



CAPTURING CASTLEMILK 2

More writing and photography from the Castlemilk Stables



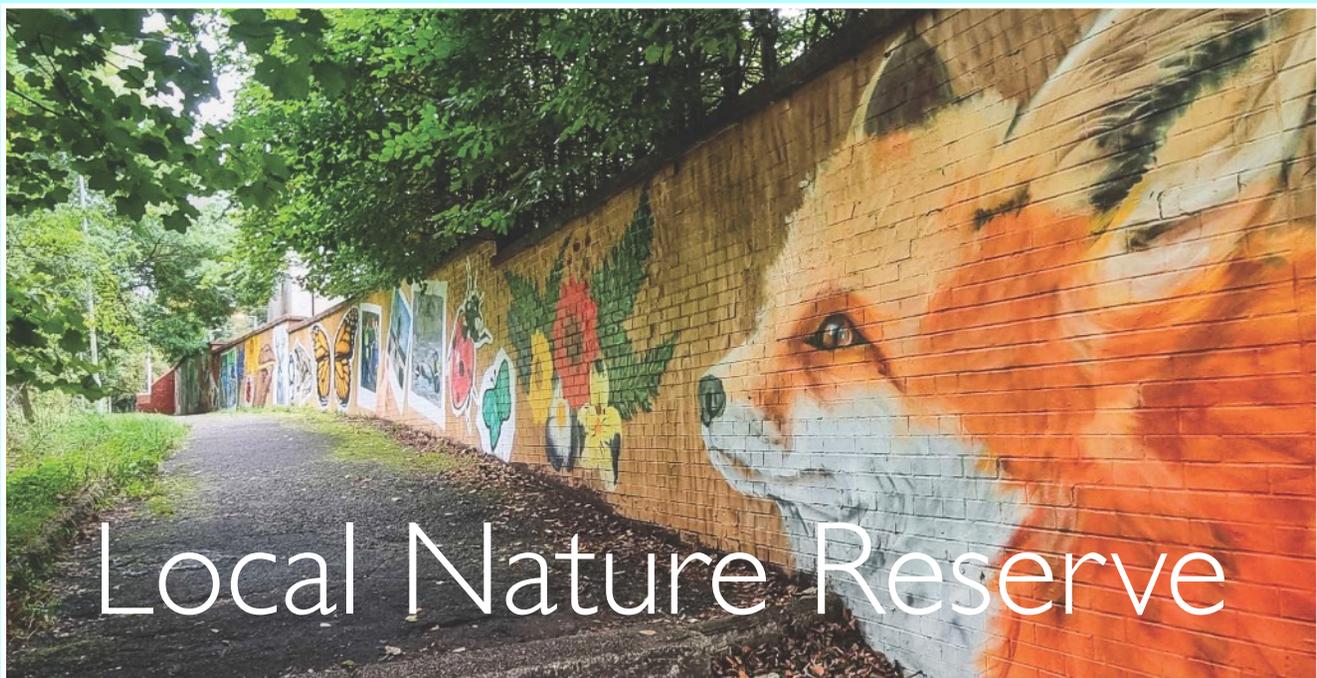


In 2024, Castlemilk Park in Glasgow was designated a Local Nature Reserve (LNR). The park achieved the designation as part of a 15-year project to transform the green space. The project has been led by the local social landlord, Cassiltoun Housing Association (based at Castlemilk Stables) and supported by Glasgow City Council and the walking charity, Paths for All.

The achievement was long in the planning. Cassiltoun Housing Association started to lay down plans in 2009. In 2011 they appointed a community woodland officer, who has worked closely with local residents on plans to improve the park ever since. With backing from the council and Scottish Forestry, woodland officer Stuart Whittaker has helped to strengthen the biodiversity of the park and it is now home to wildlife such as owls, bats, ancient oak, and butterflies. The park's new status as a Local Nature Reserve has been endorsed by NatureScot and will help protect its thriving ecosystem while continuing to promote community health and learning and cement the park's importance to the lives of the people of Castlemilk and beyond.

Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) are areas of natural heritage that are at least locally important. In December 2024 Glasgow City Council declared 5 new sites, including Castlemilk Park which is the 100th LNR in Scotland.

Castlemilk Park photographs on this page and on front cover by Jodie Armour.





The Cassiltoun Writers with John Binnie at the Castlemilk Stables Open Day in July 2024.
L to R standing: Charlotte, Frank, Noreen, John, Grace, Kate, Muriel, Gerry. Sitting: Bessie and Val.

CASSILTOUN WRITERS GROUP

Cassiltoun Writers Group has been going for 9 years. Originally called the *Cuppa and a Conversation Group*, it was supported by Glasgow Life and facilitated by creative writing tutor Julie Fraser. The group had their first *Storytelling Night* in 2018. At that time it was facilitated by the community development officer and became self-led. The booklet *Fables from the Stables* emerged when the group began their online project with Nemo Arts during the Covid 19 lockdown, creating artworks and illustrations for their stories and poems. This booklet was a powerful printed testament to their talents. The group have worked with writer and director John Binnie, photographer/designer Robin Mitchell and musician Tina Freeland over a number of years. In addition to their regular weekly meetings they have written and researched for, and performed in, a number of projects, including **Resting Place** at Ramshorn Kirkyard as part of the Glasgow Merchant City Festival and the eco play **In Our Hands** which was performed at Riverbank Primary in Dalmarnock and Miller Primary in Castlemilk. They have also written for the eco Christmas drama, **Winter Tales** which was a collaboration with NHS Restart, Singing for Fun, Lodging House Mission and St. Anne's and Riverbank Primaries in Dalmarnock. Most recently, their writing was performed by young people in four schools - Miller Primary, St. Paul's RC High School in Pollok, Swinton Primary in Baillieston and Highpark Primary in Ruchill - as part of the play **Red Weather Warning**.

In 2024 the group produced a booklet, **Capturing Castlemilk**, to showcase their writing and photography. This new booklet, **Capturing Castlemilk 2**, brings together some of the members' recent writing and celebrates their creativity. Following the news that Castlemilk Park had been awarded **Local Nature Reserve** status in late 2024 - helping to ensure its future as a vital green space for the community - the group decided to mark the occasion and promote its importance through their writing and through this booklet.



Dumping Stuff Regardless in the Park

To those of you who don't know it, all the woodland surrounding you is part of Castlemilk Park, which now has the status of a nature reserve. We are surrounded by many species of trees and flowers. We have burns running through the park leading to the pond, created by the family who once owned the area, the Stirling Stuarts. The outlet of the pond is a waterfall which is beautiful, but absolutely amazing when in full spate after heavy rain. Through the years, paths have been built in the park, allowing you access to many areas of Castlemilk. Hidden from view are lots of animal species living in our vicinity, such as foxes, roe deer, badgers and I'm sure anyone who has walked through the park has seen our many grey squirrels who seem to pop up all over the place. The bats come out at dusk, and you would be forgiven for thinking it was a small bird flying overhead! Even the famous woodpecker can be heard, and sometimes seen if you are quick enough.

In the pond we are lucky to have lots of ducks benefiting from caring people feeding them the correct diet, such as sunflower seed hearts, other seeds specially for ducks, defrosted corn and peas and other greeneries. Bread is not a good idea. There are sometimes visitors, such as a kingfisher, or the heron who stands quite often on one leg just searching for something to eat and darts down to catch it as soon as he sees some movement in the water.

Unfortunately, there is a litter problem. Some people don't seem to realise that they are destroying what could be of great scenic beauty when, for some reason, they take the trouble to drag quite heavy objects all the way down into the woods. They don't seem to know that it would be better for everyone if they just put their rubbish in the bins provided. If you can't see

a bin, put your litter in a bag and take it home with you, where you can dispose of it safely. Fly tippers don't seem to care that once their rubbish has been dumped then someone else has to go to the trouble of getting rid of it for them. The people who are removing it are prevented from getting on with the jobs they would love to do, such as cutting back branches, tidying up sides of paths, replanting areas that need some attention and creating an even more spectacular background for the rest of us to enjoy.

Think before you dump your rubbish there! Do you really want to live like this? And feel you have to apologise to any visitor seeing the mess for the first time? Not an attractive sight. In an ideal world people would take responsibility for their own waste and not inflict it on the rest of us.

Muriel Cupples

Old Man Looking to Regain Energy

Old Bob was more tired every day,
He's getting on, some folk would say.
He tried to get his old self back,
Bob knew he'd all but lost the knack.

He did some press ups, tried real hard -
He still felt like a tub of lard.
He ran a bit, did what he could,
His efforts didn't do much good.

Then he thought, I'll eat less dinner -
Would he feel good by being thinner?
That didn't really do much good
Cause Bob was far too fond of food.

He joined a group of like-minded souls,
Together they had the same goals.
They jumped up and down and tried to run
But the main thing was, they had lots of fun.

The moral of this tale is just
To have good company is a must.
Forget strict diets, you'll be alright
When your hopes are high,
and your heart is light.

Muriel Cupples

Light up Castlemilk

You're walking through the park,
It's getting just a wee bit dark.
You walk along and start to worry,
Then go a bit faster, try to hurry.

Then the new lights all come on
And so you start to stroll along.
You see the paths, the pond, the trees -
It's better now, you're at your ease.

Things begin to look much brighter
Just because the scene is lighter.
You enjoy your walk and take your time
With lighting on, you know all is fine.

Muriel Cupples

"The reinstatement of the lighting gives an additional dimension to a late evening stroll in our beautiful park."

Val Kennedy





Territorial Robin

I am a robin and I sing all year round to defend my territory. I become aggressive when other birds invade my space. One time I was fighting with another robin and it wasn't a real one - it was a garden ornament! I have seen other robins die, fighting for their territory.

The worst time is during the breeding season, when we are competing for food to feed our hungry chicks in their nest. Our chicks are helpless at birth but reach the size of their parents after just two weeks. I spend my days hopping about on the ground, searching for food like fruits, insects, seeds, uncooked porridge oats and worms. Kind people melt suet and put it into a coconut shell for us, especially in winter. The man in my garden feeds me from his hand!

Sad to say this, but robins only live for about two years. If we are lucky! We need to be extra careful when we see bobcats, blue jays, crows, foxes, hawks, owls and shrikes - they would all eat us.

Most people like robins. It may be because of the well-known phrase "When robins appear, loved ones are near," alluding to the belief that the robin is a messenger from lost, loved ones. Robins are a symbol of good luck, happiness, joy, rebirth and strong marriages.

Noreen McLaughlin





A Calm Place

Castlemilk Park is a calm place
You can tell by my peaceful face
Sitting on the bench is relaxing
In the pond the birds are swimming
The air is so clear in the park
Even at night when it is dark
Different flowers I can see
Dancing in the wind, so carefree
Many different types of trees
Leaves sway in the gentle breeze
Lots of dogs having fun
Playing with their loved one
People walking on the paths
Children playing and having laughs
The park is for people to enjoy
Not for vandals to damage or destroy
The residents of Castlemilk have
- and deserve -
Scotland's 100th Local Nature Reserve.

Noreen McLaughlin

Going to the Park for Sanctuary

The kids are at school
My housework is done
I don't need any shopping
It's not raining today
What will I do?
I will go to the park
It's my happy place.
The air is fresh
I admire the flowers
I feed the ducks
I listen to the birds
I look at the trees
I sit on a bench
People chat and smile
There are always dogs.
Look at the time
I need to go home
Kids to collect
Homework to do
Dinner to make
I've had a good day
My time in the park.

Noreen McLaughlin

"If you want to feel good, get out into Castlemilk Park! Go along the many paths - as a group, or go alone. The scenery is stunning. Fresh air makes you feel better and the people you meet are friendly."

Muriel Cupples

The Brokie

“Meet me at The Brokie at Ballantay,” she said, “about half seven.” I wasn’t sure where The Brokie was, I wasn’t from Ballantay. I lived in Hoddam Avenue, the ‘new road’ just off Ardenraig Road. We had only been in Castlemilk for three years and I still found the woods both fascinating and a bit intimidating. She saw the look on my face and said, “It’s in Ballantay Road, it’s a broken tree, so it’s been named The Brokie.” I said, “Och aye, ah know where you mean now.” I lied. I’d find it if it bloody killed me. I had just turned 15, still at Holyrood and absolutely bursting to be led astray by some girl in my age group. Sheena fitted the bill, she was wee like me, had dark hair and was, I thought, nice looking. She went to John Street School and was 14. For some reason we got the same bus, the 37. We got talking and I made her laugh. When I got up to get off she got up too. I thought, great, she’s gonny follow me. She must have read my face, cos she started to laugh and said “This is my stop too, I live in Ballantay.” I said, “Oh, right.”

I was in the first close off Ardenraig Road, but that day I wished I lived nearer Ballantay. We spoke for about 10 minutes and that’s when she said she could see me at half seven, but she had to skedaddle as her ma would kill her. She actually said ‘skedaddle!’ I went into the house in a sort of trance. I was in love, as only a 15 year old boy who’d never been near a girl could be! I finished my supper (not dinner) in record time, I washed my hair in the bathroom sink, I used my sister’s coal tar shampoo. My ma said, “What’s the occasion? You’re no usually so keen on washing your hair - or face, for that matter!” The *piece de resistance*, however was when I used my sister’s tooth powder to brush my teeth. My sister tipped right away, “are you meeting a lassie?” I drew her a dirty look and barked ‘Naw ahm no!’ She started sniggering, as only young sisters can and remarked sarcastically “it’s a pity we don’t have any Clearasil for your plooks.” I looked in the mirror - I had only two, and they were at the side of my chin. “Haha, you’re hilarious,” I replied.

We had a 3-apartment, and as I was 15 now I couldn’t share a bedroom with my 13 year old sister, so I slept on the couch in the living room. My clothes, however, were in the bedroom wardrobe. I put on a t-shirt, or I should say ‘the’ t-shirt, as saying ‘a t-shirt’ implies that I had more than one, which I didn’t. I had denims out of Galls in Cumberland Street, no Levis or Wranglers then. To round off my sartorial ensemble I had a pair of bumpers, which were just thick sannies. I walked down Hoddam into Hoddam Terrace, which had one close and a wee building facing it. I was then in Ballantay Road. I asked a guy where The Brokie was and, after giving me the once over, nodded further along the road. It was 7.25pm, I slowed down a wee bit - I didny want to appear too eager. I caught sight of Sheena and waved. Jeezo, there were another two birds with her. I said ‘bugger it’ and brassed it out. “Awright Sheena, fancy gaun a walk?” The other lassies started sniggering and one said, “a walk? Where tae, the woods?” I took a pure riddy because that’s exactly what I’d planned. Sheena came to my rescue. “Aye, OK.” She looked older out of her school uniform. I could tell her clothes were far superior to mine and I had the feeling she was a bit out of my league.

We went for a walk. Sheena showed me the waterfall next to the Machrie lake and later on she showed me a bit more than that. We never hooked up again. We would wave to each other and ask each other how we were, but that was about it.

Frank Young



The Woods and the Braes

When I looked out my living room window the woods were only 20 feet away. We were only in Castlemilk a month. We had moved up from Lawmoor Street in the Gorbals (actually, our side of the street was Hutchesontown, but I digress.) When I looked out our kitchen window all I saw were the tenements in Ballater Street and Mathieson Street. Our houses were the main reason the Gorbals was being demolished. The other side of Lawmoor Street had been pulled down and our main hobby was going with Laddie the dog, who belonged to the Bradys, to hunt rats, armed with old bits of railings. Laddie actually ended up in the Daily Record due to his rat-killing prowess.

I loved the Gorbals, but I was glad to be in Castlemilk with the fresh air from the Cathkin Braes rather than looking at squalid slums. At first I didn't venture into the woods much - there were jaggy nettles there - but the Braes demanded attention. They were part of Glasgow's southern limits and I was determined to scale them, 'because they were there', as Edmund Hillary said. The first time I went up the Braes I went round Arden Craig Road to what was called High Arden Craig. You had to really climb - I found it quite difficult! However, when I got to the top, the whole of Glasgow was laid out before me. It was one of those rare, clear days and I could see all the way to Ben Lomond, its top with a light covering of scattered snow. It looked lovely. I could also see Dumgoyne, better known as the Sleeping Giant. If you get a look, the highest part would be the chin and it really looks like a giant at rest. It was an eye-opener. I've been stuck on Castlemilk ever since. I met a school friend at the top. I said climbing was quite hard. He gave me a look - and showed me the easy way, further along the road! So, for me, the Braes were, and are, a wonderland of flora and fauna.

Frank Young



Off to the Lakes

Off to the lakes,
Our walking shoes on,
We step out the car,
And I'm thinking, "Oh, what have we done?"
The air is icy, it's bitter, it's cold,
As soon as we start I feel
I'm just too unfit,
Just too old.
I remind myself this is just a small fell,
And with you there,
On these negative thoughts,
I do not dwell.
You take my hand
And help me stumble to the top,
And you don't even complain
When I keep needing to stop.
Now at the top there is just one thing to do,
We look down at the lake,
So sparkly and blue.
I take a deep breath,
And as I take in the view,
I'm just so happy,
To be here with you.

Charlotte Kennedy



"Taking part [in Red Weather Warning] made me feel that I had a sense of purpose and that I was learning a new skill... I feel I have a useful part to play in life going forward whereas before I became involved I had felt a lack of purpose following retirement. I enjoyed mixing with new people of all ages who had the same excitement and drive for the production. I look forward to being involved in future."

Grace Dorrian



Members of Cassiltoun Writers Group with the rest of the cast of 'In Our Hands' photographed at Riverbank Primary School in Dalmarnock, 2024.

A Park for the People

For me, there can only be one park for the people and that is Glasgow Green, which was gifted to the people of Glasgow in the mid 15th Century by Bishop Turnbull. At first it was used to bleach linen, washing, grazing and even swimming. Indeed for centuries it was the city's only green public, open space.

The Green has a history of being a place where protest marches and demonstrations took place. I love Glasgow Green. I especially love the jewel in the Green's crown, The People's Palace. I used to go to all the May Day marches which were great fun. I particularly remember talking to an American guy at May Day in the mid 80s. We had a good chat for about 10 minutes till he was called on to give a speech. I was dumbfounded when he was introduced to the crowd as Paul Robeson Junior. I was delighted, a few years ago, when the long neglected Doulton Fountain was repaired and refurbished and back in working order. So there you have a people's park, but only because people, years ago, fought for it to be a people's park - in every sense of the word.

Frank Young

"Taking part in Cassiltoun Writers has made me feel included and part of the community. At my stage of life I would never have been in contact with such a varied and interesting group, spread over such a vast age difference, all having a different but enjoyable time. It has made me feel valued and part of a group."

Seeing bits of your writing or ideas being spoken by others [in the community plays] is fantastic. Working with people of different abilities and ages makes you realise you still have something to offer. As you get older it is easy just to step back, but being part of a project encourages you to contribute. It has really boosted my confidence to try other things. Once the initial nervousness ended it was great. We were all welcomed unconditionally... there are no bosses, everybody can voice an opinion. It was great to hear children make suggestions and being encouraged to do so. I loved it. Where else can a sixty seven year old get to sing, dance and laugh?"

Kate Milligan



Hand-me-downs

As one of eleven children – I'm the eldest in fact – I always got the 'new clothes.' Then they were handed down, sister to sister. The three boys obviously didn't participate in this fashion extravaganza – that I know of anyway!

Then our American cousins took to sending us boxes and bundles of hand-me-down clothes – to the 'poor' relations! In fact, when the box arrived from Boston the excitement was so high we delved into the box, pulling out items and putting our 'dibs' on what we wanted.

On one occasion I spied a really 'over the top' dress – in raw silk, cream with navy, green, pink and red paisley pattern all over it. I couldn't wait to put it on. I thought I was gorgeous (the bees knees in fact.) Unfortunately, the previous owner had had a large bust and as I was only eleven I didn't have that. So I went out and about in the dress with two large cone-like eruptions flapping on my chest. Can you just imagine what I looked like in that concoction, playing kick the can and midgey raking in the Gorbals? A sight to behold! Strangely, none of my pals commented.

I'd like to think my fashion sense has improved a bit since then!

Grace Dorrian

A Granddaughter Giving Up Her Technology and Exploring the Park

Eve was spending the weekend with Granny Grace. She was stuck on her iPad and barely lifting her head to reply to Granny's query about breakfast.

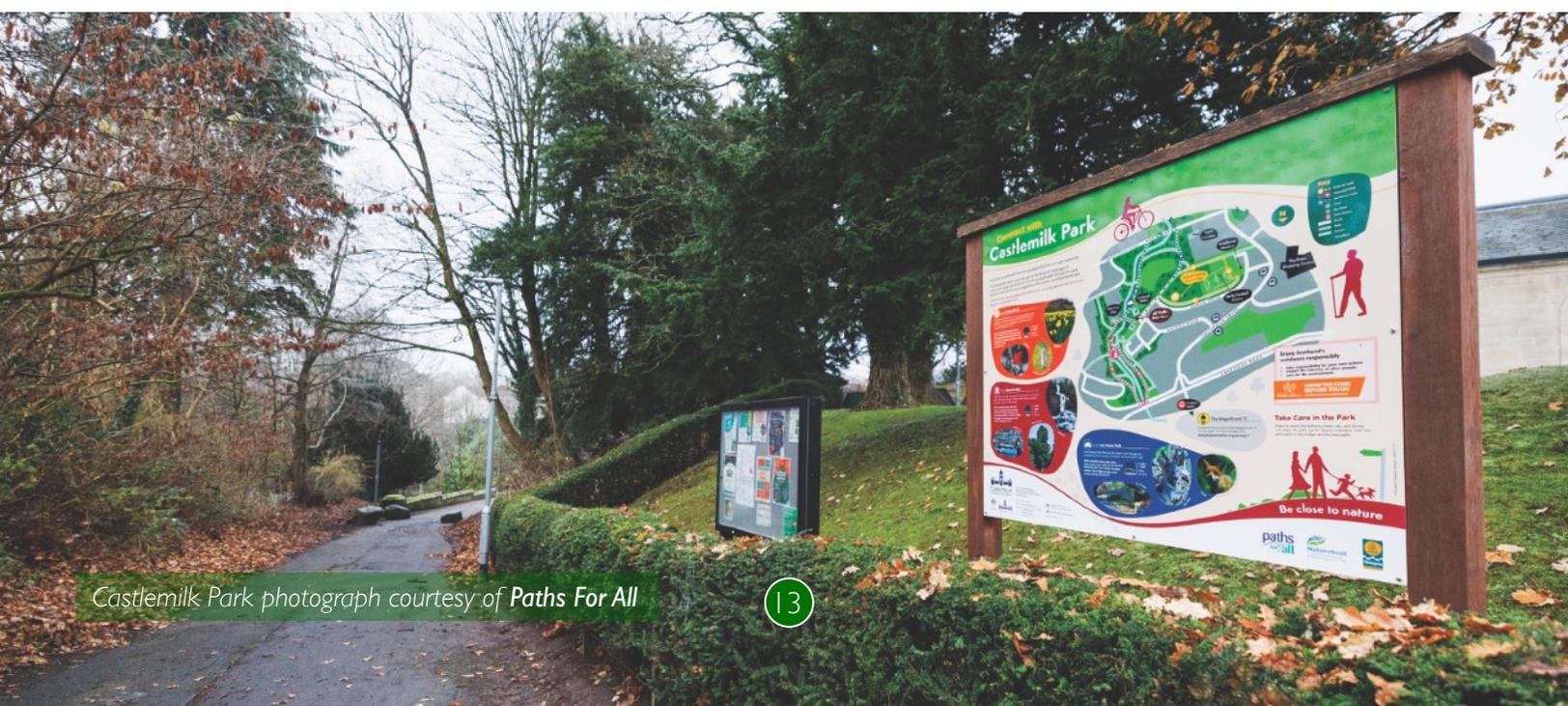
After breakfast Granny heard a loud exclamation from Eve and a thump. She went in to see what was going on. Eve explained that her iPad had run out of charge and she had forgot to bring her charger. She was devastated - you would have thought it was a major catastrophe! Eve wanted Granny to drive her home to collect the charger, but Granny said there was no one home so there was no point in driving round. Eve's face fell and her shoulders slumped as she gave a huge sigh.

So Granny said she should go and get dressed in warm clothes and her boots as they were going to the park, and this elicited another sigh and tears welled up in Eve's eyes. Granny felt sorry for her but she also wanted her to have more in her life than sitting on an iPad all day and not having any conversation. Granny explained that to Eve and said that she saw very little of Eve anyway and this was a chance for them to catch up. She said she got lonely sometimes living on her own and she would like to hear how Eve's life was going, and what she did at school and at home all week. Eve felt a bit sorry for Granny so she agreed to go to the park for a while.

They arrived at the park and got out and started walking. Granny pointed out plants and things around the park, noting that it used to be the grounds of a big house belonging to a landowner. Eve liked history so this engaged her attention and she asked questions and got into the swing of walking and talking. They talked about what Eve did at school, her school friends and how it was hard sometimes, as some of the girls were petty and cruel. Granny listened and advised how Eve could deal with this and Eve was happy to talk about it and hear how Granny dealt with that kind of stuff when she had been at school. They talked about what Eve wanted to do when she left school and she asked Granny for her opinion. Something they had never done before. It started getting dull and cold and they realised that they had been walking for nearly two hours.

When they got home Granny asked if Eve wanted her to go and collect her charger. Eve stunned her Granny when she said, "no, let's have lunch and talk about the old days." They chatted about Granny's school days, her work, her first boyfriend, and Eve was fascinated. When Eve left to go home she asked Granny if she could come to her house after school one day so they could talk about the 'old days' and look at the old photos. Granny arranged for that, and so began a friendship that lasted for all the years Granny was there. They became great friends and Eve always included Granny in her life and asked her opinion when she needed it. And all because a charger was left at home!

Grace Dorrian





Grandad the Binman

Grandad's donkey jacket and flat cap hung on the big nail on the back of the door to the coal cellar. He took them off each night when he came home from work, and they were put back on the next morning as he was leaving. It wasn't because he was ashamed of his work. He always maintained that the damp smell of the coal dust cleansed his uniform and, for many years, I totally believed him! It was only as a teenager that I learned the truth - grandma wasn't taking any chances, she didn't want any lingering smells in the house!

I was fascinated by the donkey jacket and yearned to have one when I grew up. It had been designed as workwear for manual labourers, everything a coat should be - warm, cheap, shapeless, capacious, easily buttoned with cold-numbed fingers, with big pockets and a decent collar to turn up against the wind and rain. Grandad had leather shoulder panels which helped him with his work, giving some protection from the worn edges of the metal bins. Grandad started work at seven in the morning and wasn't finished till teatime. He was a jovial man, always ready with a joke or a funny story, always looking on the bright side. I loved the tales he would tell at the end of the day around the kitchen table. Many of his tales were humorous, a few were a bit scary, and some went right over my head. Being a binman was heavy manual work and he was out in all weathers - rain, sleet, snow and sunshine. He said the sunshine was often the worst and I couldn't understand that. Sunshine makes you smile, lifts your spirits. Why could that be worse than snow or rain? Naive as I was, I didn't give a thought to the enhanced aroma as things decomposed in the summer heat!

Grandpa was part of a great team, the five of them worked hard all day and were grateful for the job, as finding work wasn't always easy. There was a lot of banter throughout the shift, and they always supported one another when times were tough. Part of their role was to go around to the

back of each of the houses, grip the heavy metal bins and either put them on their backs or on their shoulders and carry them to the lorry. If they were extraordinarily heavy the men could drag the bin and two of them would tip it into the lorry. Grandad said the easy part was carrying the empty bin back to its place. I know he hated it when the lids were left off as the rain made the bin weigh more, especially if there was a lot of ashes in it.

The years went by, and grandpa began to get twinges in his neck and shoulders. He was determined not to succumb to the 'Bin Man's Curse,' as he called it. Grandma would buy tiger balm and apply it to his shoulder and upper back. He would growl and moan if she touched a sore spot but then, when she was finished, he always told her how lucky he was. Men in other crews had to leave because of shoulder dislocations, ligament tears, and rotator cuff injuries. Some required hospitalisation and surgery.

Grandad remained in the job till he was in his late fifties. I was so proud of him and felt he really deserved his forced retirement.

Val Kennedy

Becoming a Nature Reserve

It was the foxes who carried the news of the meeting to the rest of the creatures in Castlemilk Woods. It was under the usual amnesty provision declared by the fairies when an important announcement needed to reach everyone. It wasn't an easy task for the foxes - by this time in December many creatures were already hibernating, or had wandered into the nearby gardens to keep warm under huts and garages. However, they managed to reach nearly every park dweller and, at the right time, the creatures filed to the meeting place in silence. To some of the creatures the park looked hostile, the bare trees and the collapsed reeds and bracken seemed alien. They were not used to seeing the woods in winter. They knew, however, that there must be important changes occurring.

The Fairy Queen began the meeting by thanking everyone who had come and thanking the foxes for a job well done! She apologised to those who had been roused from their winter sleep, but said she hoped, on hearing the momentous news, they would understand. "The last months have been noisy and disruptive," the Fairy Queen reminded them. "The old lighting has been renewed, pathways built, and proper flood defences put in place. That work is now completed." A cheer broke out. Once order was restored the Queen continued. "Castlemilk Park has now become Scotland's 100th Local Nature Reserve." She noticed the puzzled looks shared across the meeting. "We cannot be built over, and even new buildings nearby must ensure they don't encroach on our beautiful homeland. The park is designated a safe haven for all our animals, our birds, our insects and our wide range of plants. This means that our bluebells, wild garlic and other plants are now safeguarded. Birds and bats will be encouraged to build and use the woodland and all our creatures from roe deer to baby squirrels will find the park a safe place to be."

The cheer rose up again, this time more prolonged and louder. "Before you return to your homes," the Queen's voice rang out, "the humans will be encouraged to visit the park, so you will see more people around, probably armed with cameras - or those noisy phones they all have!" A laugh rippled through the clearing. "But, they will be here now to observe how we co-exist and they will protect our habitats."

The Queen then answered questions before the meeting dispersed. In every creature's heart there burned a glimmer of hope and a feeling of warmth and comfort.

Val Kennedy



Red Weather Warning

Red Weather Warning was a short play developed in early 2025 by John Binnie, working with musician Tina Freeland and photographer/designer Robin Mitchell. Red Weather Warning was developed from an earlier project worked on over the winter of 2023/2024, which we called 'In Our Hands'. We worked with the **Cassiltoun Writers** and the writing group at **NHS Restart** in Bridgeton and with classes at **Swinton Primary** in Baillieston, **Miller Primary** in Castlemilk and **Highpark Primary** in Ruchill. John and Tina also worked with older children from the Nurture Unit at **St Paul's RC High School** in Pollok. With each group, we explored the impact of climate change on world events, including Storm Eowyn in Scotland, the catastrophic wild fires in Los Angeles and the disastrous flooding in Valencia and other parts of Spain, all of which were fresh in the memory. We also explored issues related to pollution in the environment, including the threat to life from plastics in the food chain. The writers wrote poems and prose which fed into the play scripts. Some of the Cassiltoun Writers joined the children from Miller Primary on stage to perform the play in Castlemilk. We performed four versions of the play in the participating schools to audiences consisting of pupils, staff and parents.

The plays, together with this booklet, are the result of a project funded by the Artist in Communities 'Green Economy Programme' managed by Glasgow Life.



John Binnie directing children at Miller Primary.



Val Kennedy rehearsing with children from the school.



Ugh! there's a big dod o' plastic in ma fish!

Grace Dorrian, Frank Young and Kate Milligan performing alongside children from Miller Primary.



Some of Mrs Millen's class photographed at Miller Primary on 'World Book Day'.

"I don't know how John, Robin and Tina do it. Such a great show. Such a big group. You bring out the best in people with this show. I am so pleased to be part of it." Kate Milligan



Noreen McLaughlin protesting alongside Tina Freeland and pupils.



Rehearsing at Miller Primary on 'World Book Day'.



Walking in Castlemilk Park

As a boy I played in the park. As a young man I walked my dog through the park. Now I am older I still walk with friends in the park. I hope when I am in my twilight years I'll still be able to walk through the park and, when I am no longer here, I will watch my son, daughter and grandkids walk through the park. It has brought many memories over the years. As a boy it has left me in tears - pricked by a thistle, stung by wasps and, last but not least, running through jaggy nettles! As a youth I did not venture too far in the park. I did not come from that area and, because of the gang culture in the 70s and 80s, it wasn't a good idea. I don't know if it was just luck, but I never got into much bother as I walked there.

As I got older, my sister lived across the road from the stables, so I walked quite often from the swimming baths. As time goes on I feel a little wary as I walk in Castlemilk Park on my own - it doesn't stop me, but I don't do it often. I have seen lots of changes in the park - new houses where the Labour Club used to be, Reverend Miller's church pulled down (they used to have a jumble sale once a week to help families on the bread line,) more houses built, the stables all renovated, the plant nursery away, Barlea pitches all new, the Jeely Piece Club built. Machrie is all changed, the tenements all gone now to give way to new back and front doors, Castlemilk Park looked after by volunteers, Glenwood Business Centre on top of the old Glenwood School where my son went - lots of things have happened in and around Castlemilk Park.

For me, one of the best parts is the walk from the swimming baths to the stables in all kinds of weather; which I have done as a boy, teenager, man and now pensioner. When I am no longer here I will do it all over again with my children's children. In spirit, of course!

Gerry Gallagher

A Shortcut Through the Woods

A shortcut through the woods
In the middle of winter
That didn't turn out the way it should.
Taking a shortcut instead of going
the long way round.
Stepped on some leaves and ended up
on the ground.
A young man who was walking the other way
Shouted, 'Are you OK?'
Before he got me back on my feet.
Then he asked me again,
'Are you sure you're OK?'
I said 'Yes, I am fine, no bones broken today,
Then again, I will probably be a little bit sore
tomorrow.
So, thanks again for your help,'
'You take care.' 'I will,' said I.
Next week I will go the long way round,
in case I end up like today,
lying on the ground.
Lesson learned,
Never walk through the woods in winter
When there's leaves on the ground.
You might bang your head,
Break a few bones, or even worse,
You may never be found.
Just play it safe, go the long way round.

Gerry Gallagher

My Walking Cane

Do you have a walking cane?
That can be a bit of a pain.
It follows you about in all kinds of weather -
Sunshine, wind or rain -
Just like a puppy that never leaves your side.
Who's taking who for a walk?
Sometimes I wish it would stay at home,
Give me a break, leave me alone,
But it won't.
When it arrives, it will stick to you like glue,
but - there's always a but! -
You have to make sure it's the right one
for you.
It sits at my front door waiting for me
to take it out.
Or is it the other way around,
taking me out?
My daily companion, my best friend.
When it's not playing up or being a !
Well I have to use that word again, pain!
Getting in your road, when you are
out shopping,
at the checkout packing a bag,
carrying a basket,
trying to fill it whilst holding your cane.
Having said all that, I do like it
and it keeps me mobile.

Gerry Gallagher



"In these often fraught and challenging times it is crucial to have and preserve our green spaces. Each walk through the park is a delight, the opportunity to see nature at her best." Val Kennedy



Winter in the woods
Delicate snowdrops
Lift their heads proudly
Spring is coming soon.

Bessie Glennie Anderson

The Castlemilk Faerie Glen

Once upon a time, in a very large estate owned by the Noble Lord of Castlemilk, lived Princess Aurora. Her abode was one of the forests that flourished deep within the estate. This was the largest of the faerie dwellings scattered throughout Lord Orech of Castlemilk's estate. It was also where Princess Aurora's father, King Jacob, reigned. He was the Faerie Clan's Chieftan and ruled over them all fairly and wisely. His three children, the Prince Alexander (his eldest), the Princess Star and his youngest daughter, the Princess Aurora were all so loved by King Jacob, but Aurora was the apple of his eye! When he looked at her, he saw his beloved wife Cressida, who died when Aurora was born. Aurora looked like her mother, but in nature was so different. Every day was an adventure to her. Many a time she would get her older siblings into trouble for following her in whatever she got up to, but it was innocent mischief. She was so curious about everything and everyone and her heart was kind and pure.

King Jacob's siblings ruled the skies and seas. Queen Arianne was the oldest. She was the ruler of the skies. King Storm ruled all the seas, and their younger brother, Jacob, ruled all the Faerie Clans throughout the world. They were a very close family who helped each other whenever help was needed and visited each other and all the extended family as often as possible. Life went on in this idyllic way for many a long year. A hundred years in our lifetime is only one year in theirs, and they witnessed many changes in the sky, the sea and the land. Some good changes, some disastrous. On this beautiful, bountiful land, few houses were built. There was the Grand Manor belonging to the Lord of Castlemilk in which his family dwelt and other cottages belonged to his servants who worked in the house or on the fertile land.

One beautiful morning, just after dawn, Aurora and her family were awakened by a tremendous noise all around the grand estate. As far as the eye could see were many strange machines and many, many men. They had begun to cut down all the beautiful trees and dig up the ground and flowers for miles around. The only parts of this vast estate that were not touched was the land just around the Lord of Castlemilk's Grand Manor and part of the forest behind his home, which was the faerie dwelling of King Jacob.

Within the coming months, life was to become so changed, as strange homes began to be built, some reaching towards the sky. Others buildings would be the height of the larger trees that once grew there. Soon, many hundreds of people would come to live in these dwellings. Then the rest of the faeries, whose forest dwellings were destroyed by the machines, came to dwell in King Jacob's forest. This was a terrible time for the faerie dwellers as they stared at the mounds of upturned earth, the beautiful proud trees now cut down or pulled out by their roots and the banks of flowers destroyed. The pure air was clouded with dust from morning to night, until the machines stopped and the men departed until next day.

One morning, when Aurora awoke, she heard no noise, no rumbling machinery turning the earth, grass and flowers into piles of broken meadow. Standing there now were houses where lots of humans now lived with their children. Thousands of voices carried in the morning air, but they were happy voices with lots of laughter, especially from the children who ran about playing games. This made all the faeries and King Jacob very happy to see and hear.

Bessie Glennie Anderson

Below: Kate Milligan and Bessie Glennie Anderson at a presentation of their writing in the marquee at Castlemilk Stables.





The Park

My mum and gran are putting my wee brother's wellies on, but I'm ready at the door. We are going into the park across from my school. It's called John Miller, after a man who might have been God. We are going for a walk to see the flowers and the trees. I like the park and will show my granny, I'm sure she will like it. Old people like places that don't cost anything.

My mum and granny never stop talking and my wee brother Jason has already fallen over. I will show my granny the snowdrops. When I take her hand to look at the waterfall she smiles and tells me when she was a wee girl she played there. My granny was a wee girl who played in the park? She showed me where they climbed an old broken tree and built a den.

I ran back to tell my mum that my granny played in the park when she was a wee lassie. She started laughing out loud and said she knew, and she had played in the park as well. Her and her sisters had played hide 'n seek in the park and jumped over the burns, trying not to get wet. Does that mean my Auntie Susan was a wee girl who played and climbed trees? She never laughs now.

My granny joined us and they laughed, talking about us all having played in the park. Granny said we are lucky the park was not turned into houses. She said we all have to take care of it so when I grow up I can bring my children to the park. What? Never! I'm going to be a football player!

Kate Milligan

Age Does Not Come Alone

Kenny was looking for his glasses, moving cushions and newspapers. He shouted at the dog, asking him if he had seen his glasses. The dog just yawned and stretched out thinking, 'here we go again.' Kenny opened the back door and shouted for his wife, "Frances, where have you put my glasses? Am all over the place looking for them." Frances, sighing, said "Kenny, they're on the tap of your head." Reaching up, he tutted and said, "you could have told me earlier."

Sitting at the chair by the windie, Kenny was reading the Daily Record and adding comments to every story. Frances was cleaning out the wee budgie Lennon's cage, changing the newspaper and replacing the water. Wee Lennon sat on Kenny's heid. When Frances came in from the kitchen she stopped in her tracks. Kenny was now reading the old newspaper from the bottom of the budgie's cage. Bits of trill and droppings were falling off the paper. He shouted, "Frances, there's a big sale on at Watt Bros, quilts half price." She just nodded, not wanting to remind him Watt Bros had been closed for years.

The children were coming for Sunday dinner and they both looked forward to it. Frances was rushing about putting clean towels in the bathroom and giving the sink a quick wipe. In the kitchen, Kenny was peeling a load of potatoes - they all loved roast totties. The huge steak pie was ready to be put into the oven and the lentil soup was on at a low heat. They both loved a Sunday with the house full of the children and grandchildren. Paul, her oldest son, came into the garden as Frances put her grandson in a toy car. "Mammy, is ma da ok?" he asked. "He's a bit wandered and has called me Peter three times." Frances walked on a bit and said, "It's ok Paul, he just gets a bit mixed up now and again."

Putting the plates out, everybody sat in anticipation, looking forward to the Sunday dinner. When Frances tasted her mash she screwed her face up. They were sweet. Looking at Kenny she said, "did you put salt in the pot?" Agitated, he said, "aye, of course I did." Paul tasted his and said, "think you put sugar in da, they taste like sweeties." Getting mad, Kenny went into the kitchen and came in with the sugar container and showed the table. Frances quickly said, "oh, right Kenny, it's ok, there's loads of roasties so get tore in." Paul and his sister Tina looked at their mum but she never acknowledged them. The grand-weans were laughing at Kenny's stories about when he was young and how poor they were. "Aye we were so poor we had to share shoes and could only go out one at a time. We had to pile all the coats on the bed to keep us warm. Your uncle Malky used to slag the coal man about Rangers so he would throw lumps of coal at him and Malky would bring it hame. My maw's soup lasted about a week and got more watery as the week went on. Good times!"

When Frances got up she noticed that Kenny wasn't in bed. The front door was open. Putting on her jacket and lifting her phone she tried to call Kenny, but it was on the table ringing. Going up the street she met Noreen, one of her lassie's old pals and asked if she had seen Kenny. Noreen said, "no, but I will help you look." Going up and down the street, other neighbours came out to help. Coming round the corner was Gupta from the newsagents, walking with Kenny. Running towards him Frances asked what had happened. Gupta replied "he's ok Frances, just a wee bit mixed up, but I have sorted it." Kenny stood beside Gupta smiling. "Come on son, get a wee cuppa - ah know you fellas don't drink but you can have tea. Does tea not come from India son?" Gupta smiled and said, "it does Kenny, but I'm from Castlemilk." Gupta told Frances that Kenny had come in to buy sweeties and collect the comic his mother ordered for him. Gupta had made him a tea but couldn't find Kenny's phone. Handing the Sky remote control to Francis he said Kenny had it in his pocket. Frances said to Kenny, "I was worried about you and couldn't get you on the phone." Looking at the remote Kenny said, "Oh don't start, it hasn't bloody rang, so don't say you tried to get a haud of me."

Paul came round to the hoose after work and his mammy told him what had happened. Kenny came in from the garden carrying a rose for Frances. Looking to Paul he asked, "Nice of you to give us a visit - who you hiding fae Malky? Been out robbing again?" and laughed. "Come through to the kitchen and have a beer Malky - a canny remember the last time we had a blether." Paul looked as his mother cried quietly and told him to go in with his da. When Paul went into the kitchen his dad looked surprised and said, "Frances, oor Paul's here! You ok son, you alright for money?"

Later on Paul was talking as his da got into bed. "Da, I'll be here tomorrow - we can watch the football on the tele, give ma ma a wee rest. Do you fancy it?" "Aye that sounds great. Malky, gonnie put another coat on the bed, it's cold in here." Paul put a throw on the bed and turned and wept as he left his da to sleep.

Kate Milligan



WINTER TALES

In the autumn of 2024, the Cassiltoun Writers worked with John Binnie on an entertaining new play for, and by, the people of Glasgow. It was created as part of the Velocity East End Artist in Communities programme funded by Clyde Gateway and managed by Glasgow Life. John worked with musician and actor Mairi Morrison, designer/photographer Robin Mitchell and several East End community groups. The Cassiltoun Writers researched and wrote sections of the play and performed some of the scenes they had written. **Winter Tales** explored themes relating to the climate crisis and consumerism through creative writing, song and art in a light-hearted and fast-paced presentation.



Winter Tales was a fun and informal, inter-generational show with a cast of almost 90 people. It featured P6 children from Riverbank Primary in Dalmarnock and St. Anne's Primary at Gallowgate, with contributions from the Cassiltoun Writers, NHS Restart Writers, LHM 360 (Lodging House Mission) and Singing for Fun. The photographs on this page show some of the Cassiltoun Writers in the performance at Riverbank Primary. As part of the project, adults from Lodging House Mission and the two school classes created beautiful, colourful friezes of birds in the natural environment and these were displayed as part of the event.



Who are these big, important people
 Who make the rules for me and you?
 The ones who stand up and give orders
 And who tell us what to do.
 Do they not care about the oceans?
 Or the plastic in the sea?
 Are they not worried for the wildlife
 The flowers, and the trees?
 What are they doing in that office?
 Are they twiddling their thumbs?
 Are they staring at their televisions?
 Sitting on their bums?
 They are the people with the power
 Who could fight to save the planet,
 Stop pollution, find solutions,
 See the littering and ban it.
 Do you hear us? We are serious!
 We won't wait anymore.
 If you can't protect the earth
 Then what do we all need you for?
 So, we'll tell you one more time
 Listen up, and do what's right!
 Stop the climate change from going on
 Get serious, and fight!

Naby Savane

While working on the play *Red Weather Warning*, Naby Savane (below) from the creative writing group at NHS Restart wrote this poem and she performed it on stage with the children from Miller Primary in Castlemilk and Swinton Primary in Baillieston.





In February and March 2025, John Binnie and Tina Freeland worked with secondary pupils from **St Paul's RC High School** in Pollok. They worked on a short play about climate change and pollution, based on a community play they had worked on in 2024, called *'In Our Hands.'* This play was developed with the creative input of the Cassiltoun Writers, some of whom had performed in the original production. Following several rehearsal sessions, the pupils from St Paul's contributed to an open-air event on Friday 7 March in Damshot Woods, a beautiful natural space that was the focus of the Pollok Free Estate campaign in 1995 to save the woods from destruction caused by the building of the new M77 motorway. Part of the woods lies next to the school perimeter and has been adopted as an 'outdoor classroom' to provide the pupils with opportunities for learning in a natural environment.

The short performance directed by John and Tina was part of wider project called *'Connecting Pollok; Past, Present and Future,'* funded by Inspiring Scotland and organised by The Village Storytelling Centre. The performances, talks, songs, podcasts and art activities were also an opportunity for the audiences to think about the role of young people within environmental activism and the importance of green spaces within our lives.

"All the team work, confidence-building and developing of their performance skills that has happened prior to today's event hasn't been a waste. The young people come with so many vulnerabilities, we don't know what is going on in their lives. They have developed so much through rehearsals." - Mr Heron, St Paul's RC High School

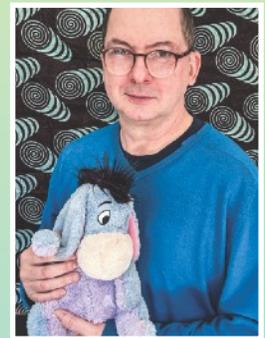




John Binnie is a playwright and director who has worked in theatre since the 1980s. He set up Glasgow's Clyde Unity Theatre with friends and wrote and directed over 30 productions that toured all over Scotland and beyond. He's been fortunate to make theatre in America, Germany, Africa, Singapore and India. His plays have won three Edinburgh Fringe Firsts, the Independent Theatre Award and been broadcast on BBC radio 4. All of his work is rooted in community engagement. He believes everyone has a story to tell, and his drama and writing classes encourage people to find their voice, develop their confidence and creativity, and contribute to community.

Tina Freeland has worked as a professional musician and recording artist, touring in bands all over Scotland, Europe and North America. She has over twenty years' experience of working with children and vulnerable adults. Starting in the education sector as a play-worker in the 1990s, she decided to bring her musical background together with her enthusiasm for exploring through play and began to teach Brazilian samba percussion in schools and to community groups. She remains committed to providing quality musical experiences in a safe and positive environment.

Robin Mitchell is a photographer and theatre designer based in Glasgow. As a designer he has worked with companies including Clyde Unity Theatre, Perth Theatre, Brunton Theatre in Musselburgh, RSAMD (now Royal Conservatoire of Scotland) and the Webster Theatre in Arbroath. Since graduating as a photographer in 2010 he often works on projects which allow him to combine theatre and photography. He has photographed for Glasgow Life, Glasgow Museums, BBC Scotland, Queen Margaret University, Lammermuir Festival, Cumnock Tryst, Glasgow Restaurant Association, production company Media Co-op and the Glasgow gallery Sharmanka Kinetic Theatre.



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THANKS

The Cassiltoun Writers Group would like to thank Jodie Armour, Rachael McMullan and Stuart Whittaker for welcoming the group to Castlemilk Stables and for their enthusiastic encouragement. The group would also like to thank the various funders for their past and continuing support of the group's activities. In particular we would like to thank the Green Economy Fund Extension, Glasgow Life Artist in Communities Green Economy Programme, Cassiltoun Trust, Cassiltoun Housing Association, Glasgow City Health and Social Care Partnership and the Wellbeing for Longer Fund (Impact Funding Partners).

We would like to thank all those who helped with the additional elements of our 'Green Economy' project, in particular the staff at the schools: Seb Heron and staff at **St. Paul's RC High School** in Pollok; Mrs Mirren and staff at **Miller Primary** in Castlemilk; Mrs MacDowell and staff at **Highpark Primary** in Ruchill, Mrs McLaren and staff at **Swinton Primary** in Baillieston.



This booklet is funded by the Glasgow Life Artist in Communities Green Economy Programme.



This project is funded by the UK government through the U.K. Shared Prosperity Fund.



Gerry Gallagher



Kate Milligan



Noreen McLaughlin



Grace Dorrian



Bessie Glennie Anderson



Muriel Cupples



Val Kennedy



Frank Young



Charlotte Kennedy