Monday 18 August 2025

# Ecas at the Edinburgh International Book Festival







# An introduction



John Mackay – Ecas Reading and Creative Writing Group Leader

Repair is such a potent word – from the deeply personal to the global with its implications for international relations and the environment – and at Ecas we aim to reflect many different concerns in our writing.

I've been at Ecas for seven years, and it's a privilege every week to witness the group pushing their creative boundaries and engaging vibrantly with an eclectic selection of poems, novels, and non-fiction. Discussions can be serious, silly, sometimes downright bizarre — you never know where they're going to go, but you can be sure there will be laughs along the way.

The benefits of creative writing are immense – boosting confidence and gaining personal insights, or simply as an outlet for all the joys and frustrations of the everyday. And when you share that writing with others, reading out loud your innermost thoughts, you open the door to mutual understanding and support.

Thank you to the Edinburgh International Book Festival for inviting us to participate this year. We are delighted to be here and hope you enjoy our responses to the Festival theme, 'Together We Repair'.

## Almost beyond words!

Over the past few months, the members of our Ecas Reading and Creative Writing group have been busy crafting their own unique approach to this year's Festival theme of 'Together We Repair'.

This exciting opportunity for five of our writers to share their creativity at one of the world's most renowned book festivals is almost beyond words. But not quite!



"It's great that we have been invited to read at the Edinburgh Book Festival. I'm a wee bit nervous about speaking in front of a big crowd of people and I get my words muddled up sometimes but I say to myself, I will be fine reading my story about 'Together We Repair'."

Lee-Ann

"It's wonderful to be part of the Book Festival

— I really love books and have enjoyed
reading all my life."

**Julia** 

## **Meet our writers**



Our writers performing today are Angela, Barbara, David, Julia, and Lee-Ann. All are regulars at the weekly Ecas Reading and Creative Writing group and, between them, create a wonderfully diverse range of poetry and prose.

The group is one of a wide variety of activities and services Ecas offers to physically disabled people living in Edinburgh and Lothian.

Ecas writers enjoy sharing their work within the group, and occasionally via video, but this will be their first public performance!



## **Angela**

I enjoy reading psychological thrillers and crime novels – in particular, books about serial killers; my favourite authors just now are J.D. Kirk and Alex Smith.

I started coming to the Ecas Reading and Creative Writing group nine years ago because I want to write a book based on my experience of suffering a stroke, and how I have coped – or not coped in some circumstances. I have made a start on this, and let's just say it's a work in progress.

Favourite drink: Pinot Grigio



#### **Barbara**

I had a brain haemorrhage 22 years ago; before that, I was very sporty, doing lots of running, aerobics, and swimming.

I worked at Scottish Widows for 30 years. I also cared for my Mum who had dementia.

Now, I take part in many Ecas activities – Tai Chi, Craft, Art, as well as the Reading and Creative Writing group. You'll also find me doing jigsaws, drinking and dancing (not all at the same time).

Favourite drink: Cointreau



#### **David**

I was born in Glasgow and then moved to Edinburgh, where I've lived for 34 years. I have been at Ecas for 15 years: I'm in the Craft class as well as the Reading and Creative Writing group.

I've written poetry since I was 16. My inspiration comes mainly from song lyrics: including Fish, Chris Rea, Justin Currie, and the Beatles, of course.

My drawings have been exhibited at The Wee Museum of Memory in Ocean Terminal, Edinburgh. Around the time of Covid, I drew every day for five consecutive years – so far, I have more than 700 drawings to my name.

Favourite drink: Tea



#### Julia

During childhood, I found that being able to retreat to a hidden world in books kept me going.

My grandad left a load of forgotten books at my Mum's house.

It was there I discovered the wonderful world of *Jane Eyre, Forever Amber*, and *Wuthering Heights*. I loved the Brontës – strong women fighting in a man's world to write and get their voices heard. It always inspired me. As I grew older I read a lot of Stephen King, Dean Koontz, and David Gemmell. I love to write horror, crime, and mysteries. I find the class an amazing place to share stories and have a good laugh with like-minded people. It's a rare chance to be able to share your work and get good constructive criticism. I really enjoy it and it makes me want to write more.

Favourite drink: White wine



#### Lee-Ann

I like true-crime stories, and I go to Ecas to improve my reading and writing skills.

I've been inspired to write my life story.

But I'm not just a writer. I'm also an Olympic Champion in Ten-Pin Bowling – six-times medal winner at the Special Olympics, a global sports movement to end discrimination against people with intellectual disabilities.

Favourite drink: Lager

"I feel quite humble to be asked to participate in this. I hope it goes well, and that I will not disgrace Ecas! We are so glad to be able to read at the event."

Barbara

"This event helps to promote Ecas in a good light. I am happy and a bit nervous to be part of that. It will be a great chance for lots of other people to hear my writing."

Angela

"I'm really looking forward to reading my poetry as part of the Edinburgh Book Festival!"

David

Enjoy our writing

## The Mist by Angela



I'd had a shit of a day and so I decided to take the car and go for a drive, not knowing how long I would be or where it would take me. Just drive.

Pretty soon, I came to a junction – turning left would take me home, so I decided to turn right as I wasn't ready to do that. I had no idea where this road would take me.

After a few miles, I came to a sudden halt. There in front of me was what I can only describe as a patch of really thick mist. However, when I checked my rear-view mirror, it was completely clear, which I found really strange. Should I drive through the mist or turn back? I had my doubts, but I wasn't ready to go home yet, so I just went for it.

I drove through the mist and then onwards for another couple of miles. Things began to look familiar, and I found myself in the area where I grew up. In a nearby park, there was a group of children playing, they were about school age. They were playing rounders, a game I loved as a child, so I decided to sit and watch for a few minutes, reliving my youth.

When I came closer, one of the children looked familiar. What was this? Where was I? I watched, a bit more mesmerised by what I was seeing. She was sitting on a bench near where the children were playing. I decided to go and join her and start a conversation.

When I sit down, she turns to smile at me and says 'Hi'.

I smile back, 'Do you mind if I sit here with you?'



'No, that's fine.'

She says that her parents have told her not to talk to strangers, and I say that is very true. I tell her I used to live in this area and I'm reminiscing. She asks me my name and I tell her it's Angela. She says that's her name too. She looks at me as if recognising something.

We sit in silence for a few minutes watching the children play, then we chat about her school. I'm wary of saying too much. Then I hear a voice shouting for Angela and Sandra. I turn and see a younger version of my Mum, calling me and my sister in for dinner.

Is this a chance to relive my youth, guide my younger self through my teens and into young adulthood, avoiding the mistakes and mending all those horrible memories? No, that wouldn't be right. I can't change the course of history because I wouldn't be the person I am today.

When she gets up to leave, she does a double-take and I look at her. She's wearing yellow shorts and a white T-shirt. How I loved that outfit!

I stand up, say goodbye and tell her it's been lovely to talk to her. She asks me, 'Will I see you again?' I tell her I'm not sure. I give her a hug and she hugs me back, and I say: 'Just remember, always do your best in life and be the best you can be.'

There is so much I want to say to her and I feel an urge to protect her from certain things, but I know I can't do that. Like me, she has to discover things for herself.

# A Healing Acrostic by Barbara



The

Original

Gentle

**Eruption** 

Today

Has

Enabled

Rampant

Wild

**Erratic** 

Healing

Even though

**A**wfully

Late

# the pope should be by David



the pope should be gay the pope should be a woman the Catholic church missing out half the population the Vatican should sell its art to help the world's poor that would be a cure for sure the Vatican should just be simple and plain all religions should do the same just simple and plain no gold or silver crosses no fancy robes just love for one and all straight or gay or just too tall we are all the same one for all and all for one everybody is for everyone nobody is better than the other sister or brother don't think anyone is better than you all humans are the same and different all humans are fragile and strong all humans are bones and dust all humans are limited and limitless all humans are magical and mysterious the pope should be gay the pope should be a woman

## Rest in Pieces by Julia



Jacob cleaned his knife. He liked everything to be precise and tidy. He wasn't sure if it was his OCD or simply his mother's fearsome influence, exerted from early childhood, to be so clean.

After a murder, Jacob liked to make sure there wasn't a trace of him left behind. He icily admired the corpse of his young victim. Her skin had turned the colour of marble, cold and hard to the touch. Her beautiful, abundant copper tresses now lay in a dark cloud around her. Like a shroud, he thought.

He had no remorse. She had been a means to an end. The girl had come to him like a gift online, full of hope and looking for romance with a handsome doctor. He had been looking for fresh body parts. Jacob needed her kidney to repair his beloved Sylvia.

Sylvia had become ill three years into the relationship. Jacob, a top surgeon, tried desperately to help. The transplant waiting list was long, so he looked around on the black market. But the quality was dire, so he took it into his head to seek out fresh kills.

The first murder had been the hardest, but this latest killing – he thinks her name was Maisie – had been easy. She had liked his online profile. On the website he was a handsome, rich doctor with silvery locks, chiselled jaw and enigmatic brown eyes. It was easy to dazzle her: a bit of romance, some fine wining and dining, and she was his.



Prepping his knives, he carved up Maisie's body and put the unwanted parts into black bags. His beloved Sylvia already had new lungs and a new right arm. Now she had a new kidney. He enjoyed the killing – snuffing out a life was such a power trip. But the mess afterwards, disposing of the evidence, the cover-up – that was the hard work.

Sylvia – currently in a coma in Jacob's master bedroom – was guarded by a nurse he recruited. She was silent and biddable and asked no questions. But Sylvia's condition had not improved. She needed another arm, and her heart was deteriorating at an alarming rate. It wouldn't be long before he needed to find another kill. He would go online tonight.

He had several dating profiles under different names. The women he attracted were fresh meat, a means to an end. He felt no compassion, only a determined coldness.

Slinging the black bags into his jeep he headed for the woods and a deep glade that had become his favourite burial ground. The moon cast a spectral glow over the trees. Shivering, he chose his spot under a large oak. Maisie would get her eternal rest in pieces.

## The Wheelchair-Making Machine by Lee-Ann



One cold morning after Alfie woke up, he tried out a special machine for making a wheelchair. But the machine was not working.

He had to fix it, and he thought to himself, maybe I need to make a machine to fix the machine that makes wheelchairs. No, he thought. Because if that machine breaks down, I will have to make a machine to fix the machine that fixes the machine that makes wheelchairs. So, he tried to fix the machine that makes wheelchairs, so that he could make his own wheelchair. But when he had made his wheelchair, it wasn't quite right.

The next day, he decided to make his wheelchair by hand. He started with the wheels and he fixed them on the chair. Then Alfie put a handle on the wheelchair. Afterwards, he added an electric motor. This was great because it meant he could go on his own to places, and he could live an independent life.

Alfie saw his carer once a week when he went shopping.

His carer said, 'Nice wheelchair, Alfie!'

He replied, 'Thank you, I made a machine for making wheelchairs.'

Alfie's carer said: 'That's brilliant.'

'Yes', said Alfie, 'you can see my machine when we have finished shopping. But I have to tell you that the machine is broken. I tried to fix it, but it still needs some work so that people can make their own wheelchairs.'

Alfie said: 'If I can't repair it, I will make the wheelchairs myself, and give them to other people. Machines are great, but human beings must never be replaced!'

## Ecas is here to help

### **Ecas Befriending Service**

Ecas operates a befriending service for physically disabled adults who live in Edinburgh and would like some extra company.

Our befriending service provides friendship and companionship for socially isolated people.

We also offer a Facilitated Friendship service, helping friends to stay connected.



#### **Ecas Grants**

Ecas grants are for physically disabled adults and children, living in Edinburgh and Lothian.

Grants are available for items or services which cannot be accessed through welfare benefits and other sources.









## A little more about Ecas



Ecas is a registered charity supporting adults with physical disabilities in Edinburgh and Lothian.

We've done so for over 100 years!

We're here to help you too!

From our welcoming weekly groups, to our befriending service and support grants, there really is something for everyone at Ecas!

#### From Art to Yoga

Ecas groups and activities are open to adults with physical disabilities living in Edinburgh and Lothian.

All our groups are weekly and take place in accessible venues around Edinburgh. Most are also available online.

**Choose from** - Art - Craft - Music - Reading & Creative Writing - Seated Tai-Chi - Swimming - Chair Yoga.



