

## Welcome to the November Newsletter!

For a month that is known for cold weather and dark afternoons, Ringwood has definitely found this November to be a warm and cheerful one— full of events and exciting new things!

### Book Week Scotland

By Rosie Hall

November in Scotland means only one thing... and no, we're not talking about the sun setting at 3pm!

We are, of course, talking about Book Week Scotland, which ran from the 13<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> November this year, and included a host of fantastic literary events that happened up and down the country. Ringwood was delighted to hold two events as part of Book Week Scotland this year – our Historical Fiction panel, and a final launch event for *The Bone on the Beach*.

The first event, *Writing Historical Fiction: Forgotten Voices*, was a celebration of historical fiction in the form of a fascinating panel discussion between some of Ringwood's finest historical fiction writers.



Rob McInroy, L.A. Kristiansen and Flora Johnston joined Ringwood intern Emma Clarke on a dreich Monday night in the wonderful independent bookshop Typewronger – along with *Bodysnatcher* author, Carol Margaret Davison, beaming in virtually from Canada. We had a fantastic evening hearing the authors read from their books and discuss their approach to writing historical fiction, their research methods, and how they go about discovering the hidden voices of history in their work.



A big thank you to everyone who made it along, to all the authors who spoke, and to Typewronger for hosting us once again!

Our second event on Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> November was our final launch event for *The Bone on the Beach*. This event was made possible through

funding from Book Week Scotland and a collaboration with the Arlington Baths, our beautiful historic venue for the evening.

Author, Fiona Gillan Kerr, enchanted the audience with readings from the book, as well as stories behind its creation and her writing process.



We were once again joined by Ailsa Morgan, Gaelic student at the University of Glasgow, to chat about the Highland language, culture and life in the book.



A big thank you to Ailsa, Book Week Scotland, the Arlington Baths staff, and everyone who made it along to this event – we had a wonderful time and it was the perfect finale to our series of events for *The Bone on the Beach*!

Missed our Book Week Scotland events and want to catch up? You're in luck! Both events were livestreamed on Facebook and so are available to watch back. Just pop on over to Ringwood's Facebook page where you can find the stream recordings under 'Live videos', or find the Historical Fiction Event [here](#) and the Fiona Gillian Kerr event [here](#).

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### **Final Call: Short Story Competition**

by Megan Gibson



It's the final call for those looking to enter Ringwood's 2023 Short Story Competition!

Do you have a story you feel needs heard? Do you have a project you've been looking to put out there? Do you want an opportunity to get that writing brain ticking? Just want to give it a go? Then we want you!

Ringwood's annual Short Story Competition is open to all writers over the age of 16. Regardless of age, ethnic origin, gender identity or sexual orientation, we want to hear your unique voice, and give everybody the opportunity to share their creative side.

The competition has a whopping £100 prize for first place, as well as

publication on our website. Runners-up will also be formally acknowledged on our social media pages and published on our website.

With an entry fee of just £2 and a 3000-word limit, why not give it a go? Why not give it a couple of gos! Participants may enter as many times as they want.

Please visit our [website](#) for more details, or please send your submissions directly to: [submissions@ringwoodpublishing.com](mailto:submissions@ringwoodpublishing.com) along with a cover letter.

We look forward to seeing what you submit - good luck!

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**Get to Know Our Interns: Stewart Porter**

by Margaret Mitchell



## **Tell us about your background**

I've been with Ringwood for about six months now, starting in April or so. One of my cousins had interned with Ringwood and recommended it; I thought it would be good to get a foot in the door of the industry. I'm in my third year of a combined degree at Glasgow University in Comparative Literature and Scottish Literature right now. In Comparative Literature we're currently looking at the differences in cultures and how they help shape an identity both of the country and the individual. In Scottish Literature we are exploring the definition of "Scottish Literature" itself; What is Scottish writing as a genre, is it simply English writing only with Scottish dialect and Scottish words? In what way does it represent Scotland? *Trainspotting* is a really good example because it's so tongue in cheek and gritty. It shows the experience of the working class. Another example is the writing in the TV show, *Chewin' the Fat*. Scottish writing is slightly more focused on the little guy and on being a bit cheeky. Scottish writing can get overlooked and underappreciated; Ringwood is doing its bit to try to reverse that.

## **What are your favourite books/genres?**

I'm interested in myths across different civilisations and cultures, like Joseph Campbell's research finding the same myths pop up in every culture across the world. They all have the same theme which is the 'hero's journey'. When Star Wars came out, he said that this is the perfect example of the hero's journey he had outlined but in a science fiction context for modern audiences. I read a fair bit of fantasy and science fiction, most science fiction based in the Warhammer 40,000 universe. It's interesting how the writer creates a 'world' and then has the protagonist challenge that world to better it.

## **What are/have been your roles at Ringwood?**

Mostly editing and report writing; Mostly Stage 1 and Stage 2 Reports which examine the manuscript in increasing detail. These Reports cover the whole range of questions. Does the manuscript work as a story, are there parts of the story that should be expanded or edited out? Do other aspects stand out like narrative continuity errors, spelling mistakes,



grammatical problems? On top of this, I am also the Support Worker for Alex Gordon's two sports memoirs *A Raccoon Stole My Thunder* and *Jinx Dog Burns Now Flu*. I really enjoy all of this work. I've also helped out with some Ringwood seminars and events. The Ringwood events that I have been to have been great and everyone seem genuinely nice. I'd like to go to more. Sandy (one of Ringwood's four executive directors) asked me to be the photographer at events, I think because I have a camera! So I do a bit of photography at these events when I can get there. Since Ringwood is a remote working company, I really value meeting other interns and senior staff at book launches, and other outreach events.

**What do you enjoy most about publishing and working at Ringwood?**

I'd like to stay working here because I do like the manuscript work and writing the Reports. I like to think I'm quite good at giving other people small ideas to improve a manuscript. So my goals for my future and career are to stay in this industry and maybe concentrate on the critical analytic work with raw manuscripts and seeing that process through to book publication.

**What would you like to see more of in the Scottish Publishing industry?**

I'd like to see more small, unknown authors get a chance to get their creativity out there. I've been with Ringwood for enough time to begin to understand just how much work is required for a manuscript to be considered for publication. There's been a few drafts that I've read or reported on that I think are great and I'd really love to see those authors get the praise and attention they deserve!

**Thank you for your time, Stewart!**

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**People's Book Prize**

by Rosie Hall



Earlier in the year, Ringwood was delighted to nominate three of our titles for the People's Book Prize. The voting process opened last month, and remains open for you to vote for your favourite Ringwood books from this year!

In the Fiction category, we have Carol Margaret Davison's *Bodysnatcher*, a darkly haunting retelling of the real story of Burke and Hare through the eyes of Nelly, Burke's common-law wife.

Also in the Fiction category, we have Fiona Gillan Kerr's *The Bone on the Beach*, a spellbinding mystery and ghost story set in the modern Highlands that tells the ancient Celtic myth of Deirdre of the Sorrows for the modern reader.

In the Non-Fiction category, we have Brendan McLaughlin's *The First of May*, a stirring memoir that weaves together the author's passion for political activism, music and storytelling, set in his native Glasgow.

Loved *Bodysnatcher*, *The First of May* or *The Bone on the Beach*? [Support the author by casting your vote now!](#)

## November Podcast Recap

by Jiyuan Li



We are two months into Season two of [the Ringwood Publishing Podcast](#), which is now on its final lap! In November, hosts Matilda Eker and Jess Court released three new episodes, marking the end of the second season of the podcast. In case you've missed it– the podcast aims to present the various aspects of all things books and publishing with new guests each week, so don't miss out on this month's fruitful episodes!

Joining us in the first episode was award-winning crime fiction writer, Rob McNroy, who chatted with us about how historical fiction resonates, and shared with us his top tips for writing. You also get to catch a sneak peak of Rob's upcoming novel, *Moot*, as part of his Bob Kelty series following *Cuddies Stripand Barossa Street*.

Coming up next was our lovely chat with Laura Hunter, Ringwood's multi-talented social media manager, who shared with us how she enjoys her role at Ringwood alongside her work at the Society of Young Publishers.

In the last episode of the season, we were joined by award-winning short story writer and novelist, Mark Gallacher, with whom we discussed his novel, *Saved from the Fire*, and his inspirations and top writing tips.

However, while season two ends, we still have more in stock for you this year, so keep an eye out for an exclusive Christmas Special.

As usual, you can catch up on us on [Apple Podcasts](#), [Spotify](#), or wherever you get your podcasts, and don't forget to subscribe and stay tuned for season three!

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## **Celebrating Leela Soma Event**

by Matilda Eker

On Sunday the 19th, we had our last event of the year: our *Celebrating Leela Soma* Event. There was a good turnout of people, and our lovely panel guests, Mridula Sharma (previous Ringwood Intern), Isobel Freeman (Ringwood Chief Editor), Anne Pettigrew (Ringwood Author), and Anjana Sen (poet and Secretary of the Scottish Association of Writers), all had a lot of insight into Leela's work and shared some wonderful stories.



Matilda Eker and Isobel Freeman



Anne Pettigrew, Anjana Sen, and Mridula Sharma

Intern Matilda Eker, who was chairing the event, opened with a tribute to Leela, which can be read on our [website](#). Then, Mridula, who oversaw Ringwood's 2023 Mela Events and worked as Leela's support intern for a time in 2021, spoke for a few minutes about Leela's book *Murder at the Mela* and its social and political commentary. Following that, Anjana did a wonderful reading from one of the first chapters of the book, after which the panel discussion kicked off with Anjana and Anne telling us about their close friendships with Leela.



We spoke about Leela's novel *Murder at the Mela*, with Isobel telling us about her first encounter with the novel when it was originally submitted to

Ringwood as a manuscript and sharing some insight into its editing process. The panel also considered the crime genre's suitability for discussing about issues of racism and prejudice, and Anne drew on her own experience as a crime writer.



After the discussion, Anjana read out another excerpt from *Murder at the Mela*, which was followed by some wonderful audience questions about the possibility of another writer taking on the sequel to Leela's detective novel and about Leela's depiction of different Glasgow communities.

All in all, it was a successful event that gave members of both the panel and the audience a chance to celebrate and remember Leela Soma, and the immense legacy she left behind. Find the [full recording](#) of the event on our Facebook page or read the tribute to Leela [here](#).

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### **Attention: Ringwood's Christmas Offers Are Now Live!**

by Laura Hunter

If you haven't seen them on our website yet, Ringwood's festive offers are now live! From thrilling true crime to the perfect guide to plan long walks in the new year, here's a full list of our deals and bundles that will make



the perfect presents for yourself and your loved ones.

We have three '2 For £15' bundles to choose from:

- [The Ringwood Irish Connection Double](#): Get copies of both Brian McHugh's *The Practice Field* and Seán Damer's *Those Tyrannising Landlord's* for just £15 (plus P&P) – the perfect bundle for those who love reading historical and political Irish fiction featuring distinct Irish narratives.
- [The Ringwood Historical Fiction Double](#): Do you know someone who loves historical fiction? Don't know what to get them for Christmas? Not to worry – we're offering both Flora Johnston's *What You Call Free* and L. A. Kristiansen's *Raise Dragon* for just £15 (plus P&P)!
- [The Ringwood Glasgow Crime Double](#): Leela Soma's *Murder at the Mela*, and Charles P. Sharkey's *Clutching at Straws* will make any crime fiction lover thrilled to receive this bundle under the tree! And all for just £15 (P&P).

Check out our four 'Buy 1 Get 1 Half-Price' author bundles:

- [Buy Embers, Get Inference Half-Price](#): This Stephanie McDonald bundle gets you two of her novels for £15 (plus P&P) – the perfect gift for lovers of thrillers, sprinkled with romance and filled with suspense!
- [Buy Sheila Garvie: Mastermind or Victim, Get Liberation Half-Price](#): These two A. M. Nicol's titles are perfect for readers of true crime that delves deeper into some of Scotland's darkest cases. Grab this bundle for yourself, or for a loved one this Christmas for £15 (plus P&P).
- [Buy A Raccoon Stole My Thunder, Get Jinx Dogs Burns Now Flu Half-Price](#): Why not grab Alex Gordon's tell all book and its highly anticipated sequel for just £15 (plus P&P) this Christmas. Avid sports fans looking to discover the full story behind Scotland's biggest sporting stars and their headlines will love this bundle!
- [Buy Cuddies Strip, Get Barossa Street Half-Price](#): Rob McInroy's thrilling historical crime novel and its sequel are only £15 (plus P&P)

this festive period – the perfect bundle to get started on before the third novel in his series comes out!

Other bundle offers:

- [Ringwood True Crime Offer: \*Ruxton\*, \*The Lanarkshire Police Chronicles\* & \*Cuddies Strip\*](#): This bundle, usually worth just under £30, is down to just £22.50 (plus P&P)! Though *Cuddies Strip* is fiction, all three titles reflect on real historical Scottish crimes - perfect for lovers of true crime.
- [\*A Guide to the Geology of Islay Volume 1 & 2\*](#): Treat yourself and your loved ones this Christmas, and plan your 2024 walks with both volumes of David Webster's guides of Islay, Jura and Colonsay for £25 (plus P&P)! Take your hikes to the next level and enjoy scenic walks well outside of the usual Glasgow routes, whether you go yourself or with some loving company.

We also have four titles reduced from £9.99 to just £7.50 (plus P&P):

- [\*Saved from the Fire\*](#) by Mark Gallacher is the perfect anthology for all dystopian and sci-fi lovers this Christmas!
- [\*Those Tyrannising Landlords\*](#) by Seán Damer explores strained relationships and family dynamics during a period of great historical changes for a first-generation Irish family who have relocated to Glasgow in 1912.
- [\*The Practice Field\*](#) by Brian McHugh is perfect if you know someone who loves books about espionage, crime or Irish history, and you're looking for an original and gripping title to gift them this Christmas.
- [\*Everyday Magic\*](#) by Charlie Laidlaw is a delightful and highly praised modern retelling of Dickens's *A Christmas Carol*, and the perfect gift for a loved one this year!

Ringwood's audiobook [\*Ruxton: The First Modern Murder\*](#) by Tom Woods has also been knocked down from £9.99 to £7.50! Once purchased, the audiobook will be sent straight to your email where it can be downloaded onto your preferred device for easy listening!

*The First of May* by Brendan McLaughlin is also down from £12.99 to £10 (plus P&P), and to sweeten the deal, this offer comes with not just one, but TWO free CDs! McLaughlin's title is an autobiography that addresses Glasgow's contemporary concerns and political, social, and cultural issues – however it is also interwoven with uplifting coming of age tales and Brendan's life adventures. Gift someone this mesmerising deal this Christmas.

And last, but definitely not least, you can purchase Charlie Laidlaw's eBook *The Time Between Space* via [amazon.co.uk](https://www.amazon.co.uk) or Kindle Store for £3.99, down from £5.99! This deal will continue out-with the Christmas period, so enjoy this uplifting read on the device of your choosing for this newly reduced price.

So what are you waiting for? Most of our deals are exclusive to this festive period, and will expire at the end of the month, so don't miss out! You can find all of our deals [here](#).

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### **Meeting the Managers: Isobel Freeman**

by Margaret Mitchell

*The third in our Newsletter series, Meeting the Managers, Margaret Mitchell spoke with Isobel Freeman, one of the members of the four person Ringwood Publishing Executive Group.*



Isobel Freeman is very well known to Ringwood authors and Interns. Sandy Jamieson and Isobel started the company as a small operation many years ago and together they have continued to develop it into the thriving publisher that Ringwood is today. Isobel became interested in publishing quite simply because of her love of books and reading. Within the company, she delights in reading new manuscripts which should be

promoted and pushed forward, and enjoys the essence of editing which is to “understand what the author is saying, and help make sure they say it clearly”. Over the years, reviewing manuscripts, editing, working with authors and marketing the books largely fell to Sandy and Isobel. However, now with the number and calibre of interns, these responsibilities are primarily carried out by Interns with Isobel being “responsive and available” when support is needed. As a strong supporter of Ringwood’s Intern model, she sees that her role, and the role of the company, is to nurture the young people who volunteer their time. To prepare for their career, she ensures the Interns experience a realistic workplace reflecting all aspects of publishing from the raw manuscript to marketing the finished books.

She encourages interns to “focus on what [they] need from the internship and to balance that with the company’s needs.” Ringwood’s responsibility, she believes, is to “facilitate interns to do what they can, and this is as important, if not more important, than the actual production of books.” Such is her trust in the interns’ abilities, she argues that Ringwood authors are “lucky— they get eager, newly trained young people editing their writing! Maybe my role is to mediate, when needed, between the author and the editing team.” This year, Ringwood commenced a strategy of attracting ‘mature mentors’, such as Christine McCrosson and Donny McIntyre, people with proven success in their professional field, who can also nurture and mentor the interns. Isobel sees this as an important step into the future, broadening the support that interns can access.

Reflecting on Ringwood titles and other novels, Isobel is intrigued by the contexts of these stories. She is keen on crime novels for this reason because they tend to tell so much about the setting. “If I am going to visit somewhere I will read a crime novel about that place. I really liked Leela Soma’s *Murder at the Mela* because it told me so much about Glasgow, and reflected my own familiarity with Glasgow. That’s also true for Flora Johnston’s story of the Covenanters, *What You Call Free*, which is set in the Pentland Hills, and the narrow passageways of Edinburgh. The day after Flora presented at one of our outreach events, I walked in the Pentlands, a place I have been to many times, but this time I thought about the story and the new perspective it gave me.” Isobel notes that Val McDermid also takes time to describe the community at length in her

stories; and re-reading Ian Rankin in the proper order, she found, formed a gripping history of Scotland and history of Edinburgh quite aside from the plot.

Ringwood is further developing its outreach strategies: “I already think the discussions in the Newsletter and the Podcast are excellent and I would like to see a much higher readership and listening audience for them ... If you'd asked me three years ago whether we should do a Podcast, I'd have said 'oh no, we don't want to do that. That'll take up time!' But I see that these are important contributions providing intriguing contexts for our books.” Isobel is excited by other outreach possibilities into the future.

“For me, holding events in Hillhead Library or Leith Library or even Arlington Baths in Glasgow has been very, very good. And we do seem to have built up a bit of a following, especially at Hillhead Library. It's not something I envisaged happening at all! We have the opportunity to diversify beyond the book launches, successful though these are, to holding events where there is a deeper analysis of the books, and their setting.” For instance, Carol Margaret Davison's *Bodysnatcher*, is set in Edinburgh. In June, Ringwood held a public 'Walk and Talk' event where Carol led participants through the backstreets of Edinburgh to illustrate the 'untold story of Burke and Hare.' More recently, following the very successful Short Story Seminar at Hillhead Library on 22nd October and in view of Ringwood's Short Story Competition, “Donny (McIntyre) suggested setting up a writers' support group, which we could do. I'd like to see where these ideas take us. We have shown the capacity to run high quality events, and this is mostly due to our talented and energetic interns.”

As a main backbone of Ringwood, Isobel welcomes the new Executive Group structure, equally sharing corporate responsibilities with Donny McIntyre, Christine McCrosson and, of course, Sandy Jamieson. Isobel's dedication to developing interns and to producing high quality original Scottish titles is obvious. However, her respect for her colleagues and her admiration for Ringwood's interns creates a working culture that makes her a pleasure to work with.

**Thank you for your time, Isobel!**



Until next time,

Matilda Eker & Megan Gibson (Editors), Jiyuan Li & Margaret Mitchell  
(Assistant Editors), and the entire Ringwood team!

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our website [www.ringwoodpublishing.com](http://www.ringwoodpublishing.com).*