Women took over the Diorama Arts Centre in March to stage the collaborative mini arts festival SHE CAN, part of the Camden Women in Focus festival. In an exciting and successful collaborative project between Survivors’ Poetry, Forbidden Theatre and Studio Upstairs the Diorama came alive with an exhilarating exhibition by women artists entitled Her Space.

In the evenings the players of Quiet took us through the real life case histories of six women who had been institutionalised for being labelled as “moral defectives”. Meanwhile, Survivors’ Poetry launched its anthology of poetry by Irish Women living in London, Fresher than Green, Brighter than Orange, in a reading to a rapt audience on Wednesday 10th March. This was followed by a launch party in the cafe downstairs - enjoyed by all!

On Friday 12th March four young women took the stage (most of them for the first time) to read poems to a small audience in the theatre at the Diorama.

(continued on page 2)

NEW GROUPS IN LONDON

As a result of our participation in The Word, new survivor poetry groups are going to spring up like daisies across London. If you have been considering joining a workshop please make sure you are on our mailing list or call Alison Smith for details of what might be happening in your area.
The reading was powerful and very moving and Survivors’ Poetry hopes to host additional performances by these women in future months.

We ended our series of events with a morning workshop, on Saturday 13th March, facilitated by poet and novelist Martina Evans. We were exploring ways in which we experienced the women’s exhibition Her Space and writing poetry about it. It was a beautiful spring morning and although the sun was calling we stayed and wrote. Everyone involved seemed to get a lot out of it and the poems were wonderful.

All in all the festival was a great success. The anthology Fresher than Green, Brighter than Orange has been selling very well and many of the Irish women published in its pages are planning to keep in contact with each other and with Survivors’ Poetry. Watch this space for future events and readings by these women, perhaps in a book shop near you or Somers Town in the near future. Do buy the book, it is a wonderfully diverse collection, priced at only £2.95, available from Survivors’ Poetry.

To follow, Kathleen O’Sullivan (one of the contributors) tells us her story, how she came to write poetry and her joy at being involved in Fresher than Green, Brighter than Orange.

Even during an intense period of writing during my mid-late twenties, I felt I could not write poetry. I thought of it as a cryptic, encoded or elite form of expression and one that I was excluded from. I was completely taken by surprise in February when I found myself so drawn to a leaflet in a Whitechapel bookshop that asked ‘Is your poetry Fresher than Green, Brighter than Orange?’ The reference to my Irish roots compelled me to consider the opportunity to write something that spoke about my pride of being an Irish woman, the nature of my greatest influence - my Irish mother and how cultural differences between Ireland and England have shaped my perception since childhood.

I had a deadline of one week to get some work together and submit it. I have no idea how or why the words flowed so easily. It was as if they were already written somewhere in my subconscious. A few days after submission I received a phone call from Eamer O’Keeffe to say that three out of the four poems I had contributed would be used. To say I was thrilled does not describe how I felt as I phoned everyone I have ever known in my life (and some who didn’t know me at all) to tell them what had happened. (Plus I had spoken to a ‘real life’ poet. Eamer handled my excited jabbering like a ... true born Irish woman). When I knew I was involved I had quite a few pangs of unworthiness. As I have said the poetry “popped out” unceremoniously and I felt it was in someway fraudulent. A friend reassured me: “Kathleen, you have written something about your childhood. That did not take you half an hour. It took you half an hour and thirty-five years.”

Meeting the other contributors was a great honour. I found their different styles of expression very moving and exhilarating. I still could not believe I was part of such a body of talent.

The day of the public reading found me extremely nervous. My partner received many garbled phone calls throughout the day. I cried, I begged to be let off, I promised I would never write poetry again and I did not know what had possessed me to do so in the first place. With my partner’s support and that of my friends and dear sons, (who proudly told teachers and friends of mums accomplishment) I arrived at the Diorama Arts Centre. The foyer looked so beautiful. Our framed poetry impressively flanking the cream walls under bold stencilled green and orange lettering, which read ‘fresher than green, brighter than orange’. I had an overwhelming Colours of Youth. (from left to right) Tabitha Draper, Karen Elliott and Victoria Beresford. (Claire Taylor also took part)
sense of pride in the whole project, especially seeing copies of the book in this setting.
It was clear as each poet arrived that a sense of excitement and calm anticipation replaced nerves or any feeling of dread. We had belief in ourselves now and in each other. Ann Dalton’s soothing tones between each reading made for a seamless performance. I was last to read and had anticipated that my wait to go on might feel endless. This was not the case. I was more and more encouraged as each reader gave her best. The time passed quickly. For me, the pacing of the poetry from the line up worked perfectly.
In a thank you note to Lisa Boardman, I said I had been helped in delivering my “first born” poetry into a supportive and vibrant environment. I sang with sheer delight after the show and a friend of mine, Goretti Anglim - along with her daughter Sorcha, played traditional Irish music on the flute. Certain of the other poets sang and danced also. I saw a ‘Comic Relief’ report recently in which a female survivor of the most appalling circumstances and tragedy said that having survived she lived to be “alive, alive”. In other words, alive joyfully. I echo those words and survive to experience alive and joyful occasions, such as being a poet for the day.
Kathleen O’Sullivan
London Charity Fair 1999
~ 20th, 21st and 22nd April 1999
Survivors’ Poetry will this year be taking part in the 1999 Charity Fair at the Business Design Centre in Islington, London, organised by Directory of Social Change. We will have a small stand at the fair on 20th and 21st April. The fair is the largest learning and networking forum for everyone involved with the voluntary sector - from funders, to fundraisers, volunteers to marketeers, senior managers to junior ministers. With over 150 workshops, seminars and debates, 120 organisations offering advice and services, and 11,000 people attending, Charityfair helps the voluntary sector get informed, get involved and get ahead. If you would be interested in attending or would like to volunteer to help for a few hours on our stall please call Alison Smith on 0171 916 5317.

The Oxford Poetry Chronicle - A new magazine
by Nancy Francis

Ever since I began writing poetry about five years ago I have found that many other like-minded souls also write poetry for one of the reasons that I do. It helps! When I was at university I went through some difficult times and writing my thoughts and fears down seemed to enable me to put things into perspective and gradually get my life back together. I’m not saying that it was some miracle cure but it was like my own private counselling and I really needed that.
Starting The Oxford Poetry Chronicle has allowed me to use my knowledge and awareness of those difficult times and give something back to all those people who are still going through them or who have reached the other side like I have.
O.P.C is a grant-based magazine trying to generate more interest in poetry and creative writing in and around the country. We have received backing from The Prince’s Youth Business Trust, Oxford City Council and Lloyds Bank and have been short-listed in the Livewire New Business of the Year competition. The magazine is full of all sorts of new ideas including news, reviews, features, interviews, music, creative writing and of course poetry. I would like to publish some survivors poetry and perhaps interview a couple of people, hear their stories, for a series of articles that we will be doing over the coming months. The aim of these features is to illustrate the beneficial qualities of poetry and how writing your thoughts and fears down really can make a difference.
If you are interested in being a part of this then please contact Nancy Francis (Editor), Oxford Poetry Chronicle, S.A.S.A. Publishing, 33 Atkyns Road, Wood Farm, Oxford, Oxon OX3 8RA or tel/fax 01865 742056.

Editorial
Survivors’ Poetry Newsletter is a quarterly publication. It’s purpose is to publicise events and activities organised by Survivors’ Poetry and by Survivor-led Poetry groups all over the country. Please send us articles, small features and events listings about your group or about anything that you think may be of interest to our readers. Work should be typed or on disc. We cannot guarantee publication and the editor reserves the right to edit any contributions. No more than 500 words. No poetry please. The views expressed in this publication are not necessarily the views of Survivors’ Poetry.
Next copy deadline for SP Summer Update is May 14th ‘99 and for the next SP Newsletter (July/August/September issue) 18th June ‘99
Designed and edited by Lisa Boardman (Information Worker)
These are the words of artists Philip Baird and Philip Hodgetts who have received a Mind Millennium Award to hold their first major exhibition at St Martin-in-the-Fields Gallery in Trafalgar Square.

The exhibition, More Than Just a Label, will feature paintings, prints, drawings and carvings reflecting their personal struggle with mental illness. Both are accomplished artists who have exhibited widely and have won various awards.

"MENTAL ILLNESS DOES NOT MEAN STAGNATION…"

The exhibition will run from the 18th -29th May and on Sunday 23rd May at 3pm there will be an afternoon performance in co-operation with Survivors’ Poetry entitled More than Just Poetry followed by a private view.

Admission is free but by invitation only - please call Survivors’ Poetry on 0171 916 5317 if you would like an invitation.

All other enquirers to Philip Baird on 0181 469 3293

Steve Hennessy on Radio 4

Steve Hennessy of Bristol Survivors’ Poetry is currently recording his second play for radio at the BBC studios. The Secret of Fire (45 mins), directed by Michael Fox in Manchester will be broadcast on Friday April 30th, 2.15pm on BBC Radio 4. Although rooted deeply in Greek mythology, "The Secret of Fire" depicts a modern world where computers offer both the instrument of abuse and the opportunity for salvation. Don’t miss it!!!

An Open Hand Open Space event in Reading.

MIND THE GAP: A HAPPENING AT THE KEEP
The Keep, Brocks Barracks, 571 Oxford Road, Reading Friday 23rd April 1999, 7.30pm
This evening of poetry and music hosted by Jenny Parke will draw on inspiration arising out of the main theme of Jenny's exhibition of sculpture: construction from destruction. There is a strong psychological and family connection in the work. The venue is a converted armory (or Keep). It is currently a centre for artists to create and exhibit their work which it is hoped will develop with funding into a community arts centre.

For further information contact Jenny Parkes on 0118 959 7752 or Steve Walter on 01892 530438

Maldon in Writing

THE ESSEX GIRLS POETRY COLLECTIVE PRESENT MALDON IN WRITING
‘An evening with handbags’ at The MootHall, High Street, Maldon, Essex.
On 9th April 1999, 7.30pm start. The Essex Girls Poetry collective will be promoting their group and publication of their new anthology Handbag Two. They will be performing poetry in this historic venue in order to further promote their town of Maldon. In addition they are planning a reading in a local library on 17th April and a workshop on the 24th April.

For further information contact Gill Burgoyne on 01621 850704.

Poetry at the Pushkin Club

Survivors’ Poetry will soon be publishing the first book length translation into English of the poetry of Russian survivor poet, Nikolai Gumilyov - called The Pillar of Fire, it introduces the work of this significant poet who died tragically young, the first of many writers to suffer such a fate after the Bolshevik revolution.

There will be a series of launch events including two readings by poet and translator Richard McKane and Michael Basker of Bristol University who has written the Introduction to The Pillar of Fire. One will take place at the Pushkin Club on Tuesday 11th May (Pushkin House, 46, Ladbroke Grove, London W11 4AP, tel 0171 221-1981) and the other on Tuesday 13th July at the Ways With Words festival at Dartington in Devon.

Kazi Nazrul Islam - The Rebel Poet

Survivors’ Poetry are producing a resource/teachers pack comprising of six posters, accompanied by teachers notes, on the poetry of Kazi Nazrul Islam (1899 - 1976). The poems are translated by poet and story-writer Debjani Chatterjee, who is producing notes for teachers, community workers or any reader who wishes to know more about the man and his writing. Nazrul, a great Indian writer and Bangladesh’s national poet is also a giant of world literature. ‘The Rebel’ and other stirring poems on freedom earned him his title ‘The Rebel Poet’. His poetry inspired the freedom movements of India and Bangladesh. Most of his poems and songs were composed in the 1920’s and 30’s. Many champion the rights of women and the poor. Nazrul fell ill in 1942 and spent some time in mental hospitals. After 34 years of silence, he died in Bangladesh in August 1976. His powerful music and poetry continues to inspire millions. 1999 marks the centenary of the poet's birth and we will be celebrating the launch of our poster set on his birthday, 24th May, in a London venue (to be confirmed). More information to follow in a future issue.

NEWS FROM THE GROUPS

"MENTAL ILLNESS DOES NOT MEAN STAGNATION…"
Changes at Somers Town

The start time of our readings at Somerstown will change from Saturday April 24th 1999. This event (and subsequent events) will start at 7.30pm, rather than the usual 8pm. The evening will end at 10pm, and will include a 20 minute to half hour interval. The doors will be open from 7pm. If you would like to do a floorspot please make sure that you sign up between 6.30pm and 7pm. Floorspots are offered on a first come, first served basis and we can not guarantee there will be space for everyone - so get there early!!

January and February

The first Survivors’ Poetry event from Somers Town (the last January event of the twentieth century) was well hosted by Peter Campbell; he introduced Fiona Branson, John Horder and representatives from the Fulham & Chelsea Survivor Poets celebrating the first publication of their magazine Mind the Gap.

February 27th was the occasion for PJ Fahy’s memorial event. Twenty-six poets and musicians paid tribute to our old buddy. The evening was a rousing celebration of so much that PJ stood for: musicianship, both electric and acoustic, and the poetry of the human voice, lyrical and in dynamic performance. Judith Silver and Razz guided us through an event that moved a packed house. PJ himself would have been proud that the tradition he helped forge continues in such good health. He will be fondly remembered - the tradition carries on.

Poetry Cafe Readings

Friday 30th April, Friday 28th May and Friday 25th June

The open readings at the Poetry Cafe are proving ever more popular - they provide a wonderful opportunity for new and more experienced poets to have their work heard in a friendly and supportive atmosphere ... and have a drink or food at the same time. All are welcome - our next evenings are scheduled for Friday 30th April, Friday 28th May and Friday 25th June. All 7.30pm - 11pm book your floorspot on arrival. There is a lift to the lower floor and a wheelchair accessible toilet. Smoking upstairs, non-smoking downstairs. Something for everyone! Poetry Cafe, 22 Betterton Street, WC2 9BU (nearest tube Covent Garden) Admission £2, £1 conc.
LONDON LAPIDUS LAUNCHED

Lapidus exists to promote links between people interested in the connections between the literary arts and personal development. Members include therapists, doctors, academics, workshop leaders but - most importantly - writers of all kinds with an interest in personal development.

The London local group is now up and running and welcomes participants. All meetings are a mixture of short presentations and lively discussion. Writing is often a lonely process so these meetings provide an opportunity to meet others with similar backgrounds.

The next three meetings are scheduled as follows:
22nd May 1999
The relationship between deepening self-knowledge and fictionalised autobiography
21st August 1999
Using fables, myths and legend
20th November 1999
'Betterness' - why do we write?

All between 1.30pm - 4.30pm at the Diorama Arts Centre. There is a charge of £2 for Lapidus members and £3 for non-members to cover room hire and refreshments.

If you would like to attend please call Alison Clayburn at least a week in advance on 0171 231 0243.

The National Depression Campaign

The National Depression Campaign with the backing of the Department of Health, has taken over from the Defeat Depression Campaign. The campaign was previously run by the Royal College of Psychiatrists and General Practitioners for five years, 1992 - 1997. The focus of the new National Depression Campaign is on the public, aiming to reduce stigma by increasing awareness and understanding of depression.

A main part of the campaign’s focus will be centred around the National day, 21st April 1999 and National Week, 19th - 23rd April 1999. The campaign encourages those who may be depressed to seek help. If you would like more information contact: The National Depression Campaign, 35 Westminster Bridge Road, London SE1 7JB, Tel. 0171 207 3293, Fax 0171 633 0559.

Didgiridoo?

If anybody knows of a didgiridoo player who would be interested in taking part in performances of poetry please contact John Horder on 0171 431 0149.

Stop Press! Stop Press!

Set up a black Survivors’ Poetry Group. Are you interested? Open Meeting Tuesday 13th April Diorama 2pm. Ring Alison Smith.

Survivors’ Poetry National Facilitator Training Course July 20th, 21st & 22nd ‘99

GET INTO AGENDA

Agenda poetry magazine (a quarterly) was founded in 1959. It publishes an anthology of new poems at least once a year. Other issues often feature individual poets or are devoted to foreign poetry in translation (we are about to publish a Greek issue and a Japanese one will follow in a year). We welcome submissions (with s.a.e.) but suggest that writers obtain a copy before submitting. We are more interested in work created out of powerful feeling than from cleverness. A subscription costs £24 (4 issues). Students and OAPs can subscribe at the concessionary rate of £18. A single copy costs £5. Submissions and subscriptions should be sent to AGENDA, 5 Cranbourne Court, Albert Bridge Road, London SW11 4PE.

Chilli Pepper Poets Anthology looking for survivors

Ricardo Corvalán of Chilli Pepper Press invites survivors to submit poetry for a new anthology that will place established writers such as Benjamin Zephaniah and Michael St George next to new and unpublished writers. There is no central theme to the anthology but the poetry should reflect the power and bite of a chilli pepper and put the fire back into the belly of poetry. Some likely topics for inclusion are relationships, alienation, political and social issues, cultural and sexual issues and a celebration of the spoken word. No payment but contributors will receive two copies of the anthology.

Send no more than 6 poems with an SAE to: Latin American Writers and Theatre Company, PO Box 430, Cambridge CB1 2UG. Strict closing date of 31st May 1999.

THE NATIONAL DEPRESSION CAMPAIGN

Therapeutic Uses of the Literary Arts - a one day conference

The Centre For Continuing Education University of Sussex in collaboration with Lapidus - The Association For the Literary Arts in Personal Development call for papers for a one day conference to be held at the University of Sussex on Saturday 3rd July 1999. For enquiries call (01273) 678040.
London New Writing Competition
“Rites of Spring”
Closing date Friday 28th May 1999.
The London Arts Board is again delighted to have Fourth Estate as its publishing partner for this, its fourth new writing competition, and to welcome as partners The Word (London Festival of Literature) and the literature development agency Spread the Word, who are co-hosting the tie-in creative writing workshops.
We are inviting entries of up to 7,000 words which may be stories, or self-contained parts of longer works of fiction.
For more information and an entry form send an SAE to: “London New Writing Competition”, London Arts Board, Elme House, 133 Long Acre, London WC2E 9AF.

Sycamore Press Poetry Prize
1st prize £100, 2nd Prize £50, 3rd Prize £25. Anthology of shortlisted and other selected entries will be published. Closing date 30th April 1999. Poems of any length on any subject. £2.50 for the 1st poem (£2 each poem thereafter up to three per entrant). There may be special award for long poems and experimental poems (depending on the number of entries).
Enter forms and rules from GFK, 39 Oransay Close, Sycamore Grove, Northampton, NN3 9HF.

Lancaster LitFest Poetry Competition 1999.
Judge: Jo Shapcott
Closing date: 1st June 1999.
Poets can win cash prizes, publication, and a chance to read at a literary festival if they enter Lancaster LitFest’s 22nd annual poetry competition. Copies of the rules for the competition are now available, and can be obtained by sending an SAE to Lancaster LitFest (Poetry Competition) at Sun Street Studios, 23 - 29 Sun Street, Lancaster, LA1 1EW

Looking for Survivors
A call for thoughts, reflections, poems etc., written by those who have been left behind after a loved one, a relative, or a friend has committed suicide.
Survivors in partnership with Altered States, AfCa, the NSF, and with the support of the Mental Health Resource Centre and Mindlink are compiling a short anthology of these writings for publication. An introduction and conclusion may also be included exploring the issues surrounding suicide for other users and for carers.
The working title for this anthology is ‘Unfinished Moments’. Please forward any writings to Survivors at the following address:
Survivors (‘Unfinished Moments’), The Rectory Centre, Rectory Road, Oxford, OX4 1BU.
Any donations towards this project would be gratefully welcomed. Cheques should be made out to ‘Altered States’ and any monies remaining after the completion of the project will be used to arrange a day of poetry workshops in Oxford run by Survivors’ Poetry in the Autumn of 1999. Any further remaining monies will be donated to organisations whose specific focus is on suicide prevention and on support groups set up for those who are left behind after suicide. Please forward any writings by 1st July 1999

Victoria Moves On
Victoria writes… I will be leaving my post as Director of Survivors’ Poetry in April after an extraordinary year. So much has happened since last April that it would be impossible to single out any one event as the most significant. Our public events such as the seminars, the packed Women in Focus festival and appearances at various literary festivals clearly increase our impact in the outside world, but, equally important have been the many phone calls we receive from survivors beginning to write and finding encouragement from local groups or our anthologies. And although sometimes we can feel that we are getting bogged down in bureaucracy, it has always been apparent to me that the work of Survivors’ Poetry is very much about what it means to be human, to express the truth and to hear the voices of people so often silenced by society or circumstances.
I will certainly be staying involved and encourage you to do so also - join a workshop, form a local group, use our resource centre - above all read and write poems and spread the word……
“The value of Survivors’ Poetry is that it offers our experience a valid vehicle for expression. It gives people the chance to claim back some of the dignity and self-respect previously taken from them.” ~ A Survivor ~

Mailing Parties Dates
Thursday 20th May
Thursday 1st July
We are looking for volunteers who would be willing to help stuff envelopes at our Newsletter Mailing Parties. These parties are an enjoyable social occasion as well helping us to reach as many survivors as possible throughout the UK. They are held every six weeks, at The Diorama Arts Centre (see address on back). Travel expenses are paid, a light buffet provided. 4.30pm - 7pm. Ring Lisa Boardman on 0171 916 5317 to let us know that you will be coming. Thank you.

Volunteers Wanted
We are currently developing a volunteer programme. We are interested to receive CV’s from people who would like to help Survivors’ Poetry. We are looking for people to help administratively in the office and/or at our events. Please send your CV to Clare Douglas, with a note about how you would like to contribute to the work of Survivors’ Poetry. You can ring Clare on 0171 916 5317 if you would like more information.

Introducing Alistair Brinkley, the Somerstown Performance Co-ordinator.
If you are going to Somerstown for the first time and want to do a floor spot this is the man you need to talk to!!!