

Health of the Sublime project update

what's been happening, new course dates, and how to take part.

Block 1 of our project with Mearns-based artist Carrie Fertig is now finished, and we are pleased to share an update with you all. We've got feedback and statistics, quotes and writings from some of the participants, as well as information on days and times for the next block, which starts week beginning 5th September.

We hope you enjoy this read, and perhaps think about taking part. Information on how to join in is included at the end.

Here are a few statistics from the feedback we received from block one participants:

100% of participants told us this course helped them focus on their experience of wellbeing in the natural world.

100% of participants told us their creative skill level went up by participating in their course and that they would recommend their course to a friend.

Reasons people chose to participate include:

- Wellbeing is important to me
- Climate change is important to me
- To increase skills
- To join like-minded people in learning
- To join in a community wide arts project
- For fun
- For new opportunities to share their creative work

"I have enjoyed this course so much. Having this special time in a small group each week makes me feel connected to everyone in the group that I probably wouldn't feel if we weren't on the same path of discovery together."

"Thoroughly enjoyed all of the sessions I attended and more than met my expectations."

Carole Jackson, walk leader for Stonehaven Walking Group took part in the Art in Nature workshop: *"The course got me thinking about my local area in new ways, and how and why it influences my wellbeing. I have learned about making interventions in the landscape and have developed an interest in how people interact with nature."*



Let's hear from Ged Adams, Stonehaven walk leader and Sandra Davison, of Laurencekirk Social Garden Group about their previous experience, what they thought of block one, and examples of their writing.

Hi Ged here, one of the walk leaders from Stonehaven. I was lucky enough to attend the nature writing course being lead by Janis Mackay, a published and award winning author. As someone with no background in writing, apart from rather boring reports from my previous life, I have to say it was a great experience. Being lead and inspired by Janis to walk through a set of thought provoking themes our small group always came up with some fabulous work and all typically written within 12 to 15 minutes. I would point out that we all produced our pieces with no thoughts of it having to be something special, on the contrary, it was important to be simple and rough and to be an outpouring rather than a polished product. I would highly recommend this experience for all. We never know until we try so don't be shy! I hope you enjoy a short piece I produced during our course.

A recollection

The pungent rotten sea shore, the whiff of boyhood adventures, family and being loved.

Waiting watching whining gulls, beauty with beaks, sadly maligned, mistrusted and mis-understood. But, be still and watch them gracefully ride the wind, and marvel at flight.

The tourist gardens prepared with so much care and love, by the unseen army, bringing effervescent beauty to all,...who care to look! They do make a difference.

The bright blue sky, diving seaward is everywhere, but so often hidden, between ice cream, chips and phone screens.

The squawking squabbling seabirds fill the crevices as their fluffy balls are being fed, being fed, being fed.

The fat full bellied seal lazes on the soft swell, smiling at the humans racing.

Hello, I'm Sandra, and I'm a volunteer with the MCHLN garden group – and help to keep the flower pots looking good at Laurencekirk Railway Station. I've dabbled in nature writing – nothing too serious, but through the Lemon Tree Writers Group, and the Mearns Writers Group I've submitted a few pieces over the last couple of years. So when I heard about the nature writing course on Health of the Sublime in the Mearns I saw it as an opportunity to meet other people, as well as to write about nature in the Mearns, in a safe environment where we're all flexing our writing muscles together and giving it a try. Our tutor (Janis Mackay) gave us a gentle, weekly, introduction to different types of nature writing plus writing exercises which we all did – and it's amazing to see what people can write in ten minutes when we can simply focus on that one thing! It's a great way to get your creative juices flowing. We've been asked to provide an example of what we wrote, and here is mine.

Wasps!

This year, I'm getting there ahead of them. They're no getting my plums this time.

So, in the morning coolness, I pick like fury. Hesitant at first in case the wee blighters have already got there before me, I speed up, my tentative reaching amongst the leaves towards the crop becoming more assured.

My bag slowly fills with delicious purple round-ness.

Finally done, I head indoors to de-stone my harvest, popping the quartered plums into the pan, adding the sticks of cinnamon and stars of anise - the exotic scents filling my kitchen as the pan heats up.

Once the plums start to soften, their cut edges blurring, I turn off the heat, and dream of winter mornings when I can unwrap the de-frosted bags of plum compote and dream of summer - with nae wasps!

If this has whetted your appetite to take part, all the information you need can be found below.

All workshops concentrate on your personal experience of wellbeing in the natural world, whether that is from walks you take, sitting at home with the window open, or being in your garden. No artistic experience is needed to take part.

The workshops are seven weeks long. Block two runs from week commencing 5th September through to the week of 17th October. Don't worry if you can't make every session, no one did in block one! We all lead busy lives and understand things come up and events may already be in your diary. It doesn't matter. Each course meets once a week for a two-hour session. The writing group meets online on Zoom. If you don't know how to use Zoom, we will teach you so you are fully confident. If you don't have a computer or smart phone, we will lend you a smart phone so you can participate. If you need help getting to the in-person sessions, we may be able to help provide transport.

All courses are led by interdisciplinary artist and project leader, Carrie Fertig, except for nature writing, which is led by award-winning author Janis Mackay. All of the courses are a safe supportive space to try something new or hone your skills.

Audio: Mondays 9:30-11:30am in Stonehaven, a different location each week. All things sound! We will make field recordings of the natural world and how to make the best recording, how to edit and layer them. Opportunity to make podcasts for three radio stations, as well as your experience of wellbeing expressed through sound on the map.

Nature Writing: Mondays 2:30-4:30pm via Zoom. Using examples of nature writing and poetry by famous authors, we have 2 exercises in each session and respond in 10-15 minute bursts of creative writing.

Art in Nature: Thursdays 9:30-11:30am, Stonehaven, a different location each week. You'll learn interdisciplinary skills making temporary site-specific sculptures in the landscape using natural materials, performance, and installation. There will be an overview introduction, then led by areas of most interest to students.

Video + Imagery: Thursdays 2:30-4:30 in Stonehaven, a different location each week. Concentrates on making imagery as both practice and documentation of wellbeing in the natural world. We will shoot & edit video, make photos, drawings, and collage with natural and tradition materials.

Virtual Reality (VR): Learn to build your own natural environments in the headset. You are largely housebound, have some dexterity in your thumb, index, and middle fingers, and don't smoke. Lots of 1-on-1 tuition scheduled at your convenience, VR is **ongoing into 2023** to give you the skills to make your own experience of wellbeing in the headset. We'll meet in person at yours and in the headset. It is fun, exciting, and the constant learning and discovery you will experience builds confidence and wellbeing.

For more information call or email Carrie on 07966 689833 or

carrie@carriefertig.com.

More information is available here:

<https://www.carriefertig.com/health-of-the-sublime-in-the-mearns>



A final word from Sheila, who's writing, "Remembering..." is included in the newsletter.

I am Sheila Lanning. I am a Gentle Exercise leader for the Mearns and Coastal Healthy Living Network. I have recently been involved with the "Nature Writing In The Mearns" workshops led by Janis Mackay, as part of artist Carrie Fertig's Health of the Sublime in the Mearns project. I have no experience of writing, other than previously at school and maybe now a shopping list or a "To Do" list. I love reading and always like to take on challenges and trying new things. I'm slightly dyslexic, so wasn't sure how comfortable I would be taking a writing course! Well! I enjoyed every minute and surprised myself. The short exercises of writing for 10-12 minutes each week, listening to other folks pieces about nature, finding new authors, meeting new people, being enveloped in new words, expressions and language has truly been a glorious 7 week journey. Janis was so encouraging and the whole experience felt very safe and comfortable. The course was conducted on Zoom- so I didn't even need to travel anywhere! And it was free!



For more information call or email Carrie on 07966 689833 or carrie@carriefertig.com.

Alternatively call Mearns and Coastal Healthy Living Network on 01561 378130.

More information is available here: <https://www.carriefertig.com/health-of-the-sublime-in-the-mearns>

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