

# KEEPSAKE

A collection of thoughts,  
inspiration and creativity



ISSUE 5

The  
**Shoobox**  
COMMUNITY HUB

JUNE 2021



# WELCOME

TO OUR FIFTH ISSUE OF KEEPSAKE -  
THE SHOEBOX'S MONTHLY COMMUNITY MAGAZINE



In this disconnected time, nothing is more important than our relationship to the world around us.

At The Shoebox we're all about connection, whether it's making links in the community or getting out into nature, and this issue is all about connection! Connect is the fourth of The Five Ways to Wellbeing (Take Notice, Be Active, Keep Learning, Connect and Give) which are simple strategies proven to help improve mental health and wellbeing.

It's been wonderful to reconnect with our regulars and meet new members of our community who love what we do! If you'd like to get out and connect, our community groups are a great way to have fun, learn and make new friends. Next months issue is all about giving, whether it's what you've done for others or the kindness you've been shown - get in touch and tell us about it!

If you'd like to give something back to the community, we're still looking for volunteers to join our Keepsake Creation Team. The creation team handles everything from proofing and editing contributions up to the final design of Keepsake. It's a great opportunity to build new skills, create something special and make friends! Send us an email at [team@theshoebox.org.uk](mailto:team@theshoebox.org.uk) to get involved.

- The Keepsake Creation Team



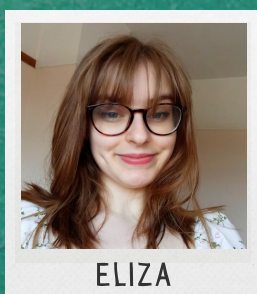
NICOLE



LAUREN



RED



ELIZA

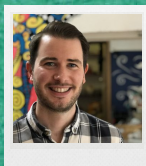


WILLOW

“ Being part of Keepsake has really changed my life. I've learned so many new skills and worked alongside the most talented and lovely people. It gives me something to work towards and has even helped me in looking for work! Knowing that Keepsake brings people joy and a sense of connection is so rewarding. ”

- Red, Keepsake Creation Team Volunteer





## WE'RE BETTER TOGETHER

TOM GASKIN, CEO POP UP ENTERPRISES CIC

We've been a proud partner of the Better Together Norfolk service since it launched in 2018. We work closely with their team of Life Connectors to support people aged 18 and over, who may be feeling lonely or isolated, to come and experience the different community groups and activities on offer at The Shoebox. We know that taking the first step to try something new can be hard so we work with Life Connectors to try and make this easier. We also provide support to volunteers to help them start new groups, email [team@theshoebox.org.uk](mailto:team@theshoebox.org.uk) to find out more.



Creating Connections  
Building Communities



BTN WALKING EVENT AT EATON PARK APRIL 2021

Better Together Norfolk (BTN) is a service commissioned by Norfolk County Council to help people who are feeling lonely or socially isolated connect to activities and groups in their area, for the benefit of their mental and physical health and wellbeing.

Better Together Norfolk has a brilliant team of Life Connectors who offer 1-to-1 assessments, coaching and support to access groups and activities. Some of their team will be a familiar

face to members of The Shoebox as they often pop in to join a community group!

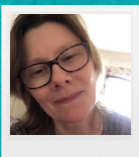
As well as supporting clients to attend groups and activities around Norfolk, BTN also host some fantastic activities themselves! Check out upcoming events and news from BTN on Facebook [@BetterTogetherNorfolkUK](https://www.facebook.com/BetterTogetherNorfolkUK) or visit [www.bettertogethernorfolk.co.uk](http://www.bettertogethernorfolk.co.uk).

**FREE PHONE HELPLINE 0300 303 3920**

BETTER TOGETHER CAN PUT YOU IN TOUCH WITH ACTIVITIES IN YOUR AREA,  
SIGNPOST TO OTHER SERVICES OR ARRANGE FOR YOU TO HAVE SPECIALIST  
SUPPORT FROM ONE OF THEIR PARTNER AGENCIES OR LIFE CONNECTORS.

OPEN 9AM – 5PM, MONDAY TO FRIDAY





# FIND YOUR SMILE AT THE SHOEBOX

DANNII DEAN, FRIDAY CREATIVE WRITING GROUP MEMBER

Everybody has a story. Some people hold onto that story and choose to stay in the place their past has made them. I used to be one of those people; my story was sad, and I thought it would always be who I was. You don't have to know the details and I don't wish to relive that time. Because my story has changed now and I am not sad; I chose to change, to let go of what was holding me back and move forward to a happier future. It took a long time and was scary, challenging, risky even, but every step we take in life is a risk and if we stay still, nothing happens.



THE SHOEBOX COMMUNITY HUB

The day I walked into this building was the beginning of something good; I didn't know it then because I was afraid to have any expectation; as I said, every step is a risk. So I just walked in, said hi and started talking. I don't think I've stopped talking since, and that's because this is a

good place, you can be yourself and you can grow your future. It starts with making one friend, joining a group, then you find you have more friends, and before you know it, you've found a new version of yourself.



FRIDAY CREATIVE WRITING GROUP

The people who run this place are passionate about helping you find yourself, getting you out of that solitary, lonely story you've been living and supporting you to get to wherever you want to be. They believe in what they do and you can trust that what you come out with will be hope, and that is something more valuable than anything else.

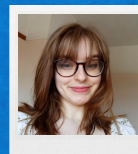
I have become part of this community of good people and it feels really great to be able to say that. If you are feeling like you want to change your story but you're not sure where to start, take a step in the door and just say hi; it may not be easy, but then nothing worth doing ever is.

The word is that there are no guarantees in life but here's what I say when I think about coming here; it helped me to find my smile, my courage and my strength, and now I always start my story from here. So come to The Shoebox, find a friend, join a group, and find your smile.



# MAKING NEW CONNECTIONS

ELIZA DUNN, SHOEBOX VOLUNTEER



I struggled with social anxiety for several years leading up to the COVID-19 pandemic, so being restricted to my home was something I had already experienced by the time lockdown began. It was a setback in my recovery and it limited my ability to communicate with not only my friends but my family too. After a year of being told not to meet with others, I couldn't wait to start doing my favourite activities again. However, it turned out that this wasn't as easy as I had expected.

Adapting to life as the restrictions eased felt stressful and I couldn't see how connecting with others would make a difference for me. To overcome this, I set myself the challenge of making at least one connection every day. I started with something simple, like messaging a family member or saying hello to somebody in the street. Once I felt comfortable with this, I could expand my horizons and start to make connections outside of my home.

I had wanted to try volunteering for a while so approaching local charities and groups was something that helped me make new connections and meet new people. I found that I was gaining more confidence with each small step and I felt a lot better than in previous months. If anyone else has found themselves in a similar position during a lockdown, making a small connection each day is a great way to boost your well-being and open yourself up to new opportunities.



## IT TAKES A VILLAGE

LAUREN LONERGAN, SHOEBOX VOLUNTEER



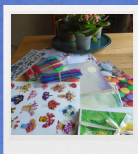
OUR RESIDENT FISHERMAN

I live in Hemsby, a small coastal village. During the pandemic, the village has come together to help each other, especially the older and vulnerable residents, by offering to go food shopping those who couldn't go out because they were shielding or unable to do so and checking in on neighbours who were on their own.

At Christmas the villagers left Christmas decorations on a fir tree for retired residents, many of whom hadn't left their homes in months, to enjoy and bring some joy to the festive season. And it did the job with residents thanking those who had left something on the tree.

Since last year the village has put on a weekend-long scarecrow festival where residents make scarecrows and place them outside their homes for people to enjoy. The children, and even the adults, really enjoy trying to find all the scarecrows. There have been scarecrows of Willy Wonka, an Oompa Loompa, Mary Poppins, a mermaid and even Boris Johnson to name a few! It has been so nice to see communities coming together and being kind to one another and I hope it continues long into the future.





# PENPALS APLENTY

MARJORIE EDWARDS, RAINBOWS PEN PAL CLUB



Back in the last century (and it wasn't all that long ago!) everybody wrote letters. During the war, people longed for the Postman to call so that they could hear news from their husbands, fathers, sons on the Front Line. Romances were kept alive by loving letters which were read over and over again, then tucked back under the pillow at night time.

Lockdown, it seems, has had a remarkable effect on letter writing. People who could not see each other, began to pick up a pen again and send a few words to their friends. It's amazing how therapeutic holding a pen is, making marks on a piece of paper which turn into cherished words to the recipient. There's been a revival in the lost art of letter writing!

Once upon a time, there were penpal clubs where you could obtain names of people at home and overseas who wanted someone to write to but sadly, not many stood the test of time and transition into the 21st century, but one penpal club called Rainbows is still flourishing – after 35 years! What's more there are even three or four of its original members still writing today! Rainbows isn't just a club that produces lists of names .... It's a big, worldwide family of members who connect with each other via a magazine – share stories, send birthday cards, get well cards when someone is poorly, play postal games and enter competitions. Oh, and they all write letters too!



YOU CAN EMAIL MARJORIE AT  
[RAINBOWS5534@HOTMAIL.CO.UK](mailto:RAINBOWS5534@HOTMAIL.CO.UK)  
TO FIND OUT MORE, OR FIND RAINBOWS  
PENPAL CLUB ON FACEBOOK AT  
[WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/RAINBOWSPENPALCLUB](http://WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/RAINBOWSPENPALCLUB)

JOIN THEIR INTERNATIONAL PENPAL CLUB  
PROMOTING FRIENDSHIP BY MAIL ALL OVER  
THE WORLD!



# THE ART OF LETTER WRITING

DINAH JOHNSON, FOUNDER OF THLAS



Over the last year people have discovered how mighty the humble handwritten letter is for keeping us connected. Technology is brilliant and convenient but when we're overloaded by it we have a tendency to short-circuit, and the joy of being able to unplug and switch-off by putting pen to paper has been a revelation for many in this digital era.

I set up The Handwritten Letter Appreciation Society in October 2017 to encourage and inspire people to write letters to each other. There is a website and a manifesto and people can join if they would like to, but really the aim is simple; to keep letter writing on the map for everyone. I also felt a need to reclaim it for ourselves- to put the fun back into it, to let everyone know they have a story to tell



and that spelling and handwriting shouldn't put people off writing them. Sending a letter is a beautiful gift to give, and letter writing can restore an intimacy lost in the digital world.

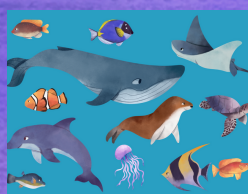
I would say write to whomever you like, tell them what you've been up to, your daydreams, your hopes, what you had for dinner, seen on TV, books you've read, what made you laugh. Write postcards if a letter feels daunting but above all, give it a go. I want to say with confidence: you'll love it! You can find us at [www.thehandwrittenletterappreciationsociety.org](http://www.thehandwrittenletterappreciationsociety.org) for more information on getting started.

## PERSONALISING YOUR POSTCARDS

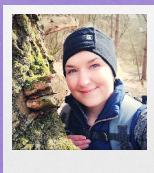


We love this postcard sent to us by the talented artist Chris Walker! However, you don't have to be an amazing artist to make your own postcards. If you want to make it individual, but don't feel up to drawing or painting there are many ways to add creative touches. You could use stickers or washi tape, cut out images or photos to stick on or make a mini collage.

You can even try your hand at making your own digital postcard designs to print on Canva! They have loads of postcard templates like the ones on the left to use, or you can design one from scratch. You can even print out black and white ones to colour in yourself! Visit [www.canva.org](http://www.canva.org) to get started on their free design site.







# IN, OUT, NATURE IS ALL ABOUT!

CATHERINE GRAY, OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST, CUP-O-T: WELLNESS AND THERAPY SERVICES

A lot has changed over the last 18 months but one thing has remained available throughout - nature. It may have been restricted at times to 1 hour outside our houses for a walk, but it was always there. Over the past few years, research has shown we have become more disconnected from nature in our daily lives. Increased time on screens and daily demands means we rarely have regular 'escapes' to places of natural beauty. However, what I have noticed over the pandemic is that the craving to be in nature has been reignited for many - and it doesn't have to be a planned trip into the wilderness just for those who can use a map and compass!

Garden centres and DIY stores reported a 500% increase in houseplant sales and 45% increase in fruit and vegetable plant sales in 2020. In the last year 3.5 million people in the UK have taken up gardening for the first time. So why is connecting with nature good for us?

- Nature increases our concentration and attention span.
- It improves our mood and our ability to be creative, it also decreases stress.
- It reduces blood pressure, fatigue and pain.

## GETTING YOUR DAILY DOSE OF NATURE



### Have a digital escape

Some days going out isn't possible. Looking at photos or videos of your favourite place in nature can transport you there. Ambient nature videos on Youtube can also help you escape for a while.



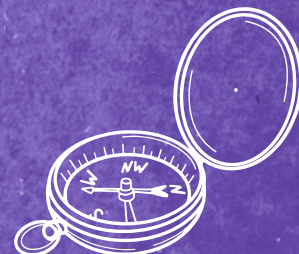
### Adopt a houseplant

There are some great plant swap groups, you don't need to spend lots and many plants don't need lots of care. I am a big fan of cacti and funny looking succulents!



### Take a break

Have a cup of tea outside and take the time to admire the natural world around you, even if it's just watching clouds. Even a short break can be enough to relax you and refresh your concentration.



### Explore your area

Explore the footpaths local to you. Observe what is growing, the colours of trees, and the sounds of birds. By getting to know your local area you can see how it changes over the seasons. This not only connects you to nature, but your community too.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON IMPROVING YOUR HEALTH AND WELLBEING FOLLOW OUR FACEBOOK PAGE AND LOOK OUT FOR OUR EVENTS, SERVICES AND WORKSHOPS AT [WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/CUPOTSERVICES](https://www.facebook.com/cupotservices) OR [WWW.CUP-O-T.CO.UK](http://WWW.CUP-O-T.CO.UK)



# GRAPES HILL COMMUNITY GARDEN

WORDS: ELLEN MARY, GRAPES HILL PROJECT MANAGER  
PHOTOS: JO RICE, GRAPES HILL GARDENER



JOIN OUR HAPPY VOLUNTEERS



ADMIRING THE ART



GRAPES GROWN AT GRAPES HILL

During a time when connection has been more important than ever, so many people have discovered the intrinsic link to wellbeing - nature! When we haven't been able to connect with people as much, gardens and green spaces have been a place of rest, exercise and reflection which has been even more essential than ever before.

The Grapes Hill Community Garden is open all day, every day for anyone to enjoy some nature in the city and connect with nature in an urban environment. Our volunteer groups are also not just about connecting with the plants and learning to garden but also meeting new friends and building relationships with the local community. We're just a short walk from Norwich city centre, at the bottom of Grapes Hill, up from the junction with Dereham Road.

Visitors are welcome to pick herbs and fruit from the garden, excluding plants from the raised beds which are rented. We only ask that you take a small amount to leave some more for other people and wildlife. Just make sure you can identify everything you pick, as not everything in the garden is edible - and some plants can be poisonous!



ART IN THE GARDEN



OUR BEE FRIENDLY FLOWERS



BIRD BOX MAKING

THE GARDEN HOLDS REGULAR VOLUNTEER DAYS FOR ANYONE WHO FANCIES A BIT OF GARDENING- NO EXPERIENCE NEEDED AS THEIR FRIENDLY GARDENER JO IS ON HAND TO HELP. VOLUNTEER SESSIONS RUN EVERY OTHER SUNDAY FROM 2 PM TO 4 PM, AND FAMILY GARDENING SESSIONS SUITABLE FOR KIDS ON WEDNESDAY FROM 3:30 PM TO 5:30 PM.

GRAPES HILL ALSO HOLDS REGULAR FREE ZOOM WEBINARS AND EVENTS, WITH THEIR 'ART IN THE GARDEN' EXHIBITION COMING SOON ON JULY 25TH AND THEIR 10TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION ON AUGUST 8TH. YOU CAN FIND OUT WHAT'S ON AT [WWW.GRAPESHILLCOMMUNITYGARDEN.ORG](http://WWW.GRAPESHILLCOMMUNITYGARDEN.ORG) OR FOLLOW THEM ON FACEBOOK.





# HIDDEN GEMS: PENSTHORPE PARK

LAUREN LONERAN, SHOEBOX VOLUNTEER



BEST ENJOYED ON A SUNNY DAY!

with a mixture of perennials, grasses, shrubs, clematis and wisteria. It is the ideal habitat for butterflies and insects to thrive during the summer and provides birds with material for their nests along with enough food for the winter. It is the perfect place to take in nature in all its glory and meditate.



ADMIRING THE LONDON PLANE

wildlife-friendly environment at home.

There are many different trails around the reserve to be explored. Why not see for yourself everything Pensthorpe has to offer?

Pensthorpe Natural Park spans 700 acres through the Wensum Valley. The park showcases the importance of species and habitat conservation for animals and birds, including turtle doves, cranes and corncrakes, who call the water and surrounding area home.

The Millennium Garden was designed by the Dutch Garden Designer Piet Oudolf back in 2000 to celebrate the millennium. The garden is a lush meadow of colour and texture



HOME TO ANIMALS BIG...

The Habitat Garden is a beautiful water-focused environment which is home to dragonflies, frogs, bats, moths, beetles, bees, damselflies, birds, butterflies and reptiles. Plants that flower for longer, such as salvias, have recently been added to the garden

to provide the bees with more nectar and pollen and in turn help the environment. The garden was created to inspire visitors with useful tips and ideas to help them create a



...AND SMALL!

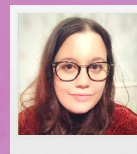
PENSTHORPE NATURAL PARK IS OPEN WEDNESDAY TO SUNDAY FROM 10 AM - 4:30 PM.

IT'S A GREAT PLACE TO GET KIDS OUT ENJOYING NATURE AND HAS A 7,000 SQUARE-METRE ADVENTURE PLAY AREA AND 11-METRE HIGH SLIDE TOWER. UNISEX TOILETS WITH BABY CHANGING FACILITIES ARE AVAILABLE, AS WELL AS ELECTRIC SCOOTER AND WHEELCHAIR HIRE. YOU CAN FIND MORE INFORMATION AND BOOK TICKETS AT [WWW.PENSTHORPE.COM](http://WWW.PENSTHORPE.COM).



# WRITING A NEW CHAPTER

NICOLE SEARS, SHOEBOX VOLUNTEER



I found Bridges Creative Writing Group by chance through an app I downloaded in the middle of the night. The following Wednesday I forced myself outside into unfamiliar territory and I am so glad I did. I didn't know what to expect as I had not done any creative writing since high school. Looking back at the notebook page from that day I have a little message I wrote for myself, "I loved this! I shall keep doing it. Everyone was so friendly". For me to write that at a time in my life filled with so much uncertainty due to mental illness gives the message much more gravity.

I continued doing it and every week I've felt unjudged, safe, and welcome. I've made so many new friends who, like me, have long-term health conditions. Those connections have made me feel less alone and given me a space in which I am comfortable being 100% myself. The idea that I have something to offer and something important and interesting to say has carried over into other aspects of my life too, giving me more confidence and the realisation that while I struggle with my health, I still have a meaningful place in society. I thought my life was on pause, but it is just different now from what I expected and just as fulfilling thanks to every door that opened to me on my first day attending a group at The Shoebox.

## A STONE

Every now and then an invisible man drops a stone into the top of my head. It falls through me down my throat, into my stomach. At some point, it will end up in one of my shoes. Some days it's a small pebble. Other days it's a large rock. From a mile above or a centimetre. I wake up wondering which stone he will choose for me today.

## BRIDGES POETRY PROMPTS

Prompt - Borrow the opening line of someone else's poem.

"There are nights where I count the silence between owls"

Sue Burge

Prompt - Write something

involving a colour, like the word blue

There are nights where I count the silence between owls  
There are days where I count the rotating shadows between  
trees

I count the pages left in notebooks  
And biscuits left on the shelf  
I keep the tallies under my mattress  
Or they'll think I'm mad  
But I don't care if I lose my mind  
For the excited tick of anticipation

Or the dreaded tock of the last number to be counted

An empty blue book  
An ocean's worth of stories  
Unwritten and waiting  
It sits gathering dust  
Then it's gently brushed clean  
With a promise renewed  
To pepper it with words  
Like kisses in navy moonlight



# THE SHOEBOX UPDATE

This month has been focused on signing people up to our new membership scheme and expanding the range of community groups we have on offer at The Shoebox! Keep an eye on our website for further updates. We have also had some fantastic new signs installed to show off our new name and logo. A big thank you to Rock Solid Graphics & Print for the new signs and Jason Plant from Plant Creative for our new logo!



We have had a brilliant response to the new membership scheme. It has been lovely to see so many new faces signing up as well as some familiar ones returning!

Not sure if the membership scheme is for you? Come along to our weekly Community Coffee Morning to find out more or sign up for our two week free trial. This issue is all about connecting and we are here to make it as easy as possible. We guarantee a warm welcome to The Shoebox from our friendly staff, volunteers and members!



Visit [www.theshoebox.org.uk](http://www.theshoebox.org.uk) or follow us on Facebook for future updates on what we're up to at The Shoebox

## WHAT'S ON

JOIN OUR NEW MEMBERSHIP SCHEME OR START YOUR FREE TRIAL TO ATTEND GROUPS OR EMAIL [TEAM@THESHOEBX.ORG.UK](mailto:TEAM@THESHOEBX.ORG.UK) FOR A ZOOM LINK. CALL 01603 850309 FOR MORE INFORMATION.



COMMUNITY COFFEE MORNING  
EVERY MONDAY 10.30-11.30 AM

Come along for a cuppa and a chat at our weekly coffee morning and start your week with a smile. Open to members, guests and non-members. Join us at The Shoebox or over Zoom.



MINDFULNESS AND MEDITATION GROUP  
EVERY TUESDAY 10:30-11:30 AM

Join Fran at The Shoebox or on Zoom to go through guided meditations, the benefits of being mindful in your favourite activities and daily life.



PUZZLE CLUB & GAMES CLUB  
1ST AND 3RD TUESDAY OF THE MONTH 3-4 PM

Come together on Zoom or at The Shoebox to solve crosswords, word searches and other puzzles and play board games in a fun, supportive group.



BRIDGES CREATIVE WRITING GROUP  
EVERY WEDNESDAY 2-4 PM

Creative writing group for people who have had, or are experiencing mental health problems. Join us on Zoom or at The Shoebox and bring along any sort of writing to share and discuss.



CREATE CRAFT CHAT  
EVERY THURSDAY 1-3PM

Bring a crafty or creative project you're working on and join this group of like-minded people for fun, friendship and support. Some materials are available for use in the group by members.



FRIDAY CREATIVE WRITING GROUP  
EVERY FRIDAY 10 AM-12 PM

Fun, friendly and relaxed creative writing group where you can laugh, share and enjoy creative writing on Zoom or at The Shoebox. Forget your worries, all you need is a little imagination.



FRIDAY SOCIAL SUPPORT GROUP  
EVERY FRIDAY 1-3 PM

This friendly, supportive group is the perfect place to talk, listen, laugh and make new friends. Everyone is welcome and accepted. Join us on Zoom or at The Shoebox.



RUNNING CLUB  
EVERY FRIDAY 3.30-4.30 PM

Join this friendly, supportive group on a short weekly run around Norwich city centre, starting and finishing at The Shoebox.

WANT TO BE IN THE NEXT ISSUE? WE WOULD LOVE TO HEAR WHAT YOU'VE BEEN UP TO! PLEASE SEND SUBMISSIONS TO [TEAM@THESHOEBX.ORG.UK](mailto:TEAM@THESHOEBX.ORG.UK) OR THE SHOEBOX, 21-23 CASTLE MEADOW, NORWICH, NR1 3DH