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# artWORK

Number 208 Pick up your own FREE copy and find out what's really happening in the arts May - June 2019

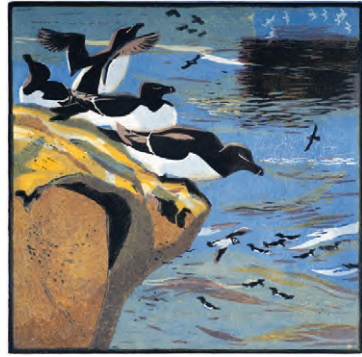


**Shedding Old Coats** – one of the haunting works by Karólína Lárusdóttir from a recent exhibition of her work at the Castle Gallery, Inverness. Inside: Denise Wilson tells the story of this Anglo-Icelandic artist.

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# Editorial Comment

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## Putting the culture back in agriculture

DESPITE ONGOING cuts at central and local government level, Arts Council England continues to trumpet and champion the worth of the arts, not only for their own sake, but also for their value to individual and community wellbeing, to education, tourism, and the economy.

A while back the arts economy was claimed to be worth more than the motor industry. No surprise now, but shocking then. A new report, the "Contribution of the arts and culture industry to the UK economy", from the Centre for Economic and Business Research, claims that, in 2016, at £ 10.8 billion, they were worth more than agriculture.

Hard to quantify, but probably an underestimate, if hidden, external costs are taken into account.

Conventional agriculture is wholly dependent on oil, not just for fertilisers and chemical sprays, but, hugely, for power. Worldwide, its carbon footprint is directly linked to climate change, loss of topsoil, water... and foliage, vital for converting CO2 to oxygen. All to meet increased demand for palm oil, soya, and meat.

In Britain our countryside's soul, so inspiring to artists, writers and musicians, is being ripped apart, as agronomy removes the 'culture' in agriculture.

Equally impossible to quantify,

## Time to take back control

OUR RAILWAY system is in total chaos – again. The hapless Mr Grayling has made such a mess of things that they have had to ask the rail operating companies what they should do next.

Easy, say the rail companies: hand the whole thing over to us, lock, track and barrel and we will shovel even more of your money into our back pockets.

Although the solution is

## You read it first in *ArtWork* (honest!)

PECHAKUCHA Reaches Berwick-upon-Tweed!

Pecha what?

PechaKucha.

From a Sushi Bar menu, perhaps?

Right, as in Japanese, but more food for thought...it means Chit Chat.

Just gossip?

No...more sharing, showcasing and meeting likeminded creative types – artists, architects, musicians, poets, film-makers....

I get the picture.

Twenty actually...

Twenty?

That's right. 20 images of work, on screen for 20 seconds each. It all started in Japan, back in 2003, when two architects came up with the idea. It's proved a great way to bring together creative people who often work alone, but find that, once they realise who else is out there, often just around the corner, there are plenty of opportunities for interesting collaborations and partnerships.

So coming to Berwick-upon-

the hidden added value of creativity, but for certain we need art and culture more than ever, for vision, insight, wisdom, humour, and the courage to change.

Once farms created beautiful landscapes, giving life and purpose to rural communities. Increasingly industrial agriculture contracts operatives with no affinity with place or community, damaging the land and its creatures.

Food, healthy or otherwise, becomes just another bankable commodity from land, itself a mere investment asset, dehumanised, relying on robots, chemicals and computers to be stripped bare.

The dignity, hands-on creativity and joy of growing good food, central to a decent culture, is still with us, but more often in gardens and smallholdings than on farms.

Very appropriate, then, that the Royal Society of Arts has set up a Food, Farming and Countryside Commission to look at a more sustainable, and human way forward.

Now it's time for the arts and culture to join with farmers, scientists and economists to explore better ways of working, respecting, and drawing inspiration from the land. Whether it be re-wilding, forest farming, organic farming, or soil conservation, the earth needs love and care.

glaringly obvious and is desired by the vast majority of the population – as many as 80 per cent in favour according to some opinion polls – anything rather than a return to national control is put forward.

The fractured system known as privatisation has been the disaster predicted in these columns. Re-nationalise, but do it in an inspired way. It can work.

Tweed now?

That's right, joining over a thousand towns and cities worldwide. Thanks to a new initiative called the Berwick Creative Guild, and with support from Berwick Visual Arts and the Royal Society of Arts.

When, where, who?

Berwick Visitor Centre, Walkergate. Wednesday May 29, 6.30 to 8.30.

The line-up for this event includes Helen Stephens, artist, writer and illustrator; Gerry Turley, artist, writer and illustrator; Foldyard Gallery, artists Dave Watson and Morag Eaton; Anna Parker, artist; Kathryn Elkin, film-maker; and more to be confirmed. Numbers are limited. Booking by email is essential, to: [berwickcreativeguild@gmail.com](mailto:berwickcreativeguild@gmail.com) It's free, although donations are invited, and there will be refreshments. And the next one? Late July. Email, as above, to be kept informed.

# Peace in our time? Or not.....

*Maxwell Macleod re-reads a letter from his distinguished father, penned in the trenches during the apocalyptic Battle of Ypres. A salutary reminder for these times, he suggests.*

THE NEXT FEW weeks will see the election for the European Parliament, the latest episode in the long running farce whose only positive is that it has brought about the collapse of the two party system in Britain.

But should we care?

It may seem a bit of a cliché to pronounce that you are against war, but I have recently been somewhat traumatised, I kid you not, to read a letter from my late father which he wrote when he was sitting in a dugout in the middle of the third battle of Ypres, a battle that saw twenty five thousand Germans and seventeen thousand allied soldiers killed.

On the first day.

It was the 22nd of August, 1917 and my father was sitting in a dugout that was twelve feet long by six feet wide, doing his best to administer a group of four hundred men who he sent out against a rain storm of hot bullets. He sent out four hundred, eighty came back. Fifteen out of the twenty officers in the battalion were killed. He was aged 22.

Three minutes before he sent the men out they cut off the telephone into that dugout and for the next six hours he had to send out all his messages by carrier pigeon. He was unable to send out messengers as the Germans had a machine gun trained on the door of his office and after he had sent the first two men to their deaths he decided to rely in the pigeons.

Shortly after the start two men crashed into his dug out, followed a few minutes later by five more. He sent out a pigeon with a message

saying he needed a doctor, who didn't arrive until all seven had died. There was two inches of water on the floor.

What made the day a bit tricky was that his father, my grandfather, was one of the chief recruiting officers for Glasgow at the time, so he was simply processing these young kids, some as young as seventeen, off the trains his father had enticed them to board and into

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**“The one thing that can be said for the notoriously corrupt European Union is that at least it has helped provide the longest period of peace between the European nations in many hundreds of years.”**

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that red hot rain.

When he returned home he didn't criticise his father, never said a thing, for thirteen years until after his father had died. Not long afterwards he became a parish minister in the Glasgow parish of Govan and was frequently hospitalised for mental stress.

Eventually, one Sunday morning

when he was preaching in Govan it all became too much and in a nightmarish gesture he ripped the medals he had won in the war, including the MC he had won for his bad day in the battle of Ypres, off his chest and hurled them at the congregation.

My father spent the rest of his life as a pacifist.

So should we bother about the European elections? Should we care about politics?

Oh yes. Mankind's propensity for violence is almost limitless and the one thing that can be said for the notoriously corrupt European Union is that at least it has helped provide the longest period of peace between the European nations in many hundreds of years.

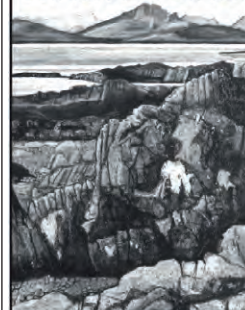
I don't think my father ever truly got over that day in August 1917. He signed off his letter "All this to give you some idea of what a joyful morning you can have if you look for it."

But his bluff doesn't convince me. I myself have seen war in Northern Ireland, the Philippines and the Middle East and although in my own case I have seen little more than a few rotting corpses – which hardly compares with the horrors my father witnessed – it has at least sensitised me to the horror of war and I can scarcely imagine what it did for him.

So before you turn on the television or go off to play a bit of tennis, consider the stakes in that election. Politics is often a dirty game, usually played by ugly people, but it matters, so vote – and vote well.



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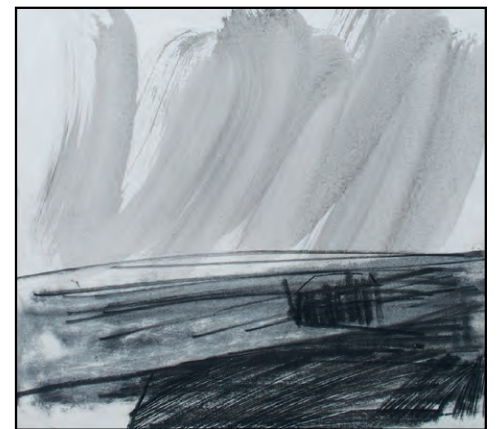
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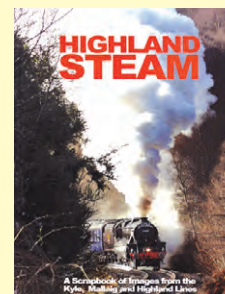
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