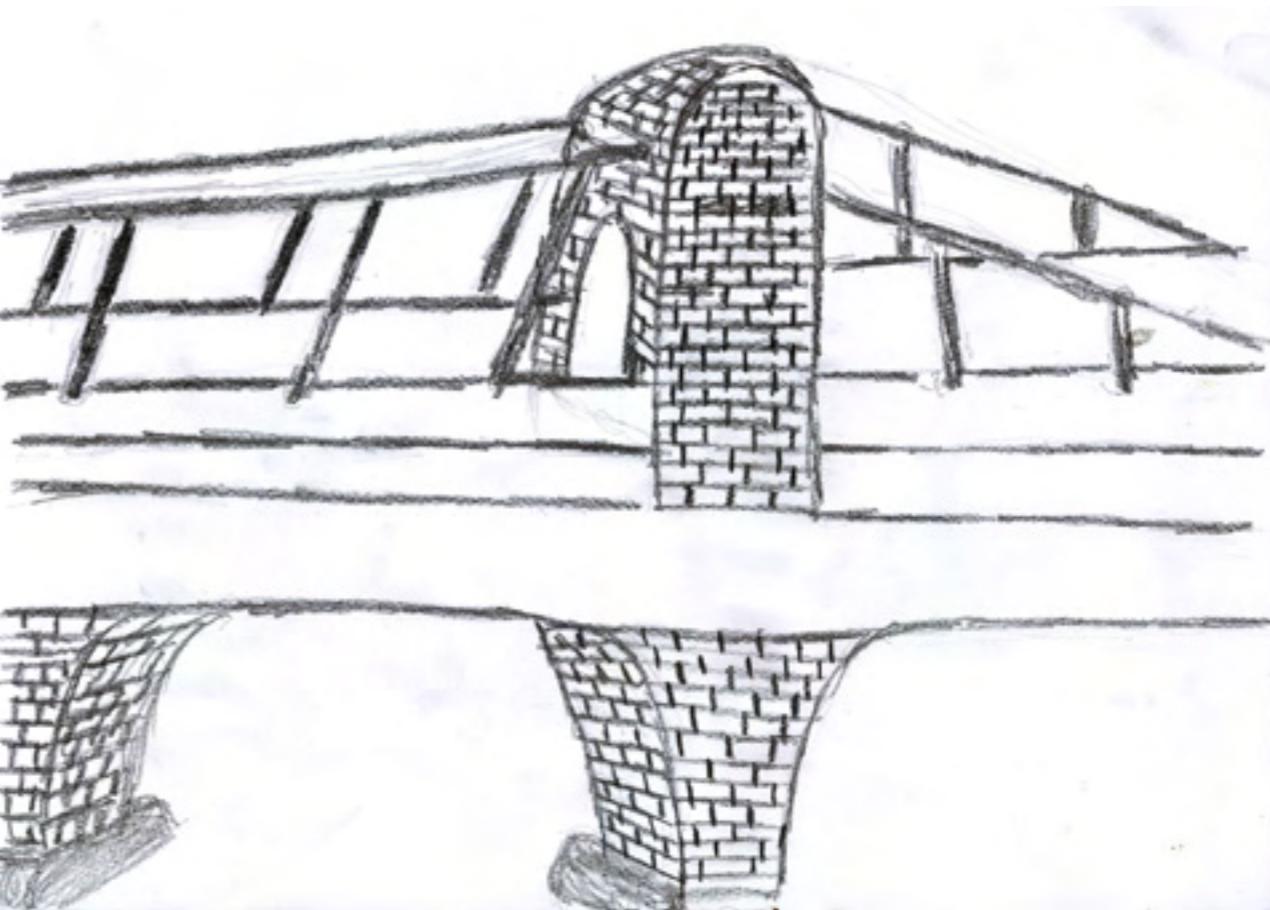
Gordon Lawrence

The Bridge of Life

I use The Wellspring to make communication, as a base, as well as to talk to people. The best thing about coming here is you, as a teacher, make people feel welcome, and also you get a lot of good advice. If I wasn't coming here I'd be looking at four walls

I was born in Bury, went to school, then went to Manchester College of Building to learn how to do bridge building, learning how to do stress over strain, and load bearing capacities. I was employed by the Co-operation for 17 years. When Maggie Thatcher said you have to go elsewhere to find employment, then I went to Manchester Direct Works. I was there for 15 years, a total of 47 years in the building trade, engineering, construction and steel works.

I live in Radcliffe at the moment. It's a little grim at home but I don't let it get the better of me. Relatives and relations, we only seem to meet up on the bad occasions. I was married to a woman with 3 children. I tried to be the best father I could, but jealousy crept in the camp. The children adored me, but other people seemed to what you call "interfere".

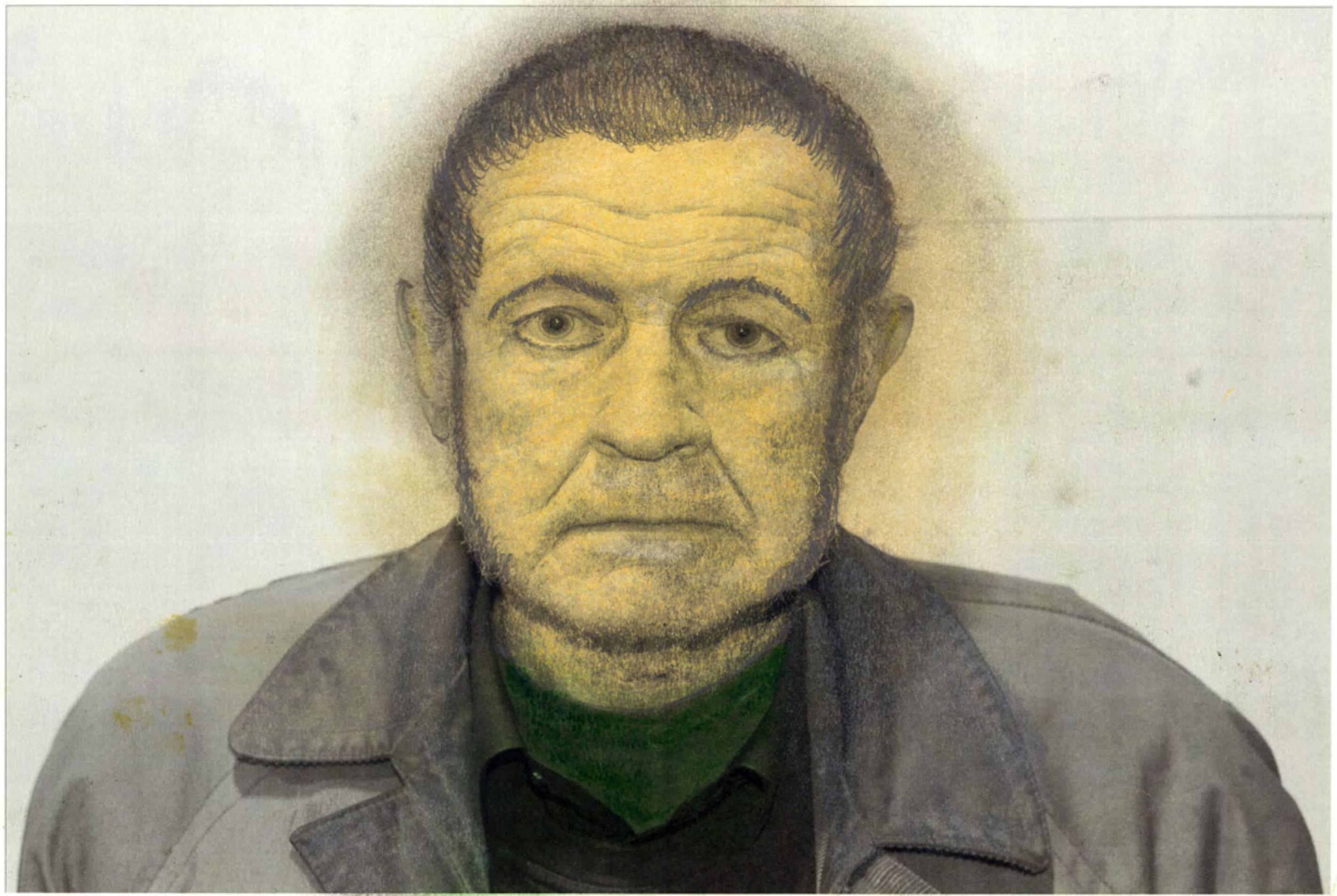


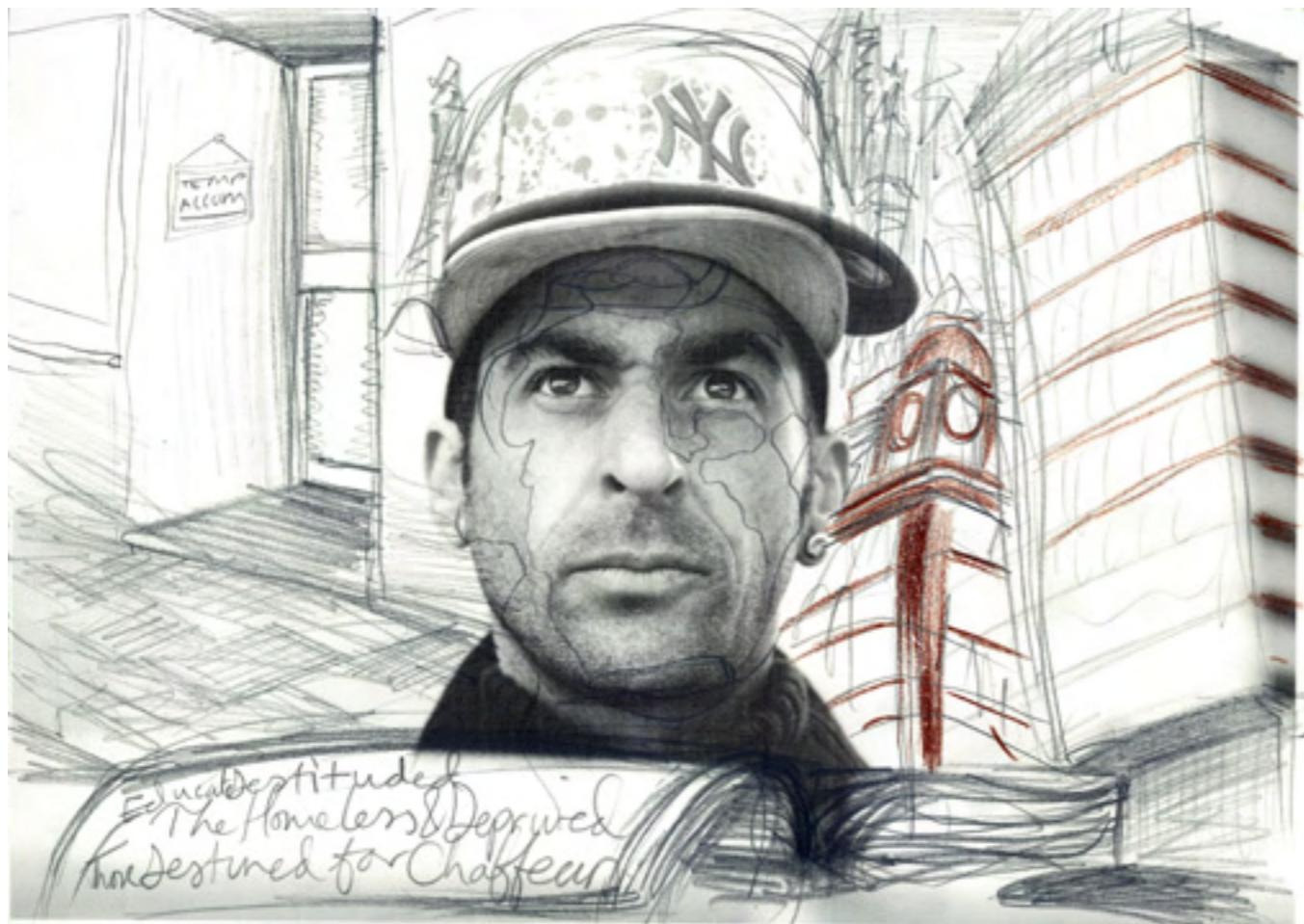
In life, you have to have this aim to go forward to do things no one has done before. That's my goal, to go where no one has been before. It's something I've got in me to keep looking for the unknown, the unforeseen. People say I'm unusual but it's not what they think, it's what I think. No one is going to run me down.

The picture is of me as a younger man, I'm 67 now. In the picture I'm in my 40s. The bridge is of the bridge of life. If you have a good foundation underneath you nothing else will fall down, because if we do things we are not supposed to, like as people say "burn them bridges" but in my case I build bridges to last, get it right first time and you will never look behind you. Life is made to go on, I've lost a lot but I've gained a lot more.

I've never had hold of a pencil since I left school. Something just clicks, and once it's clicked nothing's stopping me. I can visualise the finished product. Some say it's a gift. Why I do it I don't know. The art group makes me express something within myself, something that's been lying idle and it needs that nurturing.

I'd like to live forever but it always seems the clock is beating us to it.

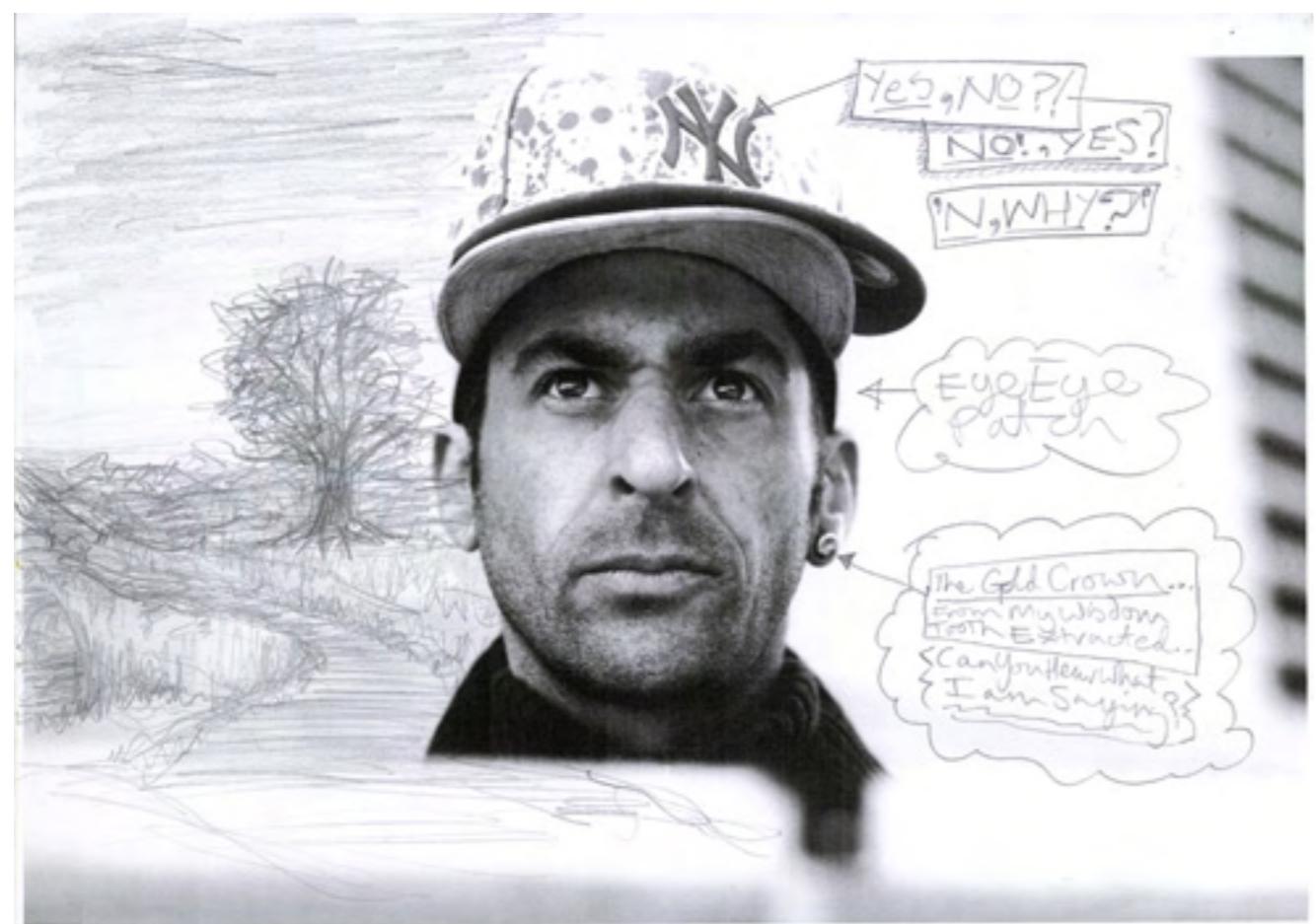




Education
The Homeless & Deprived
Are Destined for Chaffeur



Nathan Sassen



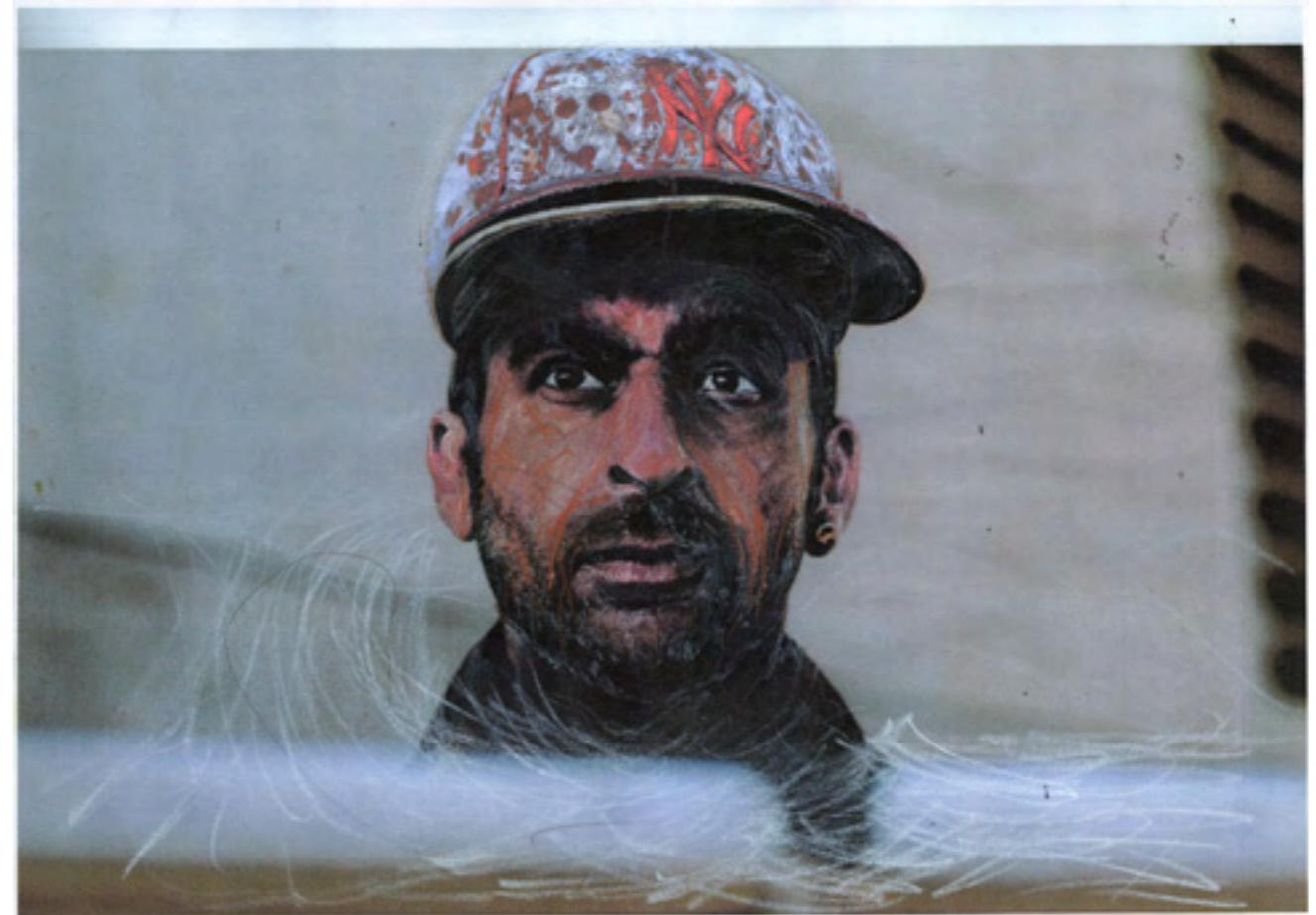
A Simple Jigsaw

Since my assault I've been studying everything about the world, everywhere in the world where I've wanted to go.

I was made homeless and was roaming the streets, slept in mills but got some racial abuse there. Basically, Mum's boyfriend was an arsehole; I couldn't pay the rent one time and ended up getting kicked out when he was on a drunken binge. Then I was taken in by a friend and stayed in their flat.

I wanted to get out one time, I was fed up with drinking cheap cider so I decided I'd go out to the pub with some mates. I was into bikes at the time. A biker wanted some artwork for his bike so I took down the artwork to the Bakers Vaults. He said he liked the artwork and he'd buy me a drink; went in a few more pubs, shook hands with a few more people. He took me in the pub at the top of the market because he said he had a bit of trouble with a lad in there, I told him I wasn't that good at fighting, but I'd watch his back if it kicked off.

I have dreams, I see things. Years back I go into this pub with a pool table, a dark room with a sticky floor. A pint gets knocked over on the table, a guy is stood by the fire exit. In this dream I'm hitting the deck and I've got blood



pouring down my face, I can't see. Then all of a sudden in real life I'm there in the pub. I see the pint on the table, the black and white floor, the pint falling in slow motion. I look towards the fire exit, I clock the guy and in seconds it's like BANG! "What the f*** was that?" BANG! BANG! Punches, kicks from all angles. I'm like skinny and these were meat heads, it was fight or flight and I flew.

Days later I go down Stockport. I'm walking normally, get to the roundabout near Woolworths. All of a sudden everything just went. I was stood there shaking and frozen. I started shouting, lost it in the middle of Stockport. Don't know how but I calmed down and managed to walk but my arm was still shaking. The hospital didn't want to know because I'm swearing and they think I'm drunk, security kicked me out. So I went back the next day, been up all night, head going, arm still shaking. I told them, "Look, I've been assaulted, can't you tell?"

They put me in Emergency Trauma. I have blood tests; they think it's alcohol. I'm saying this is not me. My friends were saying, "No it's not the alcohol, it's not him." I'm getting mad. This guy has taken my arm away and if that's the case I can't draw. Spent 6 weeks in there, lying on the bed shaking and twitching. In the end, I was moved to Hope Hospital, spent 4 weeks there. There was a possibility of spinal tap to release a trapped nerve which might of led to permanent damage.

I was there in hospital twitching, trying to draw. It was getting me that mad, my art is everything. I'm there like "Do it!". In 3 days, I've learnt to draw with my left hand. Could you imagine it if both my hands had gone? I'd be drawing with my mouth! So take these limbs, whatever, I know what I'm capable of!

After the assault I spent about 7 months inside, locked inside my house. I would take 3 hours of just shaking stood at the front door, I needed some milk to get my coffee to start the day but I couldn't get out the door. My worst day I was stood there 6 hours 45 minutes. I was popping pills from the doctors, taking drugs off the street, smoking weed, getting p***** out of my head in the day time. Every now and then I get a clear kind of run, I'm out walking in the hills. Then a little trigger, I see someone riding a motorbike, that sends me off, right back home and don't go out for three days.

I got to know The Wellspring because I was looking for a place to live with Stockport Council. I knew The Wellspring before because my Dad used it, so they could possibly locate where my Dad had moved on to or tell me if he had passed away. With the help of friends and The Wellspring, they helped me do the forms while I was in hospital, and after 2 weeks of coming out I had a flat! I've used The Wellspring to make positive changes in my life, not just for free meals and stuff like some people in there do because they can't be arsed.

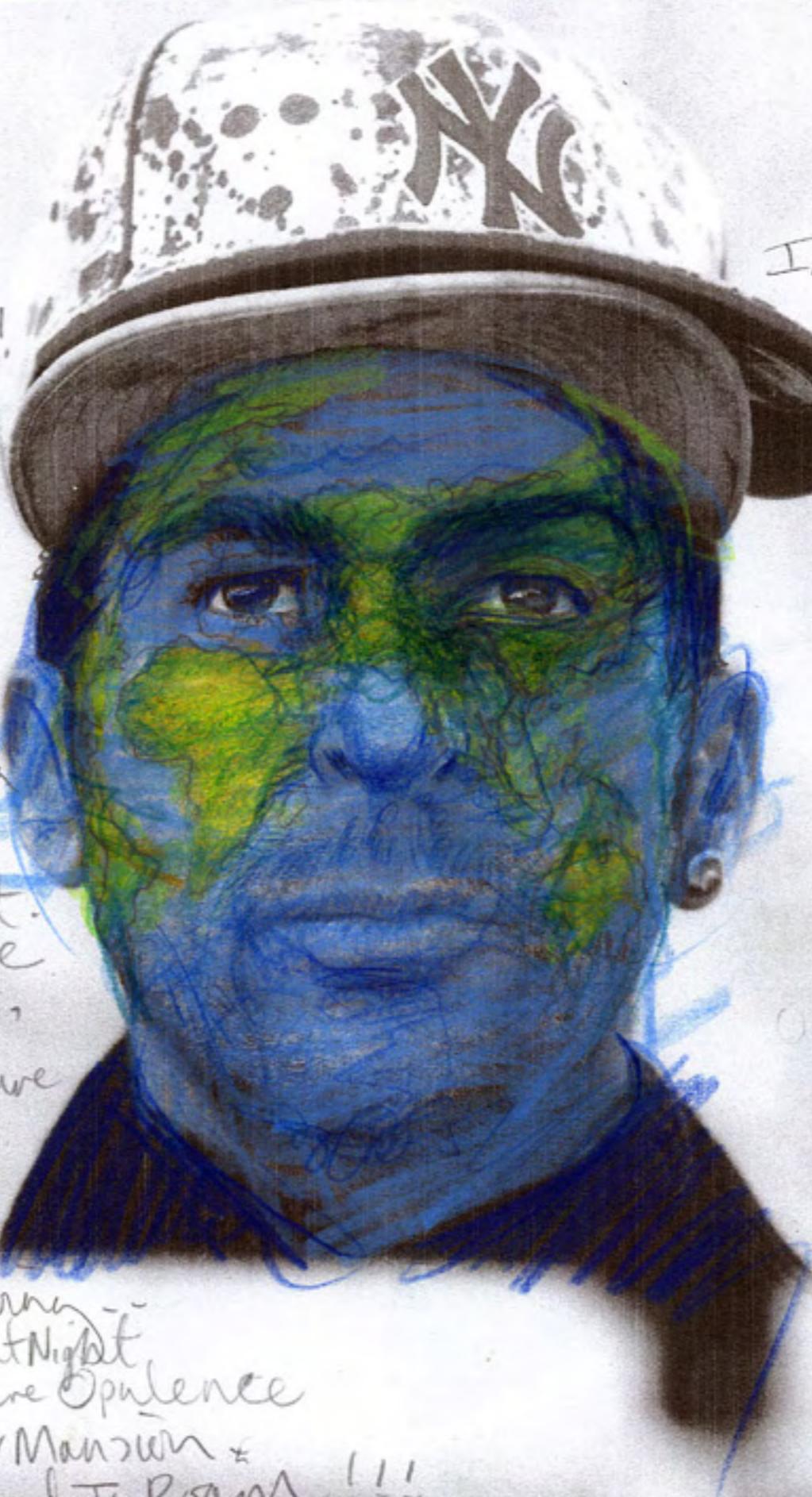
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My Tired Body,
My Thinking Mind...
Now Thinks about
Booking This Place
Imagine The Summer Vacation!
Next year, spent here
With Family
and Friends
Yes! I Think Not!!!

As I Head Through A Door
That's A Curtain!!!
My Host went ahead,
Lit up the Room, I've Never Seen
Such Welcome
I've Seen Worse a 'Place
That Land Lords Rent Out.
Yet This Place Came for Free
It pleased me So Much. That,
with my Host,
I wanted to Share My Pleasure
with Her.

I wanted to Lay Down
I Desperately Needed Sleep
After 24 Hours on Tarmac & Pavement -
Cobden's Place, On That Night
was Luxury -- Pure Opulence
With Splendor of Palace or Mansion
With Acres of Land To Roam!!!

18/09/2011 Onward
EAM



"Sofa Surfing"

Parks, Doorways,
Empty Buildings,
I Am Supposed To Be,
Sleeping...
In Silence. These Places
Are Not So Quiet!
I've Slept with Rats,
Many Years Before.
The Ghostly Creaking
Of The Loose Floorboards,
This place in Areas
Only had Joists.
Slightly Charred where
Flooring Belonged.
On The Second Floor
you Could See Much More
The Stars & The Passing Sky.
Now The Slates Had Gone
The Lead Removed
You Could Watch The Native
Rats, That are Flapping
The Rats Through The Gaps
That Fly Out or In
Indes Deep, In Pigeon Shit
I'm now Led to My Room
Completing This On
My Sinking Heart



"I'm a complicated person because of my experiences, if someone was to take the time to figure out the pieces and sort them out they would realise they make quite a pretty picture. It's also my interests, my skills, everything I do is like a jigsaw. My head's like a jigsaw at night, creating, putting things together."







I was brought up by my Granddad and my Grandma. I used to sit next to my granddad while he was painting, he'd paint animals like cows feeding and landscapes with streams running and windmills. We had some big pictures put up in the house and he'd sell some smaller ones. I used to watch and do some little ones myself. They had their own business as professional painters and decorators. They had a big shop in Blackpool near the North Pier, near Cocker Street Baths. Then they moved near Derby Baths, the big baths where Johnny Weissmuller, the old Tarzan, used to put shows on. We saw him diving off the top board. He was the best Tarzan, 6 foot 6 he was with six gold medals for swimming.

When he died I started work as a welder, then I went drilling. When I got a bit older I worked grinding and polishing lenses for binoculars. At the time I was lodging with a pal. My aunties and uncles from Stockport came to visit from time to time; they asked me if I wanted to stay with them in Stockport, so that's how I came to be in Stockport. At 18 I used to make chocolates for a factory at the bottom of Edgeley. Then I started making concrete at a concrete firm, making concrete, fencing and panels. So I did this until I retired, I'm 80 now.

My mum lived in London and worked as a singer, she was on the stage and in pantomimes. She had that kind of a voice like an opera singer. She was singing until she was 85, she used to be in a group that went round old people's homes singing. She died when she was 96.



“When I retired I thought I can't just sit at home so I'll try painting again. A friend of mine came here and he told me about the art class at The Wellspring, so I thought I'd give it a go. I've been coming here about 4 years now. I come here to paint; I like the atmosphere and the company. You get fed up staying at home.”



I come from Northern Ireland. I was born in the town of Omagh but I've been in Stockport for years. I went to primary school and high school in Omagh, then I went to college to do secretarial training. I enjoyed it but the lessons were very hard. I do miss it. Before leaving I worked in a hospital in County Tyrone for years. I've worked for years in various jobs. I've worked in restaurants, in nursing homes, in lots of jobs and cleaning offices.

I came to England with my partner at the time. We worked together for a time then he went to Canada to visit his relatives. That's his business really. We've not seen very much of each other since. The last job I had was for quite a while in Heaton Moor cleaning in care homes. It ended because I got myself dismissed and then I lost my evening job as well. I found myself unemployed.

Someone introduced to The Wellspring. They told me it would be good for me, they thought I looked a bit down here in Stockport. I was very poor, it helped to get some meals. I found some courses here which was good, I like to keep busy. I do a computer course at Stockport College as well. I enjoy the lessons.

I like The Big Wheel, they are very high up but it frightens me. You get Big Wheels at the seaside. You go in a cabin with a roof and it's open and it goes all the way up. I've seen one by the side of the Arndale Centre, but I've not experienced it though yet. They are very, very high, you can see the cabins with glass. It looks more secure. They are closed with a few people in so you don't have to be alone by yourself.

I haven't heard from my friends for years, my friends in Birmingham. I used to go and see them, I know my way about there. If they wanted to come up and see me they are quite welcome. Maybe they are in a huff with me for some reason, maybe I should write them a little letter or something. It's been a long time.



Stephen B The Brighter Side of Life

I had a good job working at McVities for 26 years. I've never really had a proper home, stayed with friends, nothing really permanent, staying in squats and on people's sofas.

I got into drugs and drinking, it became a way of life: hanging around with dubious people.

I was addicted to speed at one point, used heroin when I was on a come down after having speed or ecstasy. I stopped doing drugs after a bit, just cannabis, but then the drinking took over. I couldn't stop drinking. I lied to myself for a long time, saying if I wanted to stop then I could stop.

I lost my job through the drink. I had been suspended once, told to sort my act out, but I just carried on until someone caught me again. Sometimes we would go out at dinner and get smashed. They breathalysed me at work, I was 3 times over the limit.

In a way it was a good thing for me, it was a wakeup call. I was at a mate's flat at the time and I'd go in the kitchen, every cupboard was full of vodka bottles and empty cans. The only thing I was doing was going out all the time and drinking. It was my life, I had nothing apart from that.

I decided to stop drinking but it wasn't as easy as I thought. I started seeing someone about my problem but I wasn't being honest, I lied about how many units I was doing. I wasn't doing myself any favours and he couldn't help me because I wasn't being truthful. So I stopped going.

It got bad when I realised my liver count was really high and the doctor phoned me up to ask I go in and see him. The doctor put me in touch with a clinic and they said I needed a detox. So I got a place at Smithfield in town. Going in the clinic was the easy bit, your medication is there, your food is there, there are people to talk to. That's where I got into art. I got absorbed into it and could get my head into it.

When I came out the clinic I got a bed in a hostel, it was like a second chance for me, I didn't want to



“My picture is called The Brighter Side of Life. The past is disappearing, I don't dwell on the past, what I've done, I've done. I've had one blip since I've come out of detox. It took time for me to get my head round the fact I'm not drinking.”

blow it. It's like being reborn so I could make a new life. It's not been easy because I've had to keep away from everyone I knew. The Wellspring helped me, it's somewhere to go and you meet people.

What I was doing was wrong, I was using drink and drugs as sedation. You have to look at yourself, you might not like what you see but it's there, it's you.

You can't go back and change the past, but you can change the future.

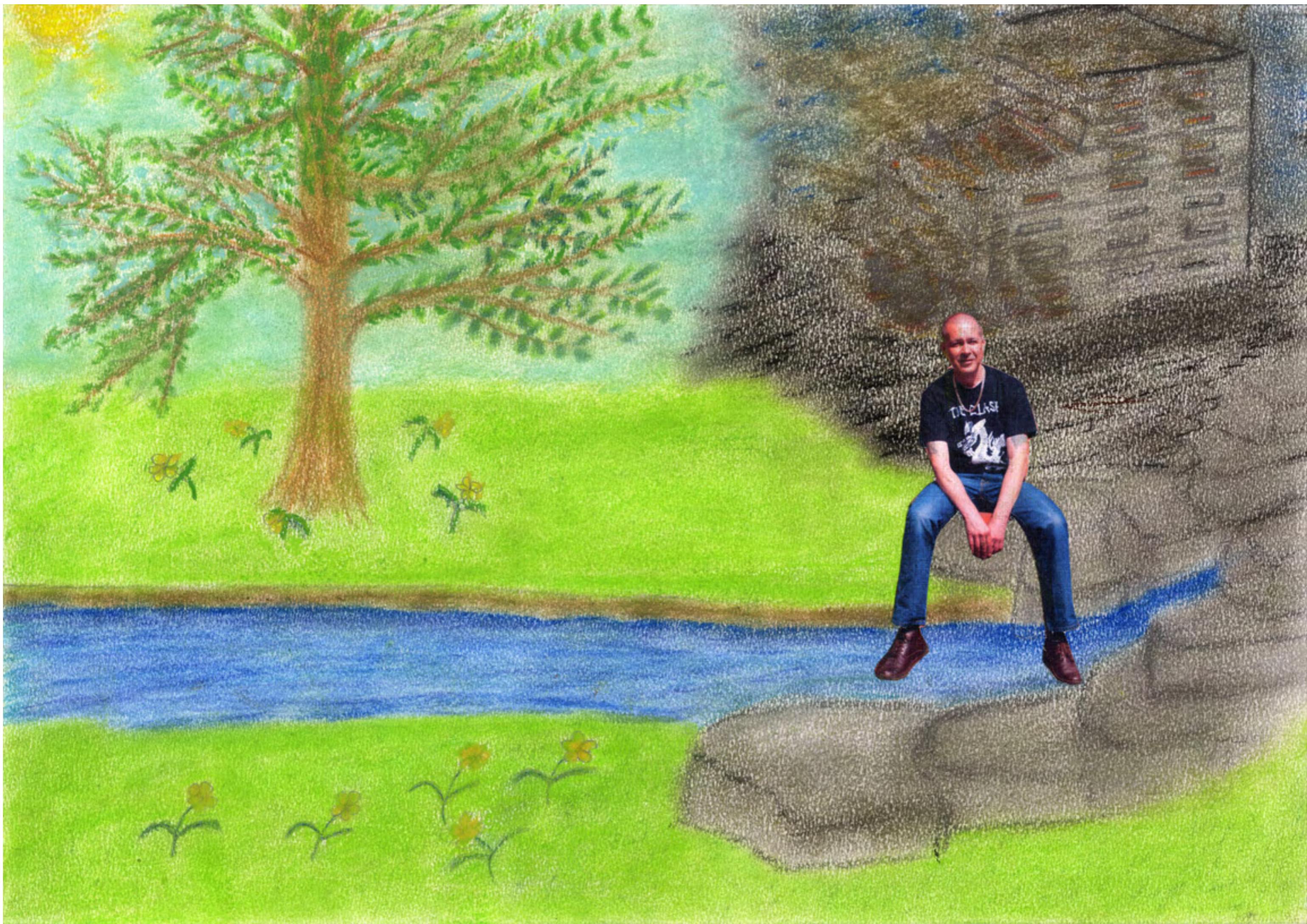
I'm signing on Jobseeker's now. Yes I do want a job, but I want a job I like. If I don't get a job I like it will just depress me and I might end up drinking. I've got no job but I'm happy. This is the happiest I've been in my life. I've now got my own flat, it's looking really smart.

Someone said to me today, "What a sh** day, it's raining." But it's not a sh** day, it has to rain sometimes, it makes the green greener, there is beauty in it.

I take each day as it comes, if something good happens, it happens! If something bad happens, you get on with it.









Out in the cold
and growing old,
don't need this s**t
try another hit.

Up next morning
same old boring
what can I do
to see me through?

No one cares,
everybody stares.
I go and roam
to find a home.

Found something new
and I'm going to see it through.
The help is all there
and they really care.

by Stephen B.



Turner Over a New Leaf

The following quotes are taken from a selection of witness statements in prosecution against a service user who between July and Sept 2010 slept rough in Woodbank Park, Stockport.

"A man entered the office whilst I was on the phone and started pacing up and down. He seemed quite agitated and smelt strongly of alcohol. When I put the phone down he came right up, putting his face very close to mine and said, 'I need some rope to make a washing line.' I asked him who he was and where he was from. He stated that he was Bruce Turner and that he had been sleeping at the side of Woodbank Hall. At this point his face was still very close to mine and I could tell he had been drinking as his breath smelt strongly of alcohol. I told him we couldn't provide him with anything whilst he was sleeping there. He seemed to calm down at this point. He said he understood what I was saying but then said he had to live somewhere. Mr Turner then left my office and went back around the other side of Woodbank Hall where he sleeps under the beech tree."

"He sleeps regularly in the park to date, on most occasions alone; however, sometimes with a friend. I am aware of him lighting fires which I have had to put out on several occasions. I have found evidence of Mr Turner defecating and urinating at the back of Woodbank Hall. I believe that this man sees this as his home now and enjoys living out in the open; I also think that he thinks it is his right to be there."

"I am aware the rangers and police have tried to help Mr Turner find accommodation and taken him down to The Wellspring in town centre; however, he doesn't seem to be interested in accessing this help."

"This man's continued presence and associated anti-social behaviour is having a detrimental effect on the Woodbank Park community. Those who work and use the park for recreation are being upset by the man's actions and their quality of life is being spoiled by his behaviour."

"I see him most evenings coming into the grounds of the hall always after 19.00 hrs. He is the only rough sleeper that we have had sleep regularly in the grounds of the Hall. In mid-July my grandson witnessed the rough sleeper fighting with another male. This was at around 07.00hrs: the two males were fighting and shouting at the front of the hall. Soon after the fight they started playing cricket together. I am aware the rough sleeper drinks alcohol on a regular basis. He always has alcohol on him, either a bottle of wine or cider."

"Members of the public who use the park have commented to me about there being a rough sleeper at the side of the hall. A lady who walks her dog here stopped and spoke to me recently stating she felt it was inappropriate and a little intimidating that he had taken up residence in the grounds."



“People and life are demanding, we never have time for ourselves. The group is all about that.”



“Coping with all the pressures is the biggest problem I face, juggling all the balls at once.”

The Women's Group

For every 10 men that visit The Wellspring there is 1 woman visitor. This is a statistic that reflects the proportion of men who experience homelessness or social disadvantage on a national scale. Being in a distinct minority some of the woman service users, led by sessional tutor Jenny Went, formed a Women's Group that meets weekly at The Wellspring.

The group serves many purposes. There is often a feeling that women are undervalued, taken advantage of and even squashed. This feeling is often amplified when you have had life challenges or a troubled background. The group provides mutual support, an opportunity to share experiences and to learn new skills. As stated in its mission statement, the group attempts to equip, enable and encourage.

Over the years, the group has enjoyed taking part in many diverse activities such as massage, meals out, D.I.Y and Soca Aerobics to name but a few. For some group members this provides the only opportunity in which they get to experience some “me time”, away from the demands of their lives and relationships. There is also emphasis on relevant issues such as drugs education and breast awareness.

In the future the group intends to continue to grow in size and reach out to more women across the community. Within its caring and nurturing environment, it also hopes to continue to support women to grow in confidence and ability.

“We play many roles in our lives: mother, wife, referee, mender, cook and cleaner.”

“I never feel strange here.”

What a shower !!
But they're great.



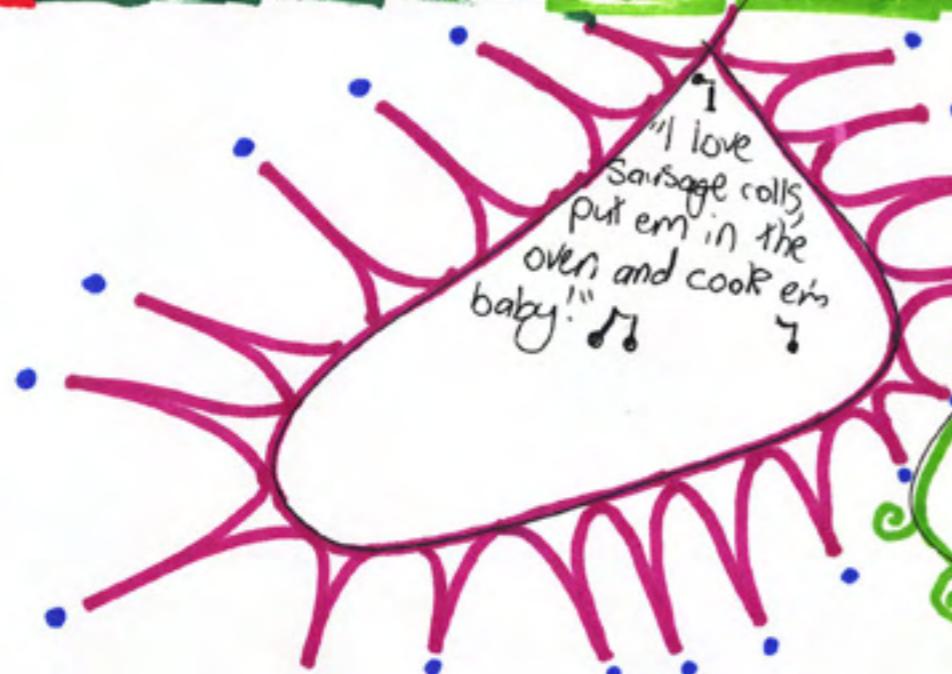
I look forward to
this Friday meet up so
so good for you x

People here are
so encouraging
it's really nice

Where have
all these people
come from?
GREAT !!

Why I am
NOT in this
lovely Picture??
C. Eva M

C. Eva M



Where's Eileen
today? !!

Here I am with all
my friends enjoying
ourselves as usual.

VIOLET WARING.



Special thanks to....

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All the staff, members and volunteers

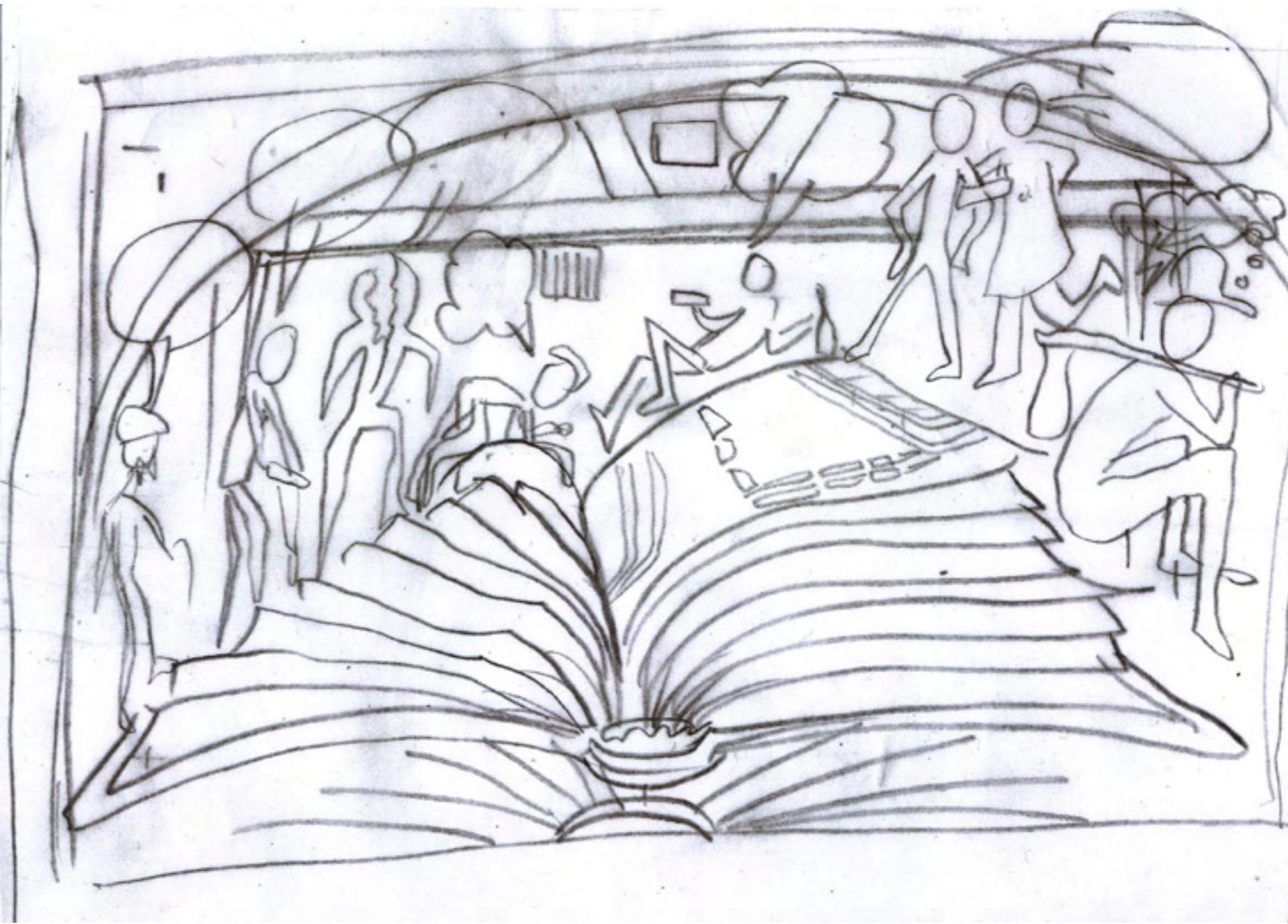
Damian Barnett

ProntaPrint Stockport

Awards for All for making it possible

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