

Washed Up and Blue

Stories of ocean journeys,
told through cyanotype
photograms and creative
writing

The cyanotype photographic prints and creative written texts in this booklet were created by Dawn Dickson, Helen MARIA, Leon Buckley-Jones and William Niven, who participated in the *Washed Up and Blue* programme at Shambellie House (and at Southernness beach) over 4 days in January and February 2025.

The programme was a collaboration between Shambellie House, the Solway Firth partnership and the University of Glasgow.



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Washed Up and Blue

Washed Up and Blue is a collective exploration of objects that wash up on the Solway shores and the movements and migrations that bring them to us, using images, objects and words.

The pieces are inspired by objects collected by the artists, including seaweed and feathers, mermaid's purses and shoreline plants, but also manmade objects such as fragments of nylon rope and net, sea glass and pirate glass, shotgun cartridges and other marine plastics

By juxtaposing the natural and the synthetic, in colours that themselves recall the marine environment, we hope to stimulate new thinking about both aesthetic beauty and our relationship with our planet.

As you explore the images and written texts in the following pages, you are invited to perceive them as multi-layered stories, woven from materials found on the Solway shore and the imaginations of their creators.

Each piece speaks in different ways, evoking thoughts of the ocean, or far-away, exotic lands, or long ago times. Collectively, the works that make up *Washed Up and Blue* initiate a dialogue in which *you* make the next move.

Will you recall the sense of peace and stillness that can come when we stand on the shore in the grey morning light, looking over the silvery sands of the Solway?



Early morning on the Solway shore at Southernness © Anna Wilson

Or perhaps the sounds of families on the beach in summer? Or the smell of salt air and seaweed?

Will you reflect on the journeys through time and space that bring plants, birds and animals, but also frayed ropes and tangled nets, broken fishing gear, gloves, shoes, bottle tops and plastic toys to our shores?

Or will these pictures and words remind you of other stories of ocean voyages – stories of heroes, stow-aways or cast-aways; storms and monsters; and the impossible dream of returning home.

Artist: Dawn Dickson



Three feathers

Three feathers. What does it mean? Glass? Bullet? Bones? How did all this end up on a beach?

Look, some seaweed - that's more like it.

Do I see people playing golf on a beach? But still all the other things!

One piece of glass looks different ... let me look closer ... yes it is. How old could you be?

Internet ... yes, let's look ... it's pirate glass! I can't believe it. In the sea for so long, with all the shells and seaweed.

How nutty is that?



shipwreck

sails

skull and bones

figures running back and forth

wooden ship, dark omen.

land ahoy!

seagulls at last, caves and sand

5 years at sea, maybe the last time

rocks

shipwreck

all washed up on the beach

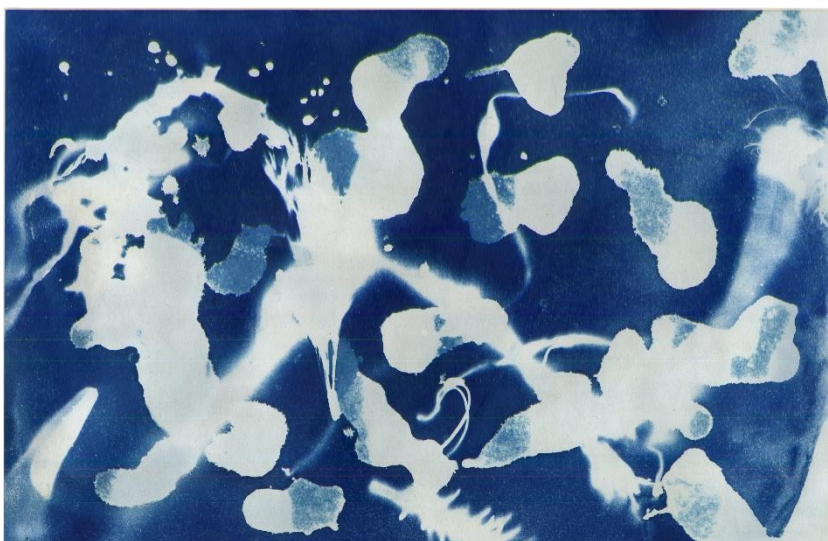
glass wood rubbish

who will find this

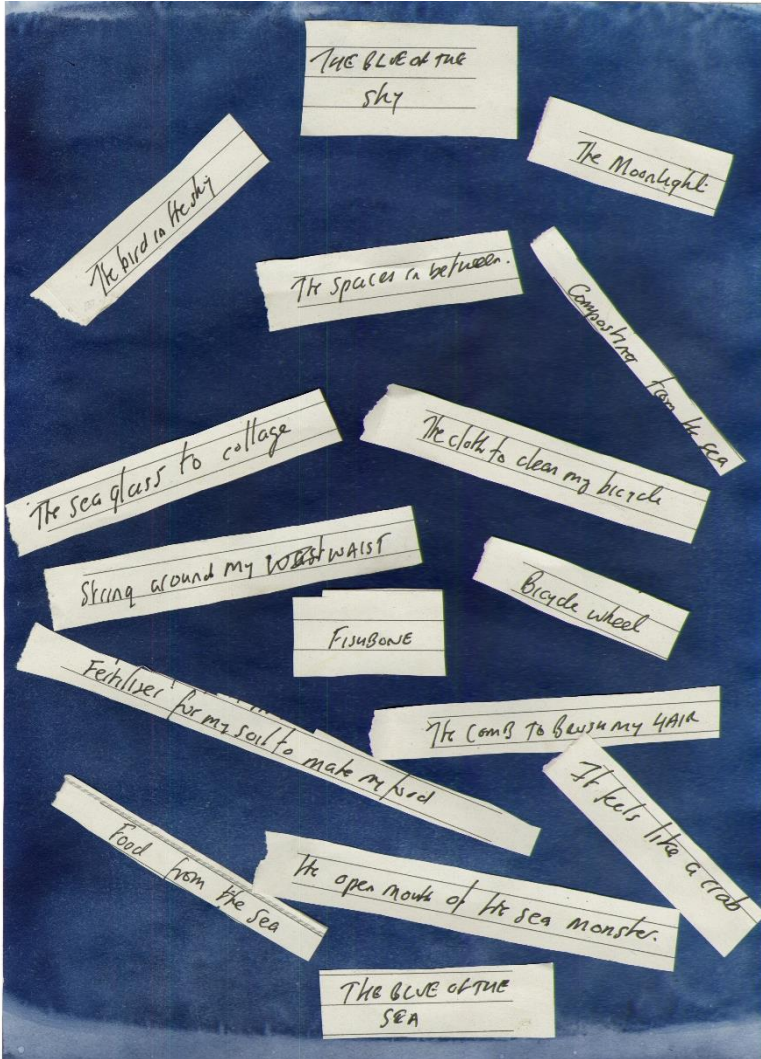
in thousands of years?

Artist: Helen MARIA

**The Blue of the Sea and All the Spaces In
Between**









Artist: Leon Buckley-Jones











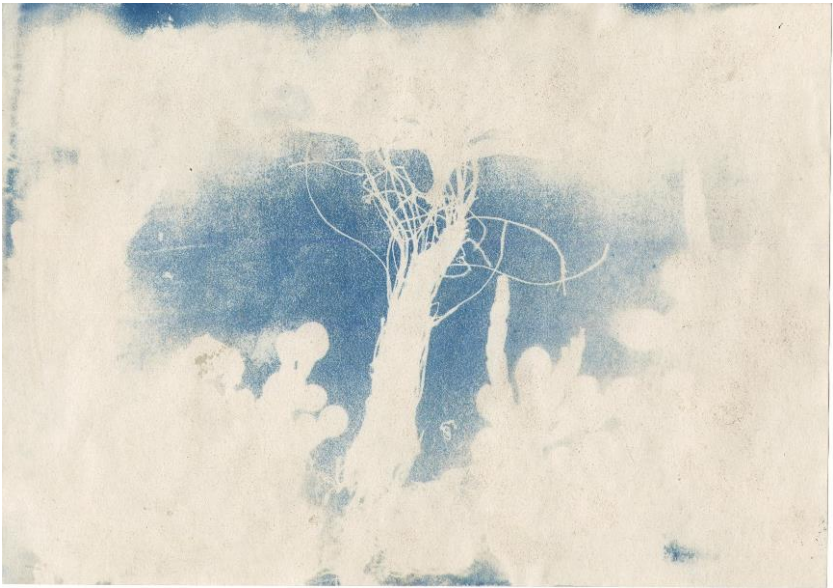


The Boy and the Whale

It was a windy, cold day on the broken sea — a harsh place, forgotten and old, it has its own way of doing things. Sheep cling to the shoreline, nibbling the seaweed thrown out by the sea.

On the hill stood a boy. He was tall and strong, with an address that made some people fear him and others admire him. It helped him see beauty in things overlooked: the delicate patterns of rocks, or the impressive trunks of trees. Today, his eyes settled on the remains of a whale, tossed out of the stormy ocean. The boy saw thick skin and powerful fins, covered with crustaceans, and the light dimming in a large eye.







Artist: William Niven

This project is an extension of a larger body of work from William Niven's time at University. It is a work in progress.

Instagram: @williamnivenphoto).



A Migratory Body (2025)

A living body, collected, transformed into the recognisable biological form.

Impressions of a body (a “living” organism, constantly migrating, growing and spreading) correlates with the human need to travel.

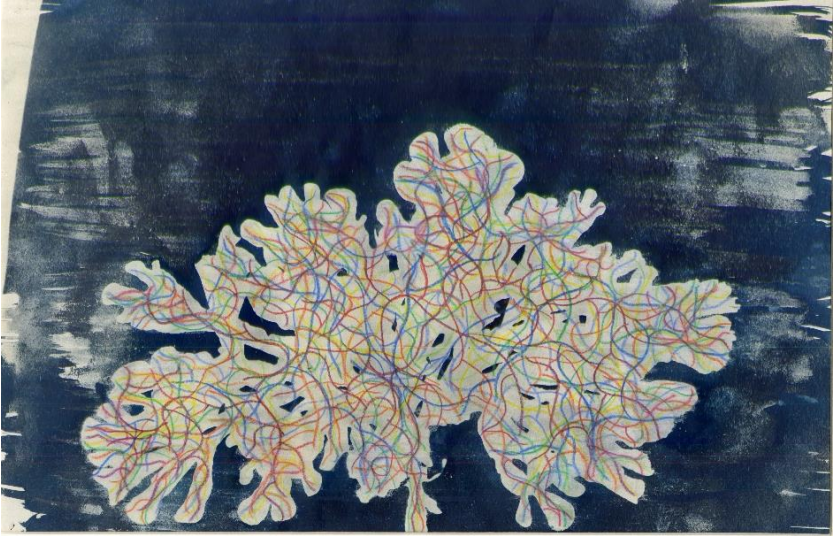
Captured through cyanotype, cameraless photography that creates imprints and impressions of objects, with strong connections to marine wildlife.

This creates a “perfect” medium in which to represent a body in the photographs, a synthetic body which has a “fluid” place of origin and environment, and a similar form, which I can shape through the images.

The connection between body and space is a running theme in my work. To generate an abstract form, that “lives” and acts like a living organism, e.g. the Portuguese Man o’ War, to relate that to a space that isn’t stationary, that ebbs and flows and leaves impressions on tangible landscapes. The impressionistic nature of cyanotypes lends itself to be a suitable candidate for capturing said body.

To have the images resemble recognisable bodily features, e.g. eye, brain, hands, can act as a new connection to the familiar, akin to looking into a mirror and being intrigued by your own reflection.

The blue of the cyanotype links the impressions of the ocean. The collection of the objects in the images, in the beach clean, resembled the collection of waste. The “shedding skin” of this body, make into photographs for inspection, dissection and observation.





The Washed Up and Blue programme

The artworks in this booklet were created during a four-day programme collaboratively organised by Shambellie House, the Solway Firth Partnership and the University of Glasgow's *Waste Stories*/Centre for Research and Development in Adult and Lifelong Learning.

During the first day, following some team-building activities, Nic Coombey of the Solway Firth Partnership gave a presentation on the migratory journeys of some birds, marine animals and plants, and drew parallels with the ocean journeys of marine plastics. He talked about the long, repeated journeys made by birds such as the Manx shearwater; the appearance of non-native species, such as Japanese seaweeds, in local waters; and the way the shapes of lobster creel hatches and other debris testify to their origins on the east coast of America.

Keith Walker of Shambellie House then led an introduction to cyanotype print-making techniques, using natural and man-made objects that the Solway Firth Partnership had gathered from the Solway shores.

The second day began with a litter pick at Southerness, organised by local environmental group Dumfries and Galloway EcoWarriors to mark their seventh anniversary.

Whilst helping rid the beach of the plastic waste washed up during winter storms, Dawn, Helen, Lewis and William also collected objects they found particularly interesting and thought they might use in their cyanotype stories.



One of the artists taking part in the beach clean at Southernness © Mike Bolam

The afternoon was spent further exploring the print-making process, trying out various compositions and toning techniques.



A series of prints experimenting with exposure times © Leon Buckley-Jones

The third day began with a focus on stories. Supported by Anna Wilson of the University of Glasgow and Brendan Breslin from Shambellie House, Dawn, Helen, Leon and William returned to the idea of journeys and migrations across oceans and through time. They considered how these feature in stories, real and imagined, from the Kon-Tiki Expedition to Homer's *Odyssey*. The group then reflected on both the washed up objects they had collected from the shoreline and the cyanotype prints they had made to create their own stories. This was followed by an afternoon of continued experimentation and production of visual pieces.

The fourth day was where everything was pulled together. Written texts were refined, finalised and in some cases created afresh. Visual artworks were selected, mounted and famed, and the collective exhibition, *Washed Up and Blue*, came into being for the first time.

Acknowledgements

Washed Up and Blue was facilitated by Shambellie House, the Solway Firth Partnership and *Waste Stories* at the University of Glasgow. It was made possible by support from Marine Fund Scotland, Dumfries and Galloway Regional Arts Fund and the University of Glasgow's Centre for Research and Development in Adult and Lifelong Learning. *Waste Stories* was originally supported by the Leverhulme Trust.

Shambellie House and Grounds is a Charity and Community Benefit Society, running a successful and thriving centre for creative inspiration. They offer a year round programme of workshops and events in visual arts, textiles and quilting, photography, applied crafts and outdoors & environment, all focussing creativity for good health and wellbeing. *'Relax, Learn, Enjoy'*

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The Solway Firth Partnership works to support a vibrant and sustainable local economy whilst respecting, protecting and celebrating the distinctive character, heritage and natural features of our marine and coastal area.

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Find out more about **Waste Stories** at <https://wastestories.org.uk>.



