

The Barony Newsletter

Craft Town
Scotland

West Kilbride
Community
Initiative Ltd

**Featured Maker
Julie Cumming**



Necklace, Julie Cumming

**Issue 10
April/May 2021**

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www.crafttownscotland.org

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 **WKCIL**

“Looking forward”

Claire Edgar

It is quite unbelievable that a whole year has passed since the very difficult decision was taken to close The Barony Centre, Cafe and Studios in order to protect our valiant team of permanent staff and volunteers, protect our organisation, and to ensure the safety and well being of our wider community.

The months that have followed have been some of the most challenging to date. These unprecedented times have caused many businesses to temporarily close their doors; events which we had been looking forward to have been cancelled and postponed; our 2020 Year of Coasts and Waters quite literally sank in the Covid storm.

In spite of these challenges, the resilience of our Community has been amazing; the strength and determination of the WKCIL Board, staff and volunteer teams has ensured that The Barony Centre and Cafe have been able to operate when permitted; our talented Studios/Gallery Makers/Artists have continued to find inspiration to create.

I am grateful to be returning to the job that I love at a time where we will continue to rebuild, refocus and re-engage; securing our future as we emerge from this pandemic and (in the words of Kirk our Chairperson) further 'grow our capacity to support creativity'.

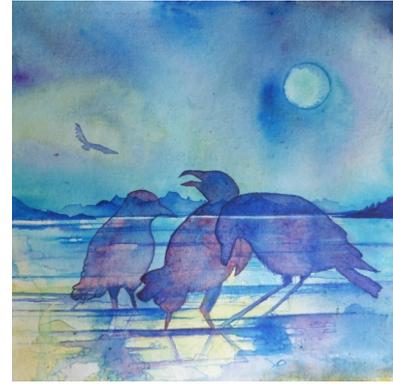
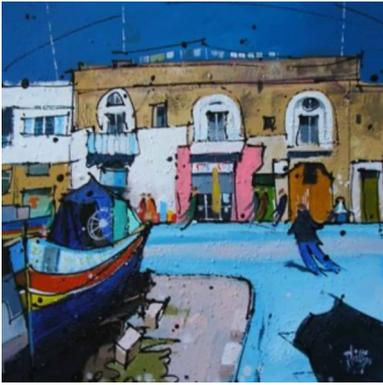
The long awaited 'Barony Baby', aka Harrison, is now 9 months old and completely oblivious to the disruption caused by the pandemic - I have been trying to take a wee leaf out of his book and approach the future with the excitement and anticipation that a 9 month old does...

It has been so uplifting that many folk in our village have been taking the time out of their day to say how much they are looking forward to getting back to The Barony, how much they have missed the exhibitions and events, how much they appreciate the hard work of the Environmental Group (which has continued throughout the pandemic), and of course how much they are looking forward to a freshly baked scone and a coffee!

We are looking forward to re-opening The Barony Centre, Cafe and Studios from 26th April and we are planning to launch with one of our postponed Exhibitions from 2020 - 'Cowal's Coasts and Waters'. We will also be working hard behind the scenes over the next few weeks to ensure we can safely deliver the rest of our Programme of Exhibitions and Events for 2021...watch out for further updates on this...

Spring is definitely the season for a fresh start and there are positive signs throughout the village that West Kilbride is re-awakening, re-grouping and preparing for the future...there has been a wee buzz of activity since the Scottish Government's announcement and I know I am not the only one who is looking forward to brighter, happier days, thankful to be a member of this wonderful community.

Claire Edgar
Retail and Business Development Manager



Cowal Open Studios at the Barony

'Cowal's Coasts and Waters'

26 April – 29 May 2021



Cowal Open Studios are delighted to exhibit a selection of their members' work through the exhibition 'Cowal's Coast and Waters' at the Barony Centre.

The theme of 'Coast and Waters' is very appropriate as Cowal is a peninsula situated on the west side of the River Clyde. It boasts at least seven lochs, red squirrels, forestry and unspoilt hills and glens. In spite of its close proximity to industrial areas on the other side of the water, there are some incredibly wild and remote locations. Added to this is an interesting history, from early settlements, standing stones and feuding Clans to modern day military connections.

Rich in ancient history it is now also the home to many artists, inspired by these surroundings. There are painter and printers, plus makers skilled in textiles, glass, wood, clay and metals. Members of the Cowal Open Studios come together for a weekend in September, opening their doors to visitors and locals alike. Members also engage with the local community with several offering workshops throughout the year. Cowal Open Studios also engage with the local schools and organise an annual children's art competition to coincide with the Open Studio weekend.

This year the Cowal Open Studio weekend is Friday 24 – Monday 27 September.

www.cowalopenstudios.co.uk

[Cowal Open Studios | Facebook](#)

info@cowalopenstudios.co.uk

www.instagram.com/cowal_open_studios



“Meet a Maker” Julie Cumming

Julie/Rona Slevin

I am a jewellery maker, gardener, interior designer and decorator, reader, knitter, fledgling print maker, mender, bird watcher, lover of Scotland and crafter of many and various things. I live in an ancient house with a wild garden just outside West Kilbride.

I'm a graduate of Edinburgh College of Art where I originally chose to study jewellery and silversmithing. However, at the time the department had a distinct 'style' it preferred students to work in and, when I returned for my second year there, I realised I was unhappy being pushed to conform with their 'trademark' angular, minimalistic style. I changed jewellery to being my secondary subject and moved to spend the majority of my time in the stained glass department. Working with handmade glass and traditional lead work was amazing and, after graduating I set up my first of 3 stained glass studios in Edinburgh, where I worked on private and commercial commissions – the most exciting of which was for two huge windows for RBS at Portobello.



How did you get your business started?

We moved to Fairlie in 1985 and, after a flurry of house renovation and child rearing, I felt the pull back to jewellery making. A photograph of a curtain tie back adorned with dangling shells reminded me of the talismanic, individualistic kind of jewellery which I had always loved, and Touchstones was born.

I built up a customer base gradually, initially doing jewellery parties in private homes, which was a great way to get feedback on what people liked and how they choose pieces for themselves and others. Craft fairs, too, have been a good source of sales and feedback. Things have obviously been quiet over the last year, but I look forward to returning custom from the Barony, my favourite shop in Orkney and my lovely clients who come to the studio to commission personal pieces.



‘What do you make and what inspires you?’

I love my home studio where I design and make my jewellery. Working mainly in silver, semi-precious stones and freshwater pearls, I source my materials from all over the world. Most of my silver comes from Thailand - these remarkable beads and pendants are handmade in 99.5% pure silver (better than Sterling!) by the Karen Hill Tribes. I source the silver I use only through ethical, fair trade suppliers to ensure a fair wage for the Thai artisans. This system provides an alternative, stable economy and helps to preserve their culture, religion and art. You can see more of the story about this on my website.

I get my inspiration from the materials themselves: with a stock of stunning stones, amazing in all their colour and variety, and remarkable Thai silver to choose from, the ideas just keep on coming. This jewellery demands to be made! I hope that people get as much pleasure from wearing Touchstones jewellery as I get from making it.



What’s your connection to West Kilbride and the Barony?

We moved to West Kilbride in 1998 and very much enjoyed seeing and supporting the development of our Craft Town. The Saturday morning furniture sales in the pre-renovation Barony building are a thing of legend! I initially sold work in both the gift shop and the Gallery but, of course, was absolutely delighted to see it move to be displayed for sale in the beautiful Barony building that we now have.



Website: www.mytouchstones.co.uk

Instagram: www.instagram.com/my_touchstones/

Facebook: www.facebook.com/Touchstones-102716871355076

Makers and Artists Mentoring Programme

Impact Arts

An update from some of the artists working on the M& programme.

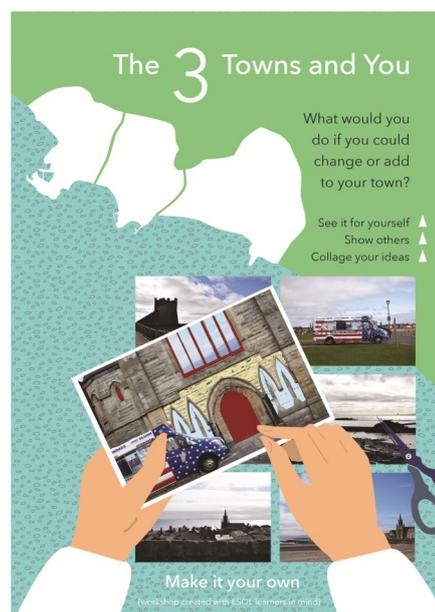
Catharine Clark

I have my own association called HOPE - Help, Observe and Protect the Environment. I'm focusing on marine themed ceramic pieces for myself and with the groups I've chosen to work with through the MAMP. I would like to fill a space in The Barony with ceramic pieces made by group participants. The theme is coastal in line with 2021 being Scotland's Year of Coasts and Waters. I'm also displaying my own artwork based on the theory of 'Blue Mind' and the power of being near living water, to our health and wellbeing.



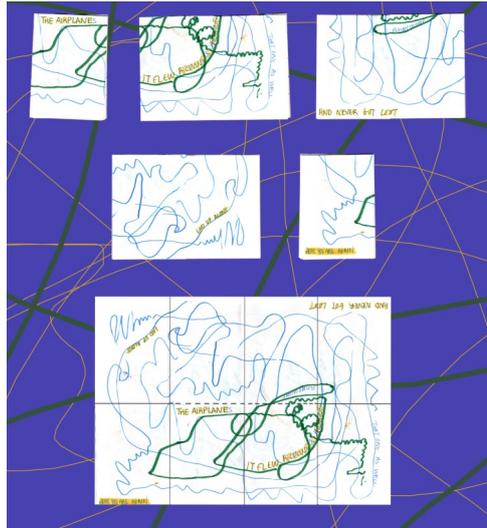
Jennifer O'Rourke

So far during my time within MAMP program I have considerably progressed my knowledge and understanding of the participatory arts sector and how best to engage with participants. I am excited to put all of this into practice in the coming weeks. In the mean time I have been brainstorming ideas for possible projects but more than anything can't wait to get to know the community groups and respond to their wants/ needs.



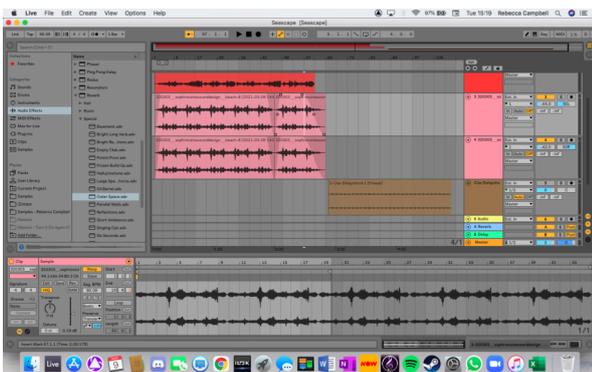
Maria Tolia

Lately I have started using writing to help form the images I want to make. Through that process I have been thinking of making a series of cyanotypes. Through the programme I got introduced to a new way of thinking about making which I really enjoy. By doing tests, having the facilitation part of the process in mind I got new ideas for booklets and prints. Currently I am focused on designing my first workshop which will be using cut outs to make compositions.



Rebecca Campbell

Going into the better weather, I plan to record a video showcasing the countryside and nature around Dalry, which is where I am based. To go along with that, I have been doing some research about the history of the area, and I came across a local legend of a 16th century witch. Using my music and sound production skills, I will compose and record a piece to work with the video. Once this is done, I will use the legend of the witch to create a narrated story to marry up with the audio and visuals. The final goal is to create an audiovisual art piece, which can be used to raise awareness of the history and heritage of this beautiful, historical town.



Makers and Artists Mentoring Programme

Impact Arts

An update from some of the artists working on the M& programme cont...

Alex Hogan

I'm currently on a leave of absence from studying Communication Design at the Glasgow School of Art. I'm still very much at the beginning of finding my way in the creative world (!) but my work so far has been mainly visually arts based, such as screen printing and paper crafting, and also sewing!

Since starting my break from GSA I've started taking on commissions for home furnishings under the name Sewn.by.alex, which I have a Facebook and Instagram page for. I've just finished making some really colourful, summer inspired cushion covers which you can see below, but I've also made curtains and Roman blinds too.

I would love to grow my commissions into a potential business going forward, as I have so far really enjoyed the work. I've recently started to experiment with dying my own fabric to then make into home furnishing so that is something I'd love to explore further and I know Karen Teal and Claire Phillips in the 52 stories group, know a lot about. I'm undecided still as to whether I'll return to Communication Design at GSA so I think a lot of my plans depend on me making that decision!

But the Mentoring Programme has definitely made me want to explore the idea of turning my sewing into a potential business. I've also had ideas about potentially reaching out to groups/charities that work with people who are having to set up a new home, e.g. women and children fleeing domestic abuse or care leavers, and giving them workshops on how to make their own home furnishings to create a more comfortable space and homely space.



Featured Photographer George Crawford

George/Rona Slevin

I love the west of Scotland, having had the good fortune to have lived in North Ayrshire all of my life, more than 30 years of it in West Kilbride. My interest in photography started as a young boy, in the days of darkrooms, expensive paper, and smelly chemicals. Since retirement, I have much more time to devote to my passion. I'm fascinated by the landscapes and seascapes around here, particularly at West Kilbride, Seamill and Portencross. Our scenery is magnificent, and the ever-changing skies are a continuing delight – especially near sunset, of course.

I'm particularly keen on the varying moods of the sky and sea, and in nature and macro photography.

Retired from a job in Computing Education, I enjoy using software to alter photographs. I see the computer as just another artistic tool, making no apologies for altering reality, which photographers and painters have always done anyway.

I often use my camera as a sketchbook for paintings but increasingly I'm resurrecting my early interest in making photographs for their own sake.



My work can be seen on Facebook

and at www.flickr.com/photos/georgecrawford

Featured Photographer George Crawford



Featured Photographer George Crawford



You can also see pictures I've made at my commercial website

<http://croftglenimages.blogspot.co.uk>

Craft Town Scotland

West Kilbride Community Initiative Ltd



'Cowal's Coasts and Waters' Exhibition
26 April - 29 May 2021

LOCATION: THE BARONY CENTRE,
West Kilbride, KA239AR

Monday – Saturday, 10am – 4pm

www.crafttownscotland.org - www.cowalopenstudios.co.uk  