Moments
People
Places
Lessons
Life

Onward and upward

A collection of writings, shares and lessons learned along the way.

I AM THE DETAIL

Pen in hand, on we go.

PAUL J. BURGESS



Here holds no recent dark memories.



I AM THE DETAIL

Paul J. Burgess

Editing assistance from Barbra Beane

I am the detail of each story
And the spaces in-between
Together we're the future
And the parts as yet, unseen

So join *me* on my travels
Back a decade, maybe two
Read the words I've written
Some may loudly speak to you

There are lessons here for learning
You may grimace as you read
Words I hope will pack a punch
Or help you plant a seed

Settle back — and take it in
I'll share all that I can
And let you see what's guided me
From boyhood into man



Me, Rhyl, around 1972.

About This Collection

I leave signs in the road when I trip on a rock.

Always have, always will.

I wrote that in 2017. I wasn't trying to come up with a clever line for a book. There was no book. I was just writing, as I have done for most of my life.

Something had happened. I'd learned something from it. Maybe somebody else could learn something from it too.

So I left a sign.

I've also always been a marker of moments.

That's another thing I apparently knew about myself long before I sat down to put this collection together. In another post from 2017 I casually wrote:

> "There are parts of me that I don't over analyse. Things that have always been core and I simply accept as a part of me. One of them of course is moment marking."

Of course.

As though everybody does it.

Maybe they do.

Maybe they don't do it quite as obsessively as me.

I mark dates. Places. People. Conversations. Losses. Firsts. Lasts. Anniversaries. Tiny victories. Huge fuck-ups. Things that made me laugh. Things that made me furious. Things that broke my heart.

Apparently I also remember sandwich boxes, muddy shortcuts, flowers pressed into journals, red ice lollies, tiny squares of beans on bread and whether I was wearing one earphone or two.

It's always in the detail.

Maybe that's why I write.

I've written for as long as I can remember. Stories when I was a child. Plays. Poems. Articles. Scripts. Books. Facebook posts. Blog posts. Rants written because if I didn't get the words out of my head, I thought they might start leaking from my ears.

In 2017 I wrote:

> "I have a book in me that is too important not to write, in fact, I have lots of things in me that need to be written."

Turns out I wasn't wrong.

I just didn't realise that some of the book might already have been written.

Scattered across years of posts, forgotten documents, websites, journals and things I'd shared because something had happened to me and I needed to say something about it.

Sometimes I wrote because I was happy.

Sometimes because I was angry.

Sometimes because I was grieving.

Sometimes because I was frightened.

Sometimes I had learned something.

Sometimes I was halfway through learning it.

And sometimes I was completely convinced I'd learned it, only to discover three months later that I hadn't finished learning it at all.

That's important.

This isn't a book written by somebody standing safely at the end of everything, looking backwards with all the answers.

Most of these words were written while it was happening.

They're dispatches from inside the learning.

In November 2016, my husband Jason and I were victims of an armed robbery. I came away from it physically injured and, although I didn't fully understand it at first, mentally and emotionally injured too.

We called it the 'Orror.

Horror without the H.

Nine days later I decided that the period beginning the day after it needed a name too.

I called it The Better.

"What we do with it is our call."

I wrote.

"Make it better I think would be a good start."

And then I started trying to.

Badly sometimes.

There were panic attacks. Grief. Anxiety. Therapy. Anger. Laughter. Work. Friends. My husband. My family. Drag. Radio. Veganism. Creativity. Cats. Holidays. Dancing. Crying. Quite a lot of swearing.

2017 takes up more space in this collection than any other year. It has to. I wrote a lot. I was trying to heal, trying to understand, trying to get back to myself — although I would eventually discover that wasn't quite as simple as it sounded. I got better. I wobbled. I declared myself back. I fell over again. I learned things, forgot them, relearned them and occasionally contradicted myself completely. I wrote through all of it.

Looking back now, those posts don't document a neat recovery. They document a man trying things. Reaching for bits of himself. Finding some, discovering others he'd forgotten were missing, and leaving a ridiculous number of signs along the way.

There was also a motorcycle.

In January 2017 I was walking to work with my earphones in when a young lad on a motorbike went past me and then pulled in really quickly about ten feet in front of me.

He was delivering papers.

My body reacted before my brain had a chance to catch up. I had to stop for a minute and regain my composure.

It was one of the moments that made it clear the 'Orror was still travelling with me.

For a while afterwards I wore only one earphone. I needed the other ear free. I needed to hear what was happening around me. I needed to know what was coming.

Months later, during something I called 28 Days of POSITIVE, I wrote about getting on a bus.

> "I sat upstairs, in my favourite seat, I wore both headphones."

Later in the same post:

> "I got off the bus and continued to wear both headphones as I walked to Gaydio and SANG."

Two earphones.

Nothing really.

Everything, actually.

That's the detail.

There were phrases too. Little things I picked up, invented, shouted, borrowed, discovered or simply needed to hear.

Onward and upward.

Today is another day.

Getting back to me.

Acknowledge. Own. Action.

And one that became particularly important:

USE YOUR FUCKING LEGS.

During therapy I was asked to go back, in my mind, to the place where the 'Orror happened. To see myself there.

I did.

I stood at the door I'd been avoiding, and looked at the floor where I'd been lying with a hooligan stood on me.

And I shouted at the man I could see on that floor:

USE YOUR FUCKING LEGS!

My legs had been part of how I'd fought back. How I'd survived.

Months later, after my final CBT session, I wrote:

> "Onward and upward.
>
> Using my fucking legs the whole way."

When Gemini, the drag queen who had once been such a huge part of me, came back into my life after more than a decade, I wrote:

> "Use your fucking legs. Sparkle. Shine."

And then:

> "The girl who used to be me used to go dancing.
>
> She dances still."

I shared these things because that's what I do.

When something works, I want to tell you.

When something hurts, eventually I want to tell you that too.

When I fall over a rock, apparently I erect fucking signage.

I've ranted about mental health posts being shared by thousands of people while somebody sitting quietly on their friends list might desperately need an actual phone call.

I've written:

> "If you're going to be aware, actually be aware. Pay attention, reach out."

I've written about veganism because I learned things I wished I'd known earlier.

I've written about coming out, bullying, childhood, dementia, ageing, grief, performance, friendship, family and people I've loved.

I've written about places too.

Places seem to matter to me.

A theatre can be a she.

An island can whisper.

A holiday destination can know nothing about what happened to you back home.

> "Here holds no recent dark memories."

I've written things because I needed to purge them.

Literally:

> "I have to purge. So purge I shall."

I've told other people:

> "write something, anything, from YOU!"

I've told myself:

> "Be bothered!
> Be beautiful!
> Be brilliant!
> Most of all, be brave!"

I've contradicted myself.

I've thought I was better when I wasn't.

I've announced that I was back and subsequently discovered there were still several versions of me missing.

I've been wise, ridiculous, furious, frightened, preachy, funny, hopeful, sweary and occasionally full of shit.

I'm leaving all of that in.

Because the point isn't that I always knew what I was doing.

The point is that I kept trying to know myself a little better.

I kept learning.

I kept evolving.

And when I found something that helped, I pointed at it.

There is a switch.

You have to be the one to press it.

I'll keep pointing at it, and using a torch if I have to.

I wrote that about veganism in 2017, but reading it now I realise I've spent much of my life doing exactly that.

Pointing at switches.

Sometimes for you.

Sometimes for me.

Because I've learned that acknowledgement matters.

In 2013 I wrote:

> "They say you can't change what you don't acknowledge."

In 2017:

Acknowledge. Own. Action.

And in 2026, after finally laying out on a page a succession of losses, responsibilities and experiences that I had convinced myself I'd simply dealt with, I wrote:

> “You can't change, fight or better what you don't acknowledge.
>
> Now I have.”

Apparently, some lessons need learning more than once.

That's okay too.

This collection isn't a manual.

I'm not qualified to tell you how to live your life and, frankly, I'd be suspicious of anybody who thought they were.

In putting this collection of writings together, I've realised — and now embrace — something about myself. I've written before about wanting my words to be seen, about loving being filmed, about liking to share.

All of that is true.

I do love to share my writing, not only because I would hate to box it away, but because I truly believe that words matter, and that they can change you, if you want them to.

The thought of learning something, or bettering myself in some way, healing a little because of something I've done or said, and then not sharing that method or those words, is alien to me.

Why wouldn't I?

If you learn nothing, gain nothing on a personal level from this collection, I hope you at least enjoy it.

I've opened the drawers. I've left the old notes in. I've even left some of the embarrassing shit in there.

Have a look.

Here is my unremarkable, deeply open, human mind.

Rummage away. x

Some are polished pieces. Some are poems. Some are memories. Some began life as Facebook posts. Some are angry. Some are

funny. Some hurt. Some swear. Some were written by versions of me I understand better now than I did when I was being them.

I've resisted the temptation to make Past Paul too clever.

He didn't know what happened next.

I do.

That's sometimes the most beautiful thing about reading him now.

I've never forgotten what being a child was like.

I've never completely forgotten any of the people I've been since, either.

The boy.

The actor.

The drag queen.

The husband.

The son.

The carer.

The vegan.

The angry bastard.

The frightened man on the floor.

The man shouting at him to get up.

The man who eventually realised that getting back to himself didn't mean returning to somebody he'd been before.

Maybe it meant becoming whoever came next.

I once wrote:

> "I live, and I tell the tale."

I think that's probably as good an explanation for all of this as I'm ever going to find.

I live.

I notice.

I mark the moment.

I learn what I can.

I tell the tale.

And if there's a rock in the road…

I'll leave you a sign.

Pen in hand, on we go.

Paul J. Burgess • 2026



PART ONE

BEFORE

Writing & Me.

I felt it important, if a little embarrassing to note that when I was a small boy though clearly able to write, I believe that my first act of 'creative writing' was writing a note to my sister as I was seemingly too shy to say it in words, that described my first childhood bout of diarrhoea.

I wrote a note that said, and I quote... "brown wee came out of my bum".

You could already see the writer in me. LOL

I was that same kid until well into my twenties. I shit you not. Pun intended.

In the early eighties I used to 'peg-off' (colloquialism) school and would often spend hours sat on the steps outside Granada Studios in Manchester. Not to 'see the stars' and get an autograph like pretty much everyone else loitering outside that hallowed entrance, I wanted to get in, I wanted to work inside.

I didn't know what the hell I was doing, I was a kid.

It felt good though, and hopeful.

I needed that.

In the later 80s I started writing giant letters on huge pieces of lining wallpaper to the casting dept at Granada. I don't know whether it was the lunacy of such an action, or my doing it over and over that worked, but it did.

I was eventually invited down to casting, I met two lovely people, and from thereon in I was a regular Granada extra, or 'walk-on' as it was at the time, now known as SA (supporting artist).

I became a regular on Coronation Street for a good few years and appeared in many other Granada productions. I was very lucky in how I got the work as usually the casting dept only dealt with agents and I didn't have one. Instead, I got called directly and booked for days of work. That felt special. It wasn't, but it felt it.

This would continue for several years, culminating in my getting little featured roles in the background, or even a line.

This, all of this, would end with a featured role as the cabaret artist in the infamous Bowery club in Prime Suspect 3. I, or should I say we (Gemini and I) were featured in a show starring Dame Helen Mirren and Danny Dyer!

Then came, mistakes.

Namely the News of the World!

I'll let the following sections tell you the tales.



A screenshot of Gemini in Prime Suspect 3.

The Queens in my Life

No documenting of my life would be complete without my cats. They have been there since the early 80s at home with my parents and our cat Chuffy. She would move into my first proper flat with me and would be the first in a long line of fur babies I was honoured to share my life with. Their names and length of life, if known, as a record.

Chuffy, 18. Doris, 23. Agatha, 17. Cleo, 8. Bubbles, ?. Elsie, ?. Smeej, ?. Alice, 18. Isis, still here and 16 in 2026.



Doris & Agatha Lived together most of their lives.

My queens.

The Early 90's

In the early 90's I started writing a book, I titled it "Controlled Schizophrenia". It was written by three people, myself - Paul, Gemini the entertainer, and Sandra the 'working girl'. I decided to add just a little of that writing here, at the start of this scrapbook/collection.

I was born on the seventeenth of June 1969 in OLDHAM. The fourth and final child of my Parents. We were a strong, close-knit, northern family with good values, my mother was always kind to neighbours and never without a job, my father had already raised three children and so for most of my childhood he drank, from work he went straight to the pub, I rarely saw him, even at weekends he stayed all day, at the pub.

Consequently, I was raised mainly by my mother and two sisters, three strong and very different personalities (makes you think, doesn't it?). I learned very early that if something wasn't nice you pretended that it was, and hey presto, it was. I had a fantastic imagination. I idolised my mother and we became very great friends. She treated me like an adult from a pretty early age and I soon became one.

At four or five I was sent home from infant school for arriving in full drag, long dress, bridesmaids hat and even our dog on a leash. By the age of six I was attending every fancy dress party possible as Hilda Ogden, and winning most of them. Any excuse to put on a frock, hey.

Not very much happened until I was Ten and became a member of the "Oldham Theatre Workshop", I also became a member of a "Gay Youth Group" based at Manchester's Gay Centre, I became an individual.

I'd always known I was different, I played with the girls and fancied some of the boys like crazy. What I didn't understand is why? It's unbelievably confusing for a gay child, especially if you're unaware that there is such a thing as "Being Gay", all I understood is that girls and boys made couples and I wanted to be with a boy. It

wasn't until my friend Anne and I were playing around on the phone one day that I discovered there were other people like me.

We phoned a place called Lesbian Link based at Manchester's Gay Centre and soon learned that there was also a number for boys to ring and discuss how it was OK to find other boys attractive. I phoned, lied about my age, and was told about the youth group held on Saturday afternoons.

The very next Saturday I went. It was like coming home, exactly the same feeling I had my first time on a stage, bliss. Suddenly I was no longer the only one in the world. I didn't feel strange and it certainly didn't seem wrong, I belonged.

For two solid years from that day, I was a regular at the youth group. I had a boyfriend when I was Ten who was Eighteen, though to him I was Sixteen. I always looked and acted much older than my age so it was easy to pass.

During my two years on the gay scene, I had quite a few boyfriends, and quite a lot of one-night stands. then suddenly one day I got bored of it all and decided to stop going down for a while, to the gay centre that is.

I was twelve years old when I became a rent boy (male prostitute) and to be completely honest I loved it. I found a whole new group of friends (the realest people I'd ever known) and learned things about people and life that only that particular line of work could have taught me. I became very real myself.

My parents knew nothing of my life, I was an excellent liar, they trusted me with my own key and a "be home time" of midnight. They asked very few questions.

It's amazing how quick you learn to swim when you throw yourself in at the deep end. My time on the gay scene taught me about people, something I personally believe to be the most important knowledge we can have. Where would we be if we didn't take the time to get to know each other, I noticed that a lot of people only wanted to talk about themselves, so I listened.

I must have worked on the streets for about eighteen months, then, again, I became very bored.

School never really appealed to me , I was far too busy having fun with my school chums to be bothered to learn anything. Besides, I've never really understood the need to learn about glaciers in geography, or war in history.

Education should be about life and the ways of the world. the only lessons I ever really got into were English and Maths as I suppose I knew that both would come in very handy. Even domestic science in my school was a sham, I learned three things that stick in my mind. How to make cheesy potatoes. How to wire a plug and how to wash a shirt, big fuckin deal.

During all my Senior years at school I was a member of the famed "Oldham Theatre Workshop", now that taught me about life. I'll never forget when I first heard about the workshop. I was Ten years old and expressed an interest in the workshop to my mother. Mum took me along to the coliseum theatre in Oldham to see a workshop production called "STYLE", I was home.

Within weeks I was a member and my time there is one of the things that is, and will always be close to my heart. Several years later I was thrown out of the workshop for talking during rehearsals, this time my insatiable interest in people had let me down, from that day, for about two years, I withdrew.

I worked a string of several boring mundane dead-end jobs. I even applied to be an apprentice plumber with Oldham council, not for me but because my dad thought I should. I did well too. I passed the written and practical exams but failed the interview. I was told that sometimes toilets are so blocked that the only way to clear them is to get your hands in, asked if this would be a problem I quite simply said, yes, it would. Bye bye O.M.B.C.

I told my father that I thought I had probably been refused because I had spoken of the importance trade unions, he believed me, hooray.

During the time that I was working the boring mundane jobs, after my being dismissed from the workshop, I always kept a hand in entertainments by becoming a kissogram, or dragogram to be more precise. I did them for men and women, for friends and relatives, even at work. It was a whole lot of fun. I also used to do a drag act, but this was all long before Gemini developed into what she now is. This was me doing drag.

Sometimes along with a few friends I would go out to a nightclub in drag. It was during one of these nights out that someone mentioned a company called "Transformations" owned by the famous sex change, Stephanie-Anne Lloyd. Apparently, they were always looking for convincing TVs to model in their monthly publications, so I applied.

A few weeks after my initial application I was asked to shoot a photo story in issue seven of a magazine called T.V Scene, I took the work. The photo story was about me and another guy in character as Annie Oakley and Calamity Jane, we were lying around in the hay and planning to rob the Deadwood Stage, they even put me in as the centre- spread. The other guy got the front cover, bitch.

I did a few more things for transformation including a film called "Slaves Training Video" and a documentary for Italian TV about transvestism, the programme was called "1988". It wasn't long after this that I gained an Equity card and started to work for Granada TV as an extra in several of their productions, mainly "Coronation St". I decided that I wanted to go further and so needed to get Directors and such to see me act.

I wrote, produced and directed a little publicity video entitled "LoveLines Dating Services", it was a gas. I played the owner of the company Miss Cupid Heart and the four guys she was trying to find dates for, Brian from Yorkshire, Mick from Birmingham, Dave from America and Eddie the Hippie from London.

(Eddie the hippy stayed with me and became a core character of my stage play, Every Single One Of Me!)

The video didn't really get me much work but I did get invited to audition for the understudy of both Billy and Adrian in the final stage production of "Bread".

The nineties have been full of all sorts of weird and wonderful things.

Since 1990, I have worked as a nude model, an Escort, a masseur, a writer, an actor, the list goes on and on and on.

It is also since 1990 that I have been close to both Gemini and Sandra, in fact, most of the nineties up to 1994 were lived as one or both of them almost all of the time. You will find out more about that in the girl's sections, they tell it much better than I do.

Well, now I've told you every personal detail of my life I think it's time to bring my part of the book to an end, don't worry, there's a lot more to come.

Sandra's bit is the bit to watch out for. In the immortal words of Ma Boswell "She is a tart". If you like to read about sex and scandal, Sandra's your gal.

As for me, well, writing this has been a tremendous help. Seeing my life put down in black and white for the first time ever is unusually helpful, somehow disturbing and even to me a little unbelievable.

I'm going to end

SANDRA – A Journal Entry

Hi me. It's Saturday morning 10.30am and I'm sat in Candy's on my own. None of the girls are here yet, typical. Linda (The Manageress) gave me a set of keys last week so I can open up when I'm working, today I'm working, so I opened up, makes sense really doesn't it?

It's nothing special here but I'm enjoying it. You walk into a little foyer which has a huge plastic plant in one corner. On the right there's a hatch (which opens up into the office where I am now) with a bell on the left and a sign that reads "Please ring bell for attention", could it be true that people, after reading this, still knock on the door?

Well, yes actually.

Through the door and you walk into a little corridor which has a huge black lacquered Chinese cabinet, quite nice actually. On the left of the corridor there are two doors, both massage rooms. On the right is the office and right down at the bottom is the big room which has the sauna, bathroom and laundry in it (Believe me, we're washing towels all day).

I did a client at a hotel last night. He was staying at the "Holiday Inn" Crown Plaza, which was a bit un-nerving to get into. I just walked, as you do, and headed straight for the lifts. Just my luck the girl on reception asked if I was booked in. I told her I was here to see a friend and knew my way up. Luckily, she believed me. The guy was in his forties and up here on business from London. We had a bottle of Moët and Chandon and then I gave him a basic massage and blow job. £130 for half an hour hey, can't be bad.

Guy's just arrived (10.55am) with two kids in tow and asking about 11.30 who wants to watch us do a lesbian scene. Then he says he wants to take Suzy and have me take him. It's £50 each so it'll not bad really T.T.F.N. (Ta ta for now)

DEPRESSION

No fags and no smoke, totally broke.

Waiting around for a client.

Sit by the phone, do nothing but moan.

Nasty and really defiant.

No food and no booze, sat with the blues.

Fuck all at all on TV.

Hungry and bored, feel like I've been cored.

Nobody wants to fuck me.

No money and nowt, I'm doing without.

Really could smoke a full fag.

But I'll just dream on, cos I've got none,

Pissed off wi' sittin' in drag!

Sandra's section continued with more prose and poetry, including these little passages written by Victoria Barrington, another voice in the original manuscript. These include some of the few references to Gemini, whose performing career Sandra's work was intended to help finance.

She (Sandra) would spend one third of what she earned on her Gin and 'Things', one third on new clothes and lingerie for work, and the other third was put aside for Paul. There was never a lot of money left over for Paul. This defeated the object somewhat as the reason for Sandra working was so that Paul could finance Gemini's career. Confused ? You will be.

In June 1993 something very confusing happened. Paul's flatmate called Sandra at work to say that Granada TV had been on the phone and wanted to speak to Paul as soon as possible. It was the first time that he had needed to 'switch Sandra off' while she was working. Paul tells me it was a mind blower.

He had to phone Granada, whilst dressed as Sandra, to discuss some possible work for Gemini. I told you you'd be confused.

Sandra carried on working until October 93 and then decided, along with Paul, to sell her story to a newspaper.

The 19th of December was an eventful day.

Prime Suspect Three was shown on TV in which Gemini had a small part, and Sandra's story appeared in the News of the World.

The story being published was supposed to mark the end for Sandra, it didn't.

There is far more material I could have added from this, my first attempt at writing a book so many years ago, but I felt these sections

and snippets were more than enough to encapsulate that time, who I was then, who we were then. x

(excerpts end but I did make a vlog in 2020 about all the sex work I did in the 90's, and why it ended)

[Sex Worker Stories | How I started and why I quit | A Cautionary Tale]



GAY HOOKER SHOCK FOR PRIME SUSPECT STARS

Drag actor's seedy past

DRAG artist Paul Burgess has a kinky past sordider than his part in tonight's TV drama Prime Suspect 3.

EXCLUSIVE

Dirty

To Paul version 3, From Paul version 2.

To Paul 3/4/2/97
From Paul 2/3/2/97

The best of luck to you my friend. Today is a new day, which, IF seized could transform your life for the better, and forever. All before have used feeble excuses for far too long. Blaming outside influences and other people for their own weaknesses. **YOU** have a chance to break the chain, change the script, IF you will.

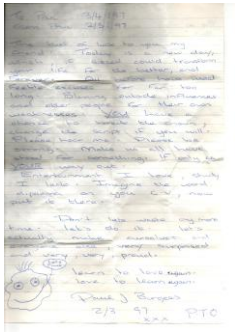
Please hear me. Please be strong. Make us all have stood for something. IF only as **YOUR** way out.

Entertainment I love, study I lack. Imagine the word diploma on your C.V, now put it there.

Don't let's waste any more time. let's do it. let's actually make ourselves, and everyone else, very surprised and very, very, proud.

learn to love again.
love to learn again.

Paul J. Burgess
2/3/97
xxx P.T.O



BE IN TOUCH WITH YOUR CHILD
BUT DON'T BE A CHILD.

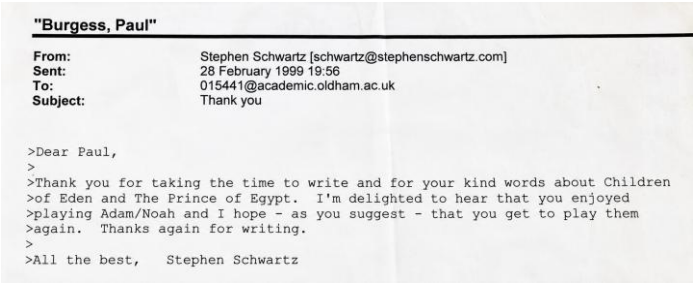
I wrote this after learning that I could start college. From version 2 of Paul, to version 3 (hence the first numbers).

I went. I left after 4 years with an OND and an HND in Performing Arts. And of course, after meeting my husband.

Sometimes It's Just Information

Starting college would be one of the most significant and powerful things I ever did - for me.

During my National and then Higher National Diploma courses, I got to be a part of shows such as *The Tree That Holds Up the Sky* (after which Jason and I became a couple), Jim Cartwright's *ROAD*, many lunchtime concerts hosted as Gemini, the pantomime *Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves*, in which I played Dame Nelly, the musical *Children of Eden*, in which I played Adam and Noah, and, of course, my beloved *Every Single One of Me*, which I wrote, produced, directed and appeared in.



"Burgess, Paul"

From: Stephen Schwartz [schwartz@stephenschwartz.com]
Sent: 28 February 1999 19:56
To: 015441@academic.oldham.ac.uk
Subject: Thank you

>Dear Paul,
>
>Thank you for taking the time to write and for your kind words about Children
>of Eden and The Prince of Egypt. I'm delighted to hear that you enjoyed
>playing Adam/Noah and I hope - as you suggest - that you get to play them
>again. Thanks again for writing.
>
>All the best, Stephen Schwartz

After college, and through many different full-time jobs, Jason and I would found and run three different non-profit, community-focused organisations and clubs.

Cycle Club Oldham, which ran for a decade.
Performance Plaza, which ran for 19 years.
Pink Triangle Theatre, which also ran for a decade.

We would become vegan in April 2014 and start our YouTube channel in 2015, but we didn't really start to put effort into the channel until 2017. Let's not jump ahead too far.

Sometimes the detail isn't in what you say about your life. It's about how it impacted others.

Arts hub appeals for help

A LOCAL arts company which has acquired new premises from which to run its successful drama and music groups is appealing to the community to help make the new building a hub of activity.

by ERIN HEYWOOD

Performance Plaza Ltd was founded in 2005 by Paul Burgess and Jason Bromley, and has since gone from strength to strength offering drama and guitar workshops for 4L free samba sessions, dance classes and organising trips for youngsters to see live stage musicals in Manchester.

But facing a constant struggle to find a room to hire for the sessions, Paul and Jason have been desperate to find a permanent home and have now been offered the old Failsworth Volunteer Centre. They are currently in the process of trying to get it signed, sealed and open to the public.

The building will be renamed The Arts Hub and will enable Performance Plaza to offer a wide range of services for volunteers and members, including a small recording studio, workshop and performance room, an office, storage room and community gallery.

However, the building isn't quite up to scratch, as old cladding and wooden window frames have allowed damp to creep inside and ruin some of the walls.

providing a place for people of all ages to learn and develop confidence and new skills and we're now asking members of the local community to help us out.

"Specifically we want 'hands on' trades people who can help us make the building fit for purpose."

Paul added: "Anyone who might have any expertise in getting rid of damp, or someone who can maybe donate a couple of windows, please get in touch because we want this to be a great facility for local people.

"When the building can be protected against the weather, it will be incredible."

Any type of help and support o

or plans

0160 0



ARTS hub . . . co-directors Jason Bromley (left) and Paul Burgess

After receiving a donation of £600 from the Failsworth and Hollinwood District Partnership to get the ball rolling, Paul and Jason are now eager to urge the community to dig deep and offer any help they can to try and rid the building of its woes.

Jason, who heads the music side of Performance Plaza, said: "We've served the community of Oldham for almost eight years now,

Diversity award chance

OLDHAM'S Pink Triangle Theatre has been nominated for yet another gong.

This time it is in line for a National Diversity Award in the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender community organisation category.

It's the second year running the theatre has been nominated.

Performances

Company founder Paul Burgess and member Jason Bromley have also been nominated in the LGBT positive role model category.

Pink Triangle Theatre tackles homophobia through it's performances and is working with schools throughout Greater Manchester.

Anyone who would like to cast their vote should visit www.nationaldiversityawards.co.uk.

PERFORMANCE PLAZA DRAMA WORKSHOPS

The idea behind **Performance Plaza** is a simple one. It is the plan to use performance art, whether it be drama or music, as a tool to aid learning, growth and bonding within local communities.

Performance Plaza is a non-profit organisation and has been running courses in the NDC area since the beginning of the year. These include a Drama group every Wednesday evening and a Guitar group every Thursday evening and Sunday afternoon.

The Plaza workshops offer a chance for people of all ages to learn different and new skills, as well as meet new friends

Tom and Robert Fox from Fitton Hill joined the workshops in January this year and really enjoy it. Paul Burgess who is the Director says the boys have taken to it like ducks to water.

They have worked hard, and were the only students to learn and memorise a dialogue from the Willy Russell production 'Blood Brothers'. As reward for their efforts they successfully performed their piece at this years Oldham Carnival.

"What I would say to anyone is have a go, there are lots of different courses running in the area and many more at the college, and you never know where it might lead you might even become a learning junkie like me."

Their performance took place in the Performance Plaza Marquee and was one of the highlights of the day. Both Tom and Robert say "Our confidence has grown very much since joining Performance Plaza and we can't wait to perform more".



If you would like any further information on Performance Plaza and the courses on offer, please contact:

Paul Burgess on NUMBERS ERASED
email: info@plaza.org.uk

Or contact Bridgett Fox (Tom and Robert's Mum) on: NUMBERS ERASED

8 Education & Lifelong Learning

County Cup glory



TACKLING homophobia . . . the Mayor of Oldham, Councillor Jim McArdle, among the guests at Gallery Oldham

OLDHAM EVENING CHRONICLE FRIDAY MAY 31, 2013

NEWS Briefing

Rolling back

ROLLING Stones frontman Sir Mick Jagger (66) still rediscovering archive footage used in a new documentary about the band. It was like opening a "family scrapbook" He put in an appearance at the Cannes Film Festival for a special screening of "Stones in Exile", a documentary about the making of the group's 1972 album "Exile on Main Street".

Mum sees again

A MUM-OF-TWO partially blinded by a rare inflammatory brain disease in a car accident eight years ago was taught to "see" again in the acoustic sensation. Vanessa Harbour was helped by researchers in Durham University's psychology department which uses computer software to help the brain to become more aware of their blind spots.

All the latest from home and abroad

Homophobia still rife in schools, warns NUT

HOMOPHOBIA is still narrowed in the borough's schools, according to a new survey.

The National Union of Teachers has released its second poll on the prevalence of the problem in the classroom.

Eighteen months after a pilot survey in five secondaries school, it targeted five others which did not originally take part.

Of the 73 teachers who responded, 96.8 per cent said they had witnessed pupils collecting homophobic abuse at least once a week, with 60.3 per cent saying this was daily.

And 51.4 per cent (38.6 per cent) of staff had been the subject of abuse during the school year.

But while 72 per cent (77.1 per cent) felt that it was a serious issue that should be tackled, only 8.2 per cent (13.5 per cent) said it was being vig-

orously encouraged in their workplace. And nearly half received practical training in dealing with the problem.

Jeff Evans, Oldham NUT teacher and equality rep, was worried that only six teachers felt enough was being done to tackle the issue.

He also said that Oldham has one of the worst records for the homophobic bullying of teachers in the borough, with 16 per cent perpetrated by pupils against teachers, what are the chances for Year 7 or 8

by KAREN DOHERTY

International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia (IDAHOT) is organised by the council and its partners, launched a new pack for schools and also includes a performance by Proud Theatre Company.

Criticised

The union joined forces with the council last June to host a successful conference and training event to help teachers combat to problem.

But Mr Evans criticised the council's decision to axe its contract with seven full-time homophobia officers, by 31 March, as "a backward step".

He also said a new group to combat issues over homophobia to tackle the issue closed down without explanation.

However Tim Pinson, executive director of children's services, said: "The council was committed to all forms of diversity and had developed policies. These

● Working with the council and partners to reduce homophobia with steps for



JASON Bromley (far left) and Paul Burgess (far right) from Oldham Community Health Services with students from Hathershaw Technology Coll

Moorland treasure hunt...on bikes

STUDENTS took part in a search for hidden treasure on Marsden Moor as part of a healthy eating and exercise programme.

Pupils from Hathershaw Technology College teamed up with Oldham Community Health Services, Cycle Club Oldham and the National Trust to take part in a range of activities.

Alison Mills, from the National Trust at Marsden Moor, said: "We had two very energetic groups come out to the Marsden Moor Estate. We

to see so many young people enjoying being out on the moors."

Jason Bromley, founder of Cycle Club Oldham, said: "This was a great

people to the woodoorstep, nd Daisy

Further work is being done local police and Oldham Comm Health Service to widen the o tunities for young people want get into general cycling as w more advanced technical biking. Mr Bromley added: were a credit to the school and enjoyed their time."

Plaza plea to help transform arts base

PERFORMANCE Plaza owners Paul Burgess and Jason Bromley have signed

by DAWN MARSDEN

Ocean's no barrier to making new friends

A GROUP of American youngsters have made friends with pupils across the world in a group of Hathershaw Technology College students.

The youngsters, a mixture of Year 7 and 8 pupils, visited the town hall to meet the Mayor of Oldham, Coun Jim McArdle.

The US kids were also given the chance to ask their UK counterparts a series of questions about their lifestyles and interests in Oldham.

Performance Plaza provides a number of workshops which include drama, guitar and a free session for kids to attend until and giving them a chance to perform for all to see.

The workshops take place at Rutherford Community Centre in Failsworth.

They are also looking for an options and keep fit class for adults, as well as kids and are inviting people to put their names forward.

For more information about Performance Plaza go to www.plaza.org.uk



Karen Aldis, Debbi O'Brien, Robert Fox, Jac Pilot, Darcy O'Connor and Niamh Hetherington with their necklaces from America

INSIGHT

Homophobia set to take centre stage

DAY JANUARY 21, 2011 —— 7



Play tackles homophobia

OLDHAM'S Pink Triangle Theatre company is giving schools and other organisations the opportunity to see its play SHOW ME which tackles homophobia.

The event runs from 3pm to 4.30pm at Gallery Oldham on January 28 and will include guest speakers.

People can watch the show and book a performance and discussion workshop for their school or organisation.

For details contact info@pinktriangletheatre.co.uk or 0161-621 0160.

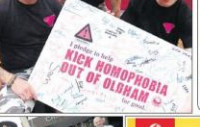
Torch lights up theatre group's work

by DAWN MARSDEN



PRIDE O moment . . . Jason Bromley (left) and Paul Burgess on the Pride Parade in Manchester

g against intolerance



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EVERY SINGLE ONE OF ME

A comedy-drama with music by Paul J. Burgess

As this play is mentioned at several points throughout this book and as I am currently working on a 2026 revival of it as a staged play, I wanted to give you, dear reader, at least a small taste of what it is actually about. This piece was written specifically for this collection.

What happens when you finally get the chance to meet yourself? All of yourself.

Adam is a writer in his early thirties. He's intelligent, reasonably successful, and has learned to navigate life's ups and downs with the help of four very different personalities who share his head.

There's Barbra, the sophisticated, occasionally uptight literary talent responsible for much of his writing.

Debra, practical, organised and happiest when there's something to cook, clean, organise or improve.

Eddie, a laid-back artist whose philosophy on life generally involves relaxing, painting and not worrying too much about anything.

And Carl, the blokey, outspoken one, whose confidence and toughness have occasionally proved useful. Although Adam hasn't allowed Carl much freedom lately, and there's a reason for that.

Together, they've helped Adam negotiate the world for most of his life.

Then there's Faye.

Oh, Faye!

Flamboyant, eccentric and enthusiastically devoted to all things mystical, Faye is Adam's best friend. And when she arrives with a rather unusual cassette tape purchased at a psychic fayre, she

promises him something extraordinary: music that might finally bring all his personalities together.

There's just one important instruction.

Whatever happens, don't play it after three in the morning.

Naturally, Adam does.

And when he wakes the following day, something remarkable has happened.

His head is quiet.

His lounge, however, is another matter entirely.

Because Barbra, Debra, Eddie and Carl are no longer simply voices inside Adam's mind.

They're sitting in his living room.

For the first time, Adam must share his home, his possessions and his everyday life with four people who know him better than anybody else possibly could.

And they're not necessarily pleased to be sharing it with one another.

What follows is a funny, occasionally outrageous and unexpectedly touching journey through friendship, identity, relationships, secrets and self-discovery.

As old tensions surface, unlikely relationships develop and long-buried truths begin to emerge, Adam discovers that understanding yourself isn't necessarily about deciding which parts of you are good and which are bad.

Sometimes it's about recognising why those parts existed in the first place.

Every Single One of Me is a comedy-drama about the extraordinary complexity of being human, the people we become to survive, and the possibility that accepting ourselves might be the greatest adventure of all.

After all, living with yourself is one thing.

But could you actually live with yourself?

My love for this story and these characters never really left me and in 2021 I gave the play a little tidy up and rewrote some parts of it. In 2026 I worked through the entire script again and realised that this project still had life. I guess, watch my spaces. Wherever they might be. ☺



The original cast of Every Single One of Me at Grange Arts Centre, Oldham. 2000
Back row: Des Sharples (Carl), Michaela Newman (Faye), Anna Merron (Debra).
Front row: Melanie Hilton (Barbra), Paul J. Burgess (Adam), Mat O'Neill (Eddie).

LIFE CHANGING LESSONS

Taken from one of my early noughties-journals (of which there are many) and carried through life.

1) Courage is the best virtue, without it all others can only be done erratically, never consistently. - *Maya Angelou.*

2) When people show you who they are, believe them. - *Maya Angelou.*

3) Same method, same results! - *Rita Mae Brown.*

4) Imagine that everything you've ever done to other people, you will feel yourself one day. Change the way you treat others by remembering it will all come back to you.

5) No means NO!

6) Would you rather be right, or would you rather have peace?

7) Without admiration and respect there is no love.

8) Love, is about how they act and how they treat you. Not about how you feel.

9) When the Mother decides, the child will follow. (when you decide, all else follows).

10) Say, I love you, when you do.

11) You are not your past. You did then what you knew you had to do, and when you knew better, you did better. - *Maya Angelou.*

12) If you aim at nothing, you'll hit it every time. - *Zig Ziglar.*

13) Value every moment that isn't spent in need.

14) There is no strength where there is no struggle. - *Oprah Winfrey.*

15) You decide IF you will come out of a situation bitter, or better.

16) We are our deeds, not our intentions.

17) Stop asking yourself if you're giving enough and start asking if you're getting enough, and vice versa.

18) Life moves pretty fast. If you don't stop and look around once in a while, you could miss it. — *Ferris Bueller's Day Off (1986)*

2026 addendums – learned over many years

19) Mark moments!

20) If you trip on a rock others might not see, leave a sign in the road.

21) If you learn something, write it down so that you can read it again later.

22) Remember the detail, always, through words or pictures. Saving it serves your soul!

23) If you can, do!

24) It'd be rude not to.

25) Blow your own trumpet! You can never guarantee that someone else will do it for you.

26) Treat yourself how you expect others to treat you, lead by example.

27) You know, I'm really easy to get along with - most of the time. But I don't like bullies, and I don't like threats…. – *Captain Kathryn Janeway*

And a final one added on 29/10/2026 as a tribute to Patrick Stewart.

"Someone once told me that time was a predator that stalked us all our lives. But I rather believe that time is a companion who goes with us on the journey, and reminds us to cherish every moment, because they'll never come again. What we leave behind is not as important as how we've lived. After all, Number One, we're only mortal." – *Captain Jean-Luc Picard*



[Check out our Music We Love Playlist on YouTube]

19 June 2009

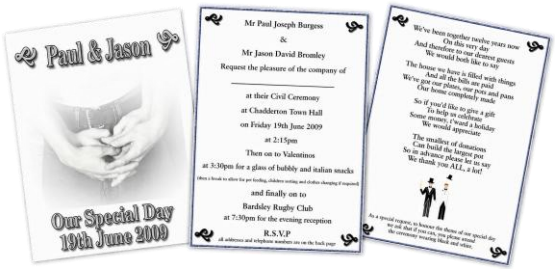


After 12 years as a couple, in fact, on our actual 12-year anniversary, we had a civil ceremony at Chadderton Town Hall in Oldham.

It was a beautiful day filled with friends, family and LOVE.

On Wednesday 10 December 2014, at 2pm, we converted our civil ceremony certificate to a marriage certificate.

Backdated to our original ceremony day.



Cyril Wild, Father

Originally published at PinkNews on April 23 2013. Reshared on Facebook in 2016.

On the three-year anniversary of my Father's passing which was 21/01/2013, I wanted to share our story again.

My Parents have two sons, one of them gay. They also have two daughters, one of them gay. They are a part of that rare club of Parents who can honestly say they have four children, one of each.

Not easy things to own for a man like my father, at least, not at first.

Cyril Wild was a typical married man living in a northwest England cotton mill town. He regularly bet on horses, regularly went to the pub and socialised with other men, many of them as butch and masculine as the cast of a good western. He was also my Father. It wasn't a job he was great at in my younger years, and it was certainly a job I made more difficult for him.

I was an effeminate child, and teenager. I could and would be as camp as Christmas, often exaggerated for effect. I didn't make things easy, and yes this was a conscious act on my part. You see, to me, this man once epitomised everything I despised about straight men. He was my example of what NOT to be, and I revelled in the opportunity to show him how different and opposite I could be, to everything he was.

He made it difficult too, for both of us. I recall one incident when I was around 11 years old. It was summer and I'd eaten a red fruit ice lolly, so my lips were stained red. Dad flipped out when he saw me, he screamed abuse at me and gave me a hard clip around the head. "Get that fucking lipstick off" he said. The problem was of course, I wasn't wearing any.

We rarely spoke anything more than a hello and goodbye.

I had a great relationship with my Mum, I still do and I always have had.

On New Year's Eve in 1989 I asked my boyfriend at the time, who was staying at our home in the spare room, to get into my bed. Not to have sex, but just to sleep with me on the last night of the year. I wanted to snuggle. That was all. On New Year's Day 1990 my Father walked into my room, saw that we were in bed together, and promptly threw me out, simply stating:

"I'm not having any of that queer stuff going on here".

I left. I became independent. I became a man myself. Things were rocky with my Dad for three years. We barely spoke; we still harboured much resentment towards each other.

I gave up on the idea of us ever having a Father/Son relationship.

As it would turn out, I gave up way too easily.

Fast forward three years to another New Year's Eve. It's the end of a night out with my Parents and I'm still not really speaking to Dad, we're in the back of a taxi van and he's about to step out of the cab. He turns to me and says; "Let's me and you start afresh Son". He then holds out his hand for a shake. I shake his hand and he pulls me in for a hug. I believe it was the first.

Life suddenly changed, dramatically and so much for the better, although I wouldn't quite realise that.

Yet.

From that moment on, we got along incredibly well. With one gesture from him, he had changed our relationship deeply, and forever.

In 2009 he sat in the front row of my 'big gay wedding' and cried as much as my Mother. He hugged me after the ceremony and told me it was one of the proudest days of his life.

We had both become two very different men to the pair constantly at loggerheads in previous years.

I had a Father and he loved me. Unconditionally.

Nothing else changed. He still bet on horses, went to the pub, had the same mates. He was exactly the same man.

He epitomised the fact that anyone can change. Anyone.

He even became a big fan of the work we did at Pink Triangle Theatre, a company tackling homophobia in schools, colleges, workplaces and even prisons across the country for almost six years. He stated that when he couldn't drive anymore, he wanted us to have his car instead of our 'tin can'. What we did was important to him and he wanted us to be able to do it easier, in a more attractive and reliable vehicle.

Dad was diagnosed with terminal cancer in early 2012. He was given ten months to live. As a family we really made the most of those ten months. Dad even paid for all of us, his children and our partners, to holiday for an all-inclusive week in Majorca at the start of October 2012. It was an amazing week. My family hoped he would be able to have at least one more holiday after this one.

I knew, deep down, as did he, that this would be his last.

On January 21st 2013, at 6 am in the morning, Dad died. He had battled for almost a year, and he battled hard. Mum called me to come down quick, she couldn't sit him up. Luckily Jason (my husband) and I had moved six doors away from my Parents in August, so that we were on hand for this. Exactly this. I was there within moments, and I had to tell Mum "He's gone Mum", followed by the awful calls to my brother and sisters. Calls I'll never, ever forget.

My family were broken. They all fell to pieces for a while. Maybe hope had been hiding the truth. A need to believe things could and should work out differently had hidden, or at least hindered, the clear view of this inevitability. I had as much to do with the stages between death and funeral as I possibly could. I helped when the funeral directors came to get him. I went to the chapel of rest and dressed him myself, with the help of my sister. I chose his final outfit and dressed him as if he was going on a Friday night out with my brother. He would have liked that.

Cyril Wild, my wonderful Dad, is my own personal Hero. He is also an important lesson for Parents of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans* people everywhere.

You too can change. You too can learn to accept all and love unconditionally.

I still miss him terribly, but I'm thankful that I had a chance to say everything that needed saying before he was gone. I told him the truth. I said that I didn't regret one single thing that had happened between us. Not one. I told him that everything, every single thing, all the good and bad had been an important part of making me the person I was today, and I was proud of myself. He told me he was proud of me too, as he was proud of us all, and he said he couldn't have married a better woman.

He meant every single word.

Less than 48 hours after that much needed conversation, he was gone.

My hope is that this story reaches out even more than it already has done. It has given hope to people who still have difficult relationships with one or both Parents. It has, in some cases, opened a door that was seemingly firmly closed.

Those two pinnacle moments outlined above, the worst when I was thrown out, and the best when Dad reached out to me, are now two of the most loved scenes in SHOW ONE, the powerful anti-homophobia play performed by Pink Triangle Theatre across the country. Dad knew about those scenes, and was proud to know that those moments were captured forever. As is he.

My tribute video for him is on YouTube. A Gay Man & His Dad.

by Paul J. Burgess



With Mum & Dad, Tenerife, February 2011.

Dad

*This poem was printed out and put into Dad's birthday card on **9/12/2012**. His last birthday alive. He read it and loved it.*

Don't go away too soon Dad.

Not right away. Not yet.

There are things I have to tell you; I don't want you to forget.

I know you know I love you, and I know you love me too.

I hope that you can see Dad, how much of me is you.

I hear it in my conversation, almost every day.

The parts of me that come from you have quite a lot to say.

I see it in the mirror when I have myself in view.

I'm right there looking back at me, and you're there looking too

You'll always be around Dad.

Even when you're gone.

You'll live on strong in all your kids, from four right up to one.

You'll be there when we all fall down, you'll see when we achieve

Know that now and set in stone.

To be is to believe.

At births and deaths and celebrations you will be around.

In all we do from now to end, our dad will still be found.

After revelation.

Since that darkened mile.

I've been taking mental pictures and recording every smile.

We've all been marking moments and trying to pitch in.

The battle long and arduous but sorrow will not win.

You are an inspiration in the most unlikely ways.

The legacy you leave is simply all the stuff that stays.

Don't go away too soon Dad.

Not right away. Not yet.

There's still a lot to say, and we don't want you to forget.



A picture I took of the table at the side of where Dad sat on the sofa. It epitomized him in one snap. 2012.

Letter to 12-Year-Old Me

Part of a larger article written for Mancunian Matters, see the Full Version here

Dearest 12-year-old Paul,

You don't know it yet, but inside you there is a strength building that will take you really far. Not in travel, finances or stature, but in soul, honesty and compassion. You are destined to do good, even great things, and your future work will matter. Really, really matter.

All of the things you are going through right now are the building blocks to the man you will one day become. Yes, I know it's tough, I know you're often made to feel alien, less than, inferior, but they are only words. Nothing but words. Being gay is only a part of who you are, it isn't now nor will it ever be all that you are. I wish I could reach back and hand you a note telling you this. It's so very important.

You'll hear all kinds of names and insults. There will be shoulder barges, kicks, spit in your face, and so many other things that will make you cry at the time but will strengthen the good in you like you can't even imagine right now.

Trust in this.

Believe in yourself sweet boy. Some of the people in your life right now will be there forever, some won't. Cherish them all, regardless. They all have some part of themselves to share with you, and you with them.

As for that 'other' Paul, the one who waits for you on your walk to school with his 'friend', the one who keeps busting your nose. Pity him. Start catching the bus, (you will, I know this), and avoid these confrontations with him. He'll end up a blatantly racist member of the BNP, divorced, and hated by all his children. It isn't your fault, it's just who he is.

Call Samaritans as many times as you need to, that's why they're there, and talking to them will really help.

I love you more than I have ever, or will ever love anything or anyone in my life again. You're a great kid. Talented, kind and loving. Hold on to all of that.

See you in a few years kiddo, for the record, it's really worth the wait

Paul. XX



Me, aged fourteen, with my cousins Gary and Lee.

Comment: Coming out – Is it always something to celebrate?

2013

See the original posting here

Positive role models are such an important part of our lives. All of us.

Whether male, female, or trans, young or old. Whether gay, bi, straight, or any of the seemingly ever-growing list of identities that fall in between.

Role models can be life changing for some people.

But, and here's the big question, should we always celebrate those who come out late in life? Are they really our best example for young LGBT people everywhere? I mean, what exactly are we celebrating?

Are we revelling in the fact that somebody hid themselves away for many, many years, before realising that they couldn't do it anymore?

Obviously, I'm happy for such people, delighted in fact that they have at last taken the plunge and fully accepted who they are, but what about all that went before the reveal?

What of the possible/probable hurt caused to others? The lies obviously told to hide the truth?

Celebrate?

The perfect and perhaps most recent example of this is of course, Gareth Thomas. Or, to clarify, the LGBT Media handling, of Gareth's story.

We all put him up on a pedestal, the shining example for our LGBT youth.

It must be said though, in all fairness, the documentary recently aired about Gareth and his coming out did indeed touch on the darker side, and the effects on other people. He should be proud of covering that, it was fair, frank and raw.

In general, however, why don't we, the LGBT community at large, focus more of our attention on the people who have never been in a closet in the first place? Our community is filled with people like this. Loving couples with kids they have through fostering, adoption or fertility treatments.

Good, strong, solid, stand-up members of society in general, who just happen to be a part of the LGBT community too. Those are the positive role models I personally want to see, and that I would like to think young people were seeing, reading about and possibly even interacting with.

Our own media, is all too often filled with scantily clad images of 'gay friendly' sport personalities, TV stars or boy bands. The media in general seems to focus far too much on those who come out late in life, or high-profile couples like Elton John and David Furnish and their personal lives, again all too often with a negative spin.

We created this environment. We buy the tickets and fill the stalls; we sit waiting patiently for the circus to begin. We are our very own creation.

They say you can't change what you don't acknowledge. So let's change things a little, shall we?

We have the power.

We always did.

It Takes a Village...

Originally published in 2013 on LGBT community websites, including Gay Wakefield and Gay Leeds.

Incredibly honest power in such a few words.

“It takes a village to raise a child” is often attributed as an African proverb, yet if you look it up there is no singular source. There are, in fact, many African proverbs which use different words to say the same thing.

I wish it was a statement that we — and by we I mean all of us — paid more attention to.

Of course, the adults of the world have a nice little out clause to counteract this powerful and all-important statement:

“Do as I say, not as I do.”

How adept we are at shirking our collective responsibility.

I hear people of a certain age constantly griping about how very different the youth of today are. Less manners, less respect, more demands, too much freedom.

The frightening part is that there are strong elements of truth in all of these statements, but — and here’s the rub — how do you think it got this way?

If adults dislike what they see in the generations they raised, adults don't get to absolve themselves of responsibility for it.

It was us.

We did it.

Our collective self-pity and inability to move on created this, and media held our hand all the way.

I’ve personally known people who thought, believed, that a clip around the ear when they were misbehaving as children constituted child abuse. I’ve seen these same people

overcompensate. Spoil their own children; give them a sense of entitlement before they've even developed a personality.

Yet we wonder what's going wrong.

There are way too many adults treating way too many young people like Fabergé eggs. Shielding their eyes from the everyday norms of the world. Wrapping them in cotton wool to 'protect them' from a world they desperately need to learn about, a world they need to SEE in order to learn about.

As the creator, co-founder and director of Pink Triangle Theatre, who has also worked many hours in the field of youth work and teaching, I see a very different side to the young people too many others needlessly protect.

They are young PEOPLE, slowly but surely developing into adults and hungry to know, to really know, about the world they live in.

Strange that they are considered old and wise enough to own a mobile phone, travel to school alone, have independence in the evenings after school, even their own house key to come home when they choose.

Try to make them responsible for their own actions, try to teach them about their world and suddenly:

"They're not ready."

"We do not inherit the earth from our ancestors; we borrow it from our children."

That's another phrase that constantly rings in my ears.

When I was younger, I longed for someone older to have already laid down a safe but knowledgeable path for me. There were times I needed to know that such a path was accessible, so badly, and yet I struggled to find it.

So what gives me the right, now that I'm an adult myself, to shirk that responsibility?

Nothing!

Not one damn thing.

Every young person I have ever worked with has known I am gay. Without exception. It is and will always be one of the very first things I reveal about myself.

I believe that it is my duty and responsibility as a member of the LGBTQIA+ community to never hide that, never wait to be asked.

If it is fine for 'Mr Whatevername' to talk about his wife and children, and it always has been fine for him to do that, then it is fine for me to talk about my husband, our decades-long relationship and love and commitment to each other, all the wonderful things we have done together and to benefit our local town and community for decades.

It takes a village to raise a child.

It also takes a village to maintain an adult.

Be out.

Be proud.

Be open and honest with people of all ages.

It is your responsibility to do so, but only if you feel you can.

Paul J. Burgess

Founder, Actor and Writer at Pink Triangle Theatre (2010–2019)
Teacher. Youth Worker. Human.

It's funny, being vegan...

5 July 2015

It's funny, being vegan, it really is. It teaches you a lot about us humans, as a species. Obviously, I'm different from most people, as in, I actually 'want' to continue to be educated, constantly, never stopping, always evolving. I don't get defensive when someone points out something to me which I do/use/eat, that may be ethically wrong.

As a vegetarian it was pointed out to me that eggs, even those marked as 'happy', may not be what they portrayed themselves to be. I didn't get defensive and tell the messenger to fuck off, I actually researched long and hard what they had told me, and they were right, I was wrong. Very wrong. Eggs were the first thing to go.

Still a vegetarian, another friend suggested watching a documentary about being vegan. I didn't get defensive and tell them to fuck off. I wasn't so precious about my milk, cream and cheese consumption that I was unwilling to watch, so I watched. On that very day I became a vegan. The documentary was Vegucated.

I was actually angry at myself at first. I'd spent twenty years being vegetarian, convinced that I was 'doing my bit'. I was 'doing A bit', but nowhere near enough. How had I never known that cows must be forcefully impregnated and have their babies taken away for me to have milk? Well, this isn't something the dairy industry likes to brag about, is it. They want you to believe cows are treated well, loved, cared for. Bullshit.

I am happy to be me. I am very happy to be married to a wonderful man as compassionate and willing to learn as I am.

Vegan, because we give a shit. About animals. About the planet. About the next generations. Do you?

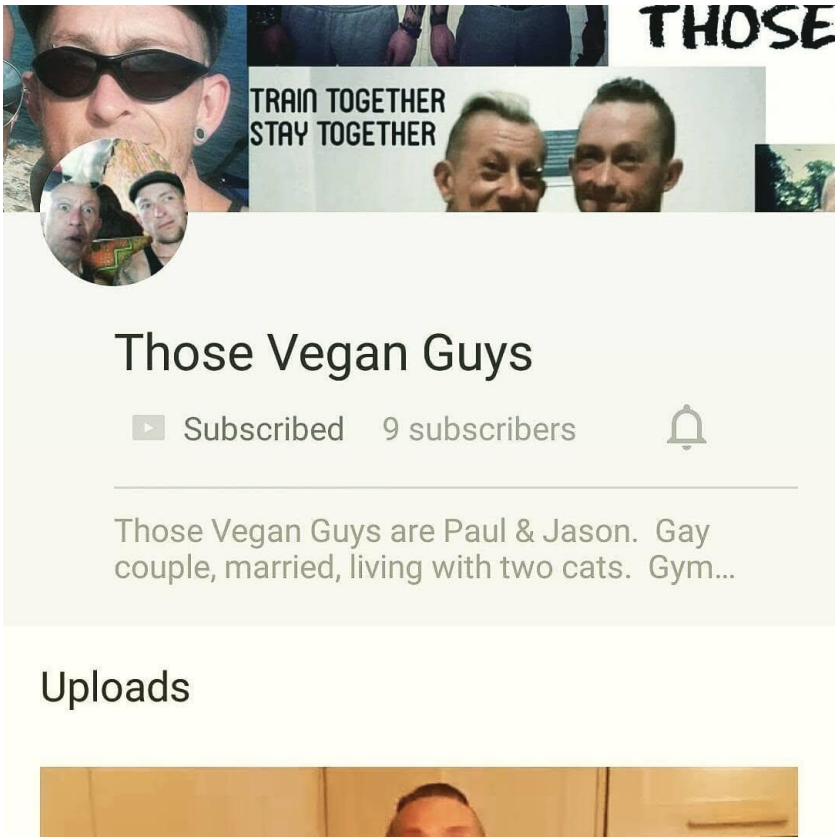
In the last few months of 2015, I was a regular guest on a weekend show called Now We're Talking on That's Manchester TV channel. It was a lot of fun being a guest but it wasn't long before the regular hosts of the show wanted to move on and the whole thing was then passed to a young lady called Julia Belle and myself. We became the Producers and Hosts. I officially hosted my first show on Dec 22 2015.

22 December 2015

I'm ready to host my first show on That's Manchester, channel 8 on freeview. Now We're Talking. Live at 4pm.

#television #thatsmanchester #chat #opinion #news





Screenshot taken in March 2016 after starting the Those Vegan Guys YouTube channel in late 2015. Now in 2026 we have over 20,000 subscribers, over 2,000 videos and over 5 million views.

START SOMETHING!!

MAKE WAVES!

18 August 2016

An amazing day with drag family filming two episodes of **#NWT** airing this Saturday at 6pm and Sunday at 7pm and 10pm on freeview channel 7. That's Manchester.

This was the day The Vegan Queens were born!!



Left to right

Creeping Miasma, Cleo Lush, Lucy Lush, Gemini Androgyne



Some of the wonderful people and memorable moments from my time hosting *Now We're Talking* on That's Manchester, 2015–2016.

One of the greatest loves of my life.

4 October 2016

I 💗💜💗this so much. Now We're Talking has become one of the great loves of my life, important to acknowledge. I'll be filming my 50th episode on October 13th. 😀😁😂😀

13 October 2016

I know, I know, you're all bored stiff with my constant ramblings now. Suck it up cupcake, it ain't over yet. 😉

EPISODE FIFTY!! 50!! FIVE, bleedin' O. It's here. 😀 😀

Ignoring the constant risk of fatal bus crash or unprovoked street murder, I 'will' get to the studio at That's Manchester today, and I 'will' film ep 50 of Now We're Talking.

Glitter addict Lucy Lush & Hot Man/Terrifying Grandma Stu Reeve will be sat sitting with me, chatting about this, and that, and them.

I have ONE bottle of bubbly. Lesson learned. 😉

I have a bucket full of vegan treats for my colleagues.

I have stories and videos.

Let's DO this!!



20 October 2016 – Written in 2026

Although I didn't know it just yet, this would be the last day I filmed with That's Manchester.

After almost a year of pure dedication, after producing & hosting 52 episodes of Now We're Talking and hosting a dozen or so episodes of The Daily Rundown it was all about to come to a bitter end.

I filmed the episodes that Thursday, but they didn't air as they should have over the weekend. On the following Tuesday I was asked to go down to the studio in the morning. I was told that a complaint about me had been elevated by a viewer to OFCOM and I was immediately off air.

That was it. No appeal, no way back, off, gone.

Never to host on the channel again.

I was devastated.

I cried right there in the studio.

I cried on the bus on the way home.

I cried after getting off the bus on the walk to my house.

I got inside the safety of my four walls and I just collapsed in a heap on the floor.

I had poured my everything into this.

And now it was done.

I barely had time to grieve before what happened next.

A year later, I would make a vlog about it all. It's linked later in this collection, but I'll link it here too.

My Story - That's Manchester #NWT

A random back of the studio shot as I always had taken. I always tried to get a shot of my hair and what I was wearing. As you can imagine there are dozens of them.





31 October 2016

Addendum: ONE complaint, allegedly to Ofcom had me pulled off the show.

Yesterday as we left the gym, I was recognised from the telly again, lovely chat with a lady who said she loved to watch me.

Just now collecting glasses on the balcony, a man tells me I'm the double of a guy who does a chat show on Manchester TV. I said it *was* me. *Used to be me.*

Everyone I've told thus far is totally shocked when I tell them why I was pulled.

This may become difficult.

Just now it's okay.



John & Gina, me and Cleo Lush, after filming an episode.

31 October 2016

Right, Cosmos. Here's the plan.

I'm going to focus on the bar this week, well, every day except Wednesday that is. On Wednesday I'm going to meet friends, make plans, set things in motion, get things written in pen, eat food, drink wine and be bloody merry.

The Vegan Queens are coming!

Every night this week (except wed), after work, I'm going to sort out a drawer, or a section of wardrobe, or a shelf, and put stuff away, make a donate pile, organize, DOWNSIZE. I'm also going to collect more stuff for my showreel and 'really' start putting it together.

Right now, it's on with the blacks and off to bartend a funeral wake. Sobering days indeed.

'Hey, I'M Talking' is in the making, more for me than anything else to be honest. I need outlets. 😉

Smudged the entire house last night, also smudged Jason, and then he smudged me.

We are fully smudged. 🙄

Okay Cos, let's go!

Have a great week, please be excellent to each other. xx

6 November 2016



This was the only post I would make on this day, and the only one I've actually screenshot for this book. It was a delicious lunch and a normal day in work.

Later that day the 'orror would occur.

I had no way of knowing it.

Yet!

PART TWO

THE ’ORROR / THE BETTER

The ’Orror — First Public Post

10 November 2016

As the CID have now done a press release and we've been contacted by the Manchester Evening News, it's going to be in the paper probably tomorrow, social media silence is no longer required. So here goes. Some of you have already been PM'd.

Before anything hits the press, which it will tomorrow, Jason and I were the victims of a violent armed robbery on Sunday night at the Golf Club where I work. Four guys, claw hammers, knives etc, all masked up. As a staff member I took the brunt of it. I thank the cosmos with every fibre of my being that Jason was there (I'm equally devastated he was there too), because it could have gone very differently. I don't mind saying that I think we were both amazing under the circumstances, dynamically risk assessing and giving them what they wanted as calmly as possible when it became clear that they had weapons and that at least one of them didn't actually care if we lived or not.

One of them was a fucking lunatic. He pulled me to the ground and then stood on my neck with all his weight and force until I almost blacked out. Fight mode kicked in briefly and I kicked up from the floor and got the bastard in the head, that gave me a chance to breathe, lift my head off the floor and say 'let me get up, I can open the door'. Etc. Etc. Etc. If I hadn't made it clear that I was both useful and needed, if I hadn't kicked up when I did, I might not be writing this.

Jason kept saying 'be smart guys', and that kept them focused so that they got what they wanted, and we lived.

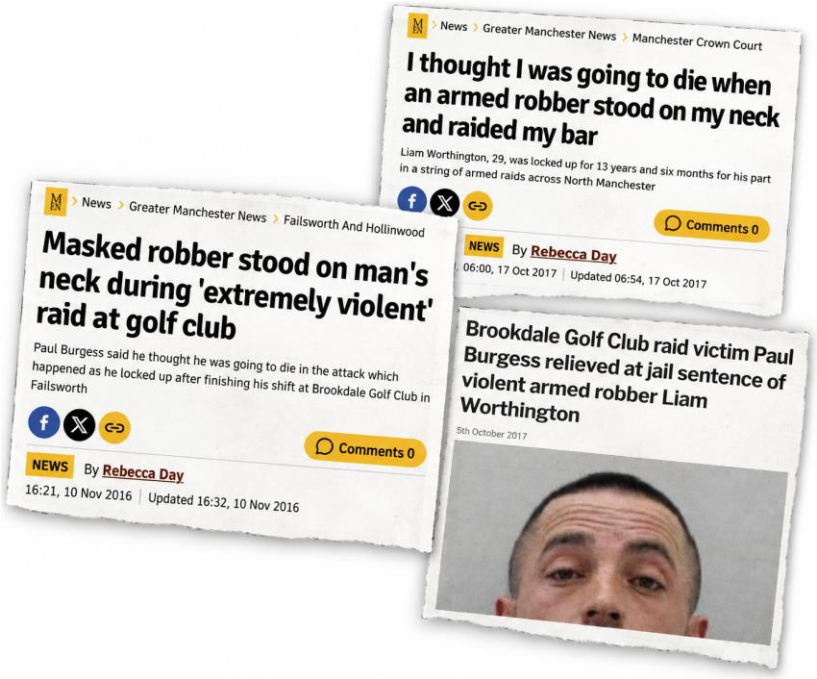
As they left, the violent one booted Jason so hard in the back that he has a tread print in grazes and bruises. For good measure, the violent one also threw the bottle bin down stairs onto us. I caught it. Fuck you violent one!!!

It was horrific. We are both very, very shaken up.

The bits that piss me personally off the most about it all are that I had to take my wedding ring off before my finger swelled too much and it had to be cut off. It still won't go back on. I also had a pair of earrings literally stomped out of my ears. They were the pair I bought on Dad's last holiday before he died. I'd worn them every day since. Gone.

We're okay though, we're alive.

If you hear anything at all, a li'l whisper at a bus stop, some cocky fucker bragging, pass it on please.



The Better

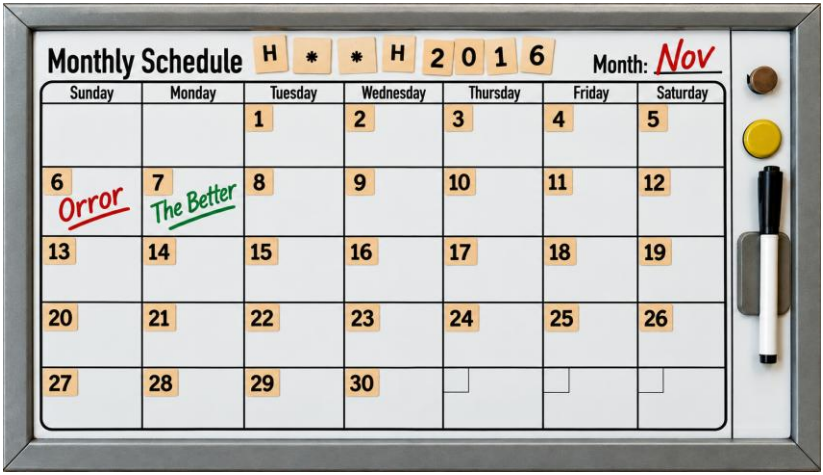
15 November 2016

Jason erased a visit to friends from our monthly whiteboard planner after last week's events, it did say 'Chris N Kirsty' on the 6th November, it now says 'Orror'. Basically horror without the h.

Okay, so that day has a name, time to name this new period after the 'Orror'.

'The Better'. An era that began (for us) on Nov 7th 2016. What we do with it is our call.

Make it better I think would be a good start.



Building The Better

16 November 2016

After losing my very special earrings in the 'orror', I decided to get some new ones, so whilst in Oldham having my hair cut the other day I called at that silver shop in spindles. Got myself a gorgeous pair of 8mm cubic zirc studs, a la Beckham, and they are adorning my ears right now looking bloody fabulous. They were £6. So there's that. 🙄

Also, I worked yesterday, five and a half hours on the bar. All well. Lots of questions which I'm okay with now.

Building 'The Better'. (an era, began on Nov 7th 2016)

Tonight we're taking action on one of the most important steps of this building process. Doing more! (for US)

A bite out to eat this evening followed by a movie. Very much looking forward to it.

Have a wonderful day, please be excellent to each other. Xxx

29 Nov 2016

Wonderful day, lived fully. Jason had a day off today. We shopped for bits we wanted/needed, had a gorgeous lunch at Molino Lounge (the all-day vegan breakfast is lush).

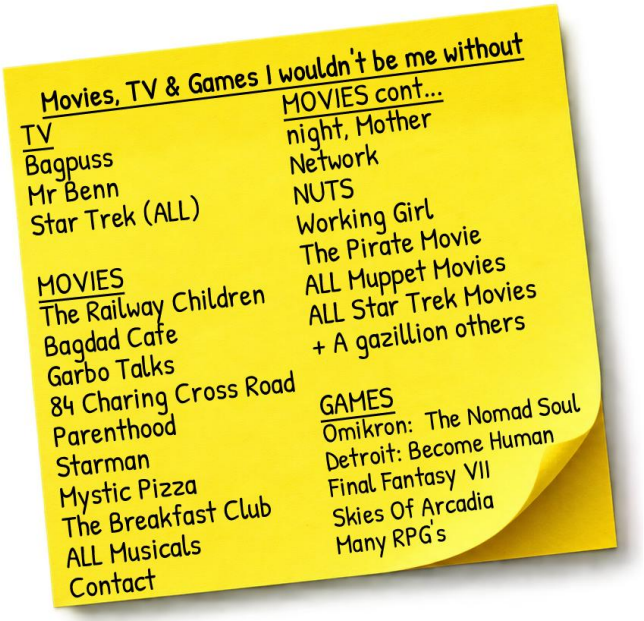
We also decided to do another recipe video for our "Those Vegan Guys' youtube channel and make a pan of kick ass soup in the process.

Maybe it's when you fully enjoy and appreciate the things others might see as mundane or trivial, that you can really say you're living.

You're living! Right now.

I hope you're paying attention to it.

Much love muckers, please be excellent to each other. Xx



Onward and upward

10 December 2016

First a funny bit. So, last night Jason had beans on toast for his dinner. (made it himself, I couldn't face it) I asked for one tiny corner of toast with some beans on and managed to eat it. Fast forward about an hour and I think I can have a little more. I cut out a quarter of a slice of bread, and have a spoon of beans on it. Husband, in all his sympathy, looks at my side plate with a tiny square of bread and beans, bursts into hysterical laughter and says it's one of the most pathetic things he's ever seen. His only regret, not taking a picture. lol

So, last night not too bad. This morning was another story, I felt so very bad again that I asked hubby to take me to the ICC. NOW I have conclusions.

A sickness bug, although not Noro as I had the exact opposite of diarrhoea, compounded by the side effects of co-codamol use since the orror, hath led me here. I knew about constipation as a side effect, but not nausea, sickness and loss of appetite. Nice. Real nice.

So, I was told to stop taking them immediately, and use a pain gel like voltarol on my soft tissue if needed. Also given some digestive meds to get things working like they should.

Onward and upward.

PART THREE

THE BETTER: 2017

Pen in hand, on we go.

1 January 2017

We've all just opened a 365-page book with only blank pages. What we write is up to us.

My chapter one has started with a tight hug as the chimes of a new year bellowed out. An amazing night with the man I love the most in this world. A lovely night's sleep. Woken to cuddles from our fur babies, warm Croissants, mixed berries and kick ass coffee.

Pen in hand, on we go.

Xxx



This version of myself

10 January 2017

In the future, when I eventually write my book, I shall refer to this particular period as **meme month**.

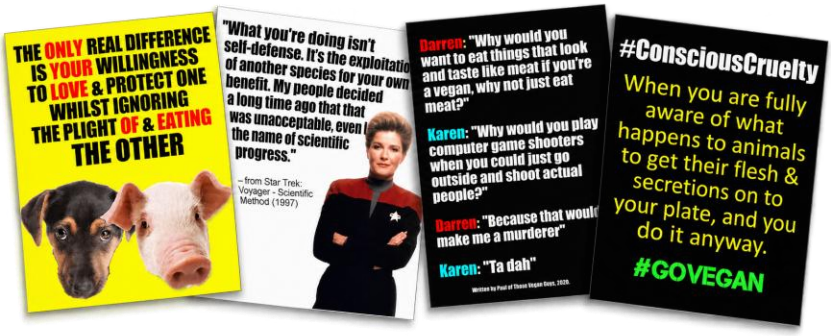
My head is full of them.

Things I need to learn, want to share, must meld with, etc.

Am I, realistically, doing all that I could do with this version of myself.

No, I can do better.

So I will.



18 January 2017

Had a shave, got my contacts in, still sat in my scrags but about to get dressed for my lunch date. Always lovely to spend time with friends, and I even have a £10 voucher for Lush that we received as an xmas gift, so I can have a look see and maybe get a vegan bath bomb or something. Looking forward to catching up, hugs, chat, good company & of course lunch at V-Revolution.

Some amazing people, some jewellery sales and more hours working have meant that we are OUT of the shit. (and we really were in it, more than I've said)

So incredibly grateful for all of this, all of you.

I finally, FINALLY feel that the traces or the orror, and all that followed, are dissipating and I'm getting back to me. Even though I thought I already was. (I clearly wasn't) I also know that when Jason and I have our short break, reasonably soon, it will be THE most needed, most therapeutic, & most healing break we will have ever had. Ever. Ever ever.

Update complete. 😀

Please be excellent to each other, have an awesome day, smile at people and YOURSELF in the mirror, reach out a hand if you need some help, you are NEVER a burden. Talk. Hug. Call and tell someone you love them, post it on facebook, be good, do good.

Okay I'm done.

I love you, even if you don't really want me to, in fact more so if that's the case. 😉

Now, to dress.



Paul & Stuart, 18 January 2017.

XXX

20 January 2017

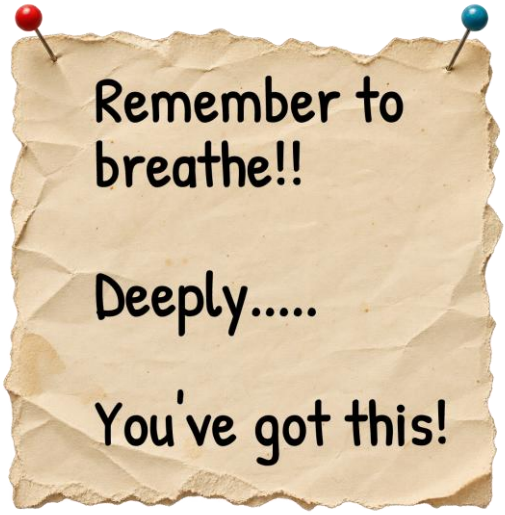
I keep having minor panic attacks. I had one on Tuesday when a young lad on a motorbike went past me and then pulled in really quickly about ten feet in front of me.

He was delivering papers. Another one this morning as a jogger ran past me, I had my earphones in.

Had to just stop for a minute and regain composure.

One eared music for me until further notice.

😔 🤞 👍



22 January 2017

Shitty end to an otherwise milestone week. I've worked six days on the bar this week since Monday, including today. This is good for several reasons, the main two being finances of course and getting them back in order, the second being that the last time I worked a week, the orror happened on the Sunday.

Today was the first Sunday I've worked since then.

I was anxious, not gonna lie.

So, we get to 5.20pm. A guy who has left the bar comes back in and says there are people sat in a car halfway up the drive. I get really anxious, scared even. Staff and customers say not to worry, we all leave together and we leave now. I text Jason, can you come now. No response. I send two more texts, I try to call twice, no response, no answer.

Luckily, I got a lift to the main, well-lit road and walked half way home.

Nothing got through to Jason, worst time for phone fuckuppery EVER!

Onward and upward. I worked a six-day week, I worked a Sunday shift. Both firsts since.

Milestones. Xx

I'm just about calm again.

Alice

26 January 2017

We bought you down in Chadderton, some woman friend of diva.
I paid the cash and took you home, from seller to receiver.
We named you little Alice but the little didn't stick.
You took to all the others like a wall gap takes a brick.
You liked to claw our 'human skin' whenever we were eating.
We knew that you were begging but we took it as a greeting.
You became a loving friend, so loyal, warm and giving.
We're glad you shared your time with us, for all your years of living.
We'll smile when we remember you, your crazy names and ways.
You won't be here to stroke but all your love and friendship stays.
Let this be our tribute, our public salutation.
You were a Queen amongst your kind, right across the nation.
Your clump of fur, with Ash of Doris has been allocated.
The power clan of her, with you, has now become belated.
Isis is the first and last of your house, Clan of Alice.
Our memories of you will see that house become a palace.

Thank you, baby, for everything.

Love you forever and a day. Xxx



What do you do?

28 January 2017

What do you do? What the fuck do you do when every single day that you have been in your home for the last eighteen and a half years has seen a significant part of that day with you hugging, snuggling, cuddling someone that isn't there anymore?

I'm married to Jason for goodness' sake and yet have absolutely spent more of the last, almost two decades, snuggling with Alice than I have him. We do that don't we though. We're often far more tactile with our fur babies than our significant others.

So there is nothing to do, except long for a warmth that isn't there anymore and feel like some huge part of my life is missing.

It is. It fucking kills me.

I will get past this, or learn to live with it, but right now I feel nothing but a massive loss that deeply affects me personally. We both do.

The break will help. Xx



Alice, January 2017.

Pieces

I broke myself into defined and complete pieces, once, and gave each segment a name and a face.

I wanted us to be a team.

Formidable. Fierce. Family!

We were. We are.

I wrote us into a play. All of us.

Every single one of me.

Some of us fell by the wayside over the years. Some of us tried to leave for good, for a million different reasons, the kind of reasons that you might find in a journey of discovery book, or maybe in a brutal story of survival.

We made a pact though. Together.

We planned that if we ever needed to reconvene, if one of us or all of us would benefit from being together again, we would make it happen.

There's a beach somewhere beautiful and tranquil and incredibly healing. I'm going to be there soon.

And you know something.

I can’t wait to see me!



Here is here

31 January 2017

Bit of a wobble this morning. Saw a beautiful cat, too much like Alice, and it span me out for a wee while. Soon back though.

It's raining, it's been raining since this morning, but we're here and not there.

Here holds no recent dark memories.

Here doesn't know about the orror, or the illness, or the loss.

Here is here, and right now, with the rain and the grey skies and the turbulent sea, here is home.

For two more days. Xx



Portugal, January 2017.

A mourning break

1 February 2017

This hasn't been a totally break type break. It's helped massively to heal the wounds of the orror, but the wounds from having to say goodbye to Alice are much deeper than I expected. Much. Too much.

I got myself together, publicly, after seeing the cat today, but honestly the wounds are deep, still bleeding and extremely painful. Not silly. Not stupid. Not pointless. If you think any of those things, may I say, you shallow cunt. Yeah, terrible language, just like your terrible soul.

I've lost a child. A best friend. A soulmate. Getting used to losing a limb is and would be tough for the toughest. I'm not that tough, never have been, never will be. Wouldn't want to be.

My girl. You will never EVER be forgotten. Nor should you be. You changed me and my life for the better. I'll get used to losing you, but I'll never get over it. Love you, miss you, forever and a day. Xx

I know I will move on from this, but, not right now. It's too raw, too real. I. Just. Can't.

This has been a mourning break as much as a healing break. So I acknowledge I'm in mourning and rightly so. I need, want, have to mourn. You would too in my situation having lost someone so important to you.

Fuck life and it's losses. Sometimes it's just too much. This is one of those times.

Right now, I can't move past it, but I will.

I always do.

Goodnight you sexy bastards. Xx



Portugal, February 2017.

8 February 2017 • 28 Days of POSITIVE • Day 2

Today I've been visited by a very handsome fella and it was a lovely surprise. Hope hubster doesn't mind. 😉

Today I'm back earning a wage and on a new shift, which will help keep us financially stable obviously, and may lead to more trips.

Today I've pondered and discussed the possibility of another short break in Portugal before the prices match the season, so at the end of March, whilst one of my sisters and her hubby are there.

Today I'm also considering the possibility of another, week long holiday later in the year, somewhere I've never been, with my other sister, her wife and mum.

Today I have coriander pesto pasta for eats later on.

Today I have life, love and HOPE. XX

Today is another day.

15 February 2017

Bit of a wobble last night which I really could have done without tbh. Shot my anxiety through the roof and made Jason furious. Since the orror, anytime I've worked another person has been there at the end of the shift to lock up. I'm not sure whether this is just something that happens with me, or all staff. I've never asked. Anyway, last night at the end of my shift, nobody was there. Just me inside, and Jason in the car outside. I freaked out. I was looking through the spyglass at the exit door, palpitations, cold spot on my head, sweating and really, really anxious. Not good. I had to call Jason, who was only feet away and just get confirmation that all was clear. I tried to lock the door, but I was panicking and couldn't, then I just ran up to the car, bypassing the actual path and using the muddy shortcut, which I've never done.

We went straight to the gym, so that was good, but I was pretty anxious for the rest of the night, and the night sweats last night were, wet. 😳

Today is another day.

I missed my 28 days of positive post last night. Maybe I'll do two today.

Have a good one. xx

16 February 2017 • 28 Days of POSITIVE • Days 8 & 9

I'm behind, pffft! 🙄
No matter, this is why the words 'catch up' were invented. Surely.
On day 8 I walked to work, my usual route, and I thought, feck it, I want to listen to my music with BOTH earphones in, so I did just that. I 'knew' that the newspaper delivering motorcyclist would be coming past and probably stopping abruptly not far in front of me. He did. I smiled, and on I walked.
On day 8 we went to the gym for the first time in two weeks, and I tell you what, ouch! Feels good to have sore pecs and trics. I also wore my abs belt for 3 sessions, so just under 90 minutes, also ouch. Tis all good though, I'm physique crafting for two now, her and I, and somewhere in the middle we'll find our happy place where I can look slightly buff, and she can look lean and slim. (we got this girl|)
On day 9 I spent the morning doing 'exposure therapy' with Isis, our cat. She's never been good with other cats, but Alfie from a few doors down keeps coming to visit anyway. She actually allowed him to come into the kitchen, she stood near him and didn't lash out. This all bodes well for the possibility of having another cat in the not-too-distant future which we honestly didn't think could ever happen.
On day 9 I worked a ten-hour shift, and at several points throughout the day and evening was made to laugh by the random antics and comments of the members. They should fit a streaming camera into the top of the bar and live stream to youtube. Sometimes it's hilarious. I had a bowl of free and delicious minestrone soup. I stood on the balcony and watched a gorgeous sunset slowly take place.
On day 9 I got a CBT appointment. 🙄
On day 9 hubby and I shared some silly snapchats, phone calls and texts. Love that man. Love that cat. Love our lives.
Feel like I've had a good pot of twinings.
Getting back to me. 🙄 xxx

28 Days of POSITIVE! — Day 24 & Day 25

4 March 2017

On Thursday I worked for a few hours on the bar but didn't start until 3pm. I had the morning to totter and catch up on a few bits of this and that. Productive day.

On Thursday Jason picked me up after my shift and we had an hour or so together at home before he went off to do his first 'gig' for a long time. It wasn't what he'd hoped, BUT he got to perform and has been working really hard at it of late. More of that please Jason. 😀 xx

On Thursday, after Jay had set off, I got the bus down to Gaydio. I sat upstairs, in my favourite seat, I wore both headphones. I got off the bus and continued to wear both headphones as I walked to Gaydio and SANG. (I've decided that I no longer care if folk think I'm weird, they're right) Had a great show on't radio, and then was picked up by the lovely, post-performance hubby, with our Go Falafel supper. Popped in to see Mum, had supper and wine, watched TV. Bliss.

On Friday I caught up with washing before venturing to town. Bought some new black jeans for work. (having one pair is no longer working)

On Friday I met Jason on his lunch break. We had lunch together, then I went to get my hair cut for the evening, which in some ways was HUGE.

On Friday night I worked on the bar for a function. A function full of young men. (the last time I did this, post orror, massive panic attack and home) I BUZZED MY TITS OFF ALL NIGHT!!!! NO anxiety! NO Panic! NOTHING! Just a great night, lots of fun, lots of chatting to people and having a good laugh.

On Friday I got home at 1ish after work to an already poured glass of wine and a hubby offering to make me a sausage roll butty for supper. Again, bliss. The simple things are always the best.

On Friday, I put some demons to bed, and I smothered the little bastards with pillows and buried their fowl stinking bodies in a fowl stinking hole where they belong.

On Friday…. I CAME BACK!



Gaydio, March 2017. I was mightily impressed with this duck from Berlin.

9 March 2017

I'm glad the weather is better. I had 22 hours penned in at work this week and have already lost 12 of them because of course saturation, and then obviously, club closure. So, I'm down to a 10-hour wage next week, because of the rain.

Fuck you, rain, I hated you anyway but now you're literally taking money out of my pocket. 😐

I'm also acknowledging today that, even though the **#28DOP** series I did has helped me to keep focusing on the positives, however small, I still can't get back to my preferred version of me. Inspired and always planning something bigger, working on lots in the background. That me. Right now, my entire life is centred on work and home, with most other things feeling like they have to be forced out of me.

Meh, maybe the cbt appointment I'm waiting for will help with that. Maybe the 4 nights in Portugal at the end of the month will. Or maybe it'll all just come back, unannounced and shouting surprise. At which point I'll probably punch the shit out of it because being jumped out at is still not sitting that well with me. lol

Hope you're having a good one, be it day, week, month or merely moment. X



Write something, anything, from YOU!

10 March 2017

A few days ago I started reading a friend's status which began like this...

"How often do you sit at home and wish someone would ring you and suggest, well anything rather than these 4 walls?"

It was only when I got most of the way through it that I realised it was 'one of those' annoying as hell, fucking condescending, copy and paste pieces of shit. 'I know who will share'. FUCK YOU! The second I get to parts like that I'm done. 'I know at least 5 of my friends will share this'.

Actually, thousands will share it, because hardly anybody any more has the, whatever it is it takes to actually write something themselves, from their own mind, from the heart.

The reason I started reading it was because it hit home at the start. I really HAVE just been through a period where I would have given anything for a visit, a call, a suggestion to go out for a coffee. The worst period of my life, turned out to be the time I was left most isolated. (outside of my marriage)

Sometimes, 'keep going Paul', 'you'll get there', just come across as autopilot statements.

So yeah, really DO reach out. Really DO call someone, have a chat, arrange a lunch or a coffee, plan a night out, or in. BE THERE for people who need you.

Also, maybe, just maybe, use that amazing mind you have, and write something, anything, from YOU!

I make no assumptions about who will read, react, copy, share or ignore this post.

It doesn't really matter! Good morning. X

SURVIVOR

14 March 2017

Once I was a victim.
My victimhood tried to define me.
It tried, and tries to make me into its very definition,
but I am me, and it hadn't factored that into its equation.
It is strong, though. More powerful than I acknowledged.
It has many facets, dozens if not hundreds of battlefronts,
It gets into places you'd forgotten you even had.
An impact statement can only use words, written then spoken.
It can never, will never and could never tell even a quarter of the tale.
The tale is ongoing.
A series.
There are episodes to come, not yet written.
Victimhood assumes it will always win.
And so do I.
So will I.
It has pity, sorrow, regret and pain as bedfellows.
I have a husband, belief, power, strength, will,
promise, hope, energy and the future.
I live, and I tell the tale.

I wrote a page last week.

17 April 2017

The last day of what has turned out to be a lovely few days away from most things with my husband and best friend. We've eaten great food, watched loads of excellent movies, played lots of games and simply spent some quality time together. I never forget to deeply appreciate times like this. We haven't done much, and that has been just perfect.

We're both back at work tomorrow, and I'll tell myself that this time, I'm going to do all the things I keep thinking about doing. I'll tell myself that this was just the break I needed to get some clarity, focus and drive. Life will happen, and then I'll make some excuses for why I haven't pushed this thing, written that thing or planned all the others.

I'm not going to keep beating myself up over this though, talking to so many people of late who are having lulls, feeling unmotivated, anxious, finding it difficult to focus and plan. Small wonder, look around. The world really is in utter chaos, counties being run by narcissists, religious zealots and charlatans, and yes that includes right here. It feels like the verge of a war too often and there doesn't feel like there's a damn thing any of us can do about it.

I, and maybe you too, have to learn, somehow, to switch all of that shit off occasionally. Without feeling like bad people for not paying attention. Self-preservation is crucial, relaxation vital.

I have to learn to appreciate what I actually do.

I wrote a page last week. Maybe this coming week, it'll be two.

Have a lovely day/week/life.

Love you. Xx

#Praiseshouldbepublic

Post to Stuart after seeing him in a promenade show.

30th June 2017

Hey sweedie.

I know we were chatting rpdr, The Vegan Queens and more on the way home from your show last night, so talk of the show itself was only in snippets.

I did want you to know though that your performance as John was brilliant, and actually quite uncomfortable. You see, I know him. I've worked with him, supported him, helped him to get back on his feet, find a home, put life into place. I've watched him relapse, then relapse again. I've seen the pain in the eyes of his children, I've seen his excuses and reasonings, listened to his suicide threats, talked to him on his phone whilst he was beaten and bloodied, drunk in the corner of a street somewhere, covered in his own piss and vomit, not knowing where he even is.

I've also seen him thrive, grab the chance of a fresh start and make it work, volunteer, pay his bills, attend therapy and slowly become the person he wanted to be. I've seen the hope in the eyes of all who love him.

You're a fucking brilliant actor, yes, I made a swear.

Love you. xx



Such a little life

30 June 2017

I've come in for a gripe. I need one.

There is so much going on in my head since my last cbt session, and much of it is rubbing harshly against actual life. The hardest part is acknowledging that the way I feel right now was a part of me way before that bastard stood on my neck and didn't care if I lived or died.

Like Shirley Valentine says, and I'll add only a little at the start of the quote...

"I have led such a little life (for the last few years), I have allowed myself to lead this little life when inside me there is so much more. And it has all gone unused, and now it never will be. Why do we get all this life if we don't ever use it? Why do we get all these feelings and dreams and hopes if we don't ever use them? That is where Shirley Valentine disappeared to. She got lost in all this unused life"

That CUTS me with its weight, and reality.

Today I will go to work at the bar where I almost got killed. I'll do my job, smile at the customers, collect glasses and every hour or so, I'll go and smoke a cigarette at the back door where a small part of me is still lied on that fucking floor. Tiny.

Next Friday I'll be Gemini, at a lady's night, for the first time in over a decade.

Maybe, just maybe, that will be the start of the new. I feel that The Vegan Queens is one of very few 'last chances'.

I intend to take them. Make the most of any chance I get to do anything that stops me feeling little.

I am more. Bigger. Better. Brilliant and beautiful. I want to live that, own it, wear it well.

Not today though. Today I will be 'bar man'. Another role to play.

Sorry, I waffled. #notsorryreally

Much love warriors. Xxx



Gemini, July 2017. Stuart couldn't do that first show with me.

I used my fucking legs and did it alone.

She dances still.

8 July 2017

I've said it before and I'll say it again. You're never too old. It's never too late. Not ever. Whether you sing, dance, act or drag, maybe all four, or some not mentioned, do it, do it no matter what that voice in your head says. Change the voice, change what it says. YOU are in control.

"Be all that you can be, live your life with joy"

That's a lyric from a song written and performed by my amazing hubster, Jason Bromley. Not just a lyric though is it.

I'm really fucking proud of myself, and Gemini. I'm emotional in the best of ways. Pride, belief, confidence.

Use your fucking legs. Sparkle. Shine.

Be ALL that you can be.

Goodnight fellow earthlings, warriors, friends and even foes.

The girl who used to be me used to go dancing.

She dances still. Xx



Onward and upward.

11 July 2017

Imagine a tiny lady coming out of my mind's eye, down the bridge of my nose, stopping at the bottom she takes off her glasses and says;

"This mind, is clean"

I've just had my final cbt session, which we mutually agreed should be the last.

I don't mind saying that I'm incredibly proud of myself for both wearing my issues in clear view, and dealing with them so proactively, in my own creative ways.

My therapist thanked me for taking her along on this journey with me. I thanked her for being so dynamic and getting how I *needed* our sessions to be.

Onward and upward.

Using my fucking legs the whole way. 😂 xx

25 July 2017

Coincidence? Cosmos?

So, I'm sat here at my desk filling in a final form from CICA (criminal injuries). I've had the form for over a week, and put it right in front of the TV until I was ready. This morning, wanting it all to be done with, I got to it. It is five pages long and required me to detail, again, every injury I received treatment for, both physical and mental. I wrote it all down. Clinically. Detached. That was then, this is now. I started thinking...

'After this, only the court date, then it's all over'

Last time I was contacted 'it' was pleading not guilty and the court date was set for August. I had been asked to keep myself free and available for a two-week period, just in case.

I'm on page five of the form, the final section, additional information you wish to provide about your injuries or claim.

My phone rings. It's the Police.

"Just to let you know he's pleaded guilty to all robberies, including Brookdale and will be sentenced in September. We'll let you know the outcome but you'll probably see it in the paper. Your part is over now, but we're here if you need us for anything"

Huge. Mahoosive. Mega.

Now another coffee, and a think, and maybe a smile or two.

Plans and ideas abound, fabulous ways to...

USE MY FUCKING LIMBS

Yeah, I brought arms into the equation, rude not to.

Peace out, thanks for reading and sharing this moment.

Please be excellent to each other, and animals, always. xx

I'm way past surviving

7 September 2017

I thought about writing what I'm about to write a few days ago, then stopped myself because of those nagging inner voices. 'People will think it just attention grabbing'. 'People really don't care how you think or feel'. Blah, blah fecking blah.

Those voices can fuck themselves. All of 'em.

Just about a year ago this week I started work at the Golf Club. Things were looking up. After having hosted the TV show for many months with no income, completely supported by my husband and led on by outright lies from the TV companies owner, who offered me part time work then ignored every email afterwards, (for almost 3 months), this income was a much needed helping hand.

Approximately six weeks later, after ONE very dubious and strangely timed complaint to ofcom, I was told I wouldn't be hosting the show I had worked so hard on for so many months, or anything at the station, anymore. Devastated.

Two weeks after this I was lied on a concrete floor with a masked, weapon wielding hooligan stood on my chest and neck. Broken.

Four weeks after this I was being poisoned by codeine and went through several weeks of illness and horrific withdrawal caused by the painkillers I desperately needed. Crumbling.

Then xmas came along, and that's all a bit of a blur. Numb.

Four weeks after this my fur baby/friend and desperately needed cuddle chum had to be put to sleep. It was the most difficult goodbye, the most gut-wrenching kiss and cuddle I had experienced thus far in life. Empty.

A short time after this, a short trip, gifted to us by beautiful people, got us off this land mass for a few days. There was a lot of grieving, a lot of reflection, and healing began.

I started to realise. I went through ALL that, and here I am, surviving. That was a big one. Something clicked. I could continue to be defined by all of this, or I could be me, but not both.

Throw in a gentle return to the gym, a well-balanced diet, some great therapy, making time to do enjoyable things and inner strength, and here we are.

I'm not thriving yet, but I'm way past surviving.

Waaaaaaay past.

See, now I feel so much better for getting all that out. Fuck y'all haters. 😃

Have a great day. Xxx

17 September 2017

A lovely night out with **#friends** and **#family** in early celebration of Jason's **#birthday**.

A lovely meal at **#Zizzi** and then a drink or two and a li'l cabaret on **#CanalSt**

Great night, still home by midnight. 😁😁



Andrew, Jason, Paul and Stuart.

Another Letter to Myself

22 September 2017

Hey Paul,

Remember that guy who wrote you a letter when you started college all those years ago? Well, it's me again, commonly known as past Paul. I was going to write this in your journal (the one you're already neglecting), alas, I feel Facebook is better for this. You see past posts through here and timehop, so in a year, you'll see this. Again.

It's time for you to move on from me. Right now!

The last twelve months have been tough, so let me, and it go.

Be an older, wiser version of Paul who woke up that morning in 1997, read that letter from a previous version of himself and started a journey. Let the journey continue again.

Ride the roller coaster, fuck the merry go round. That just goes around! Nothing!

I've hated much of the last year truth be known. So much loss, pain and illness, both physical and mental. Let it be done. Let ME be done. YOU have to carry on where you left off before this all started. A year is enough, more than enough! Too much!

You are strong. You are good. You are a beautiful spirit, a talented performer and when you can be bothered, a brilliant writer.

Be bothered!
Be beautiful!
Be brilliant!

Most of all, be brave!

I love you. I love you too much to stay. Let me take it all away.

Bring me back when we can write about how well things are going, how successful our ventures are, how happy we've become.

For now, I bid you farewell, and Paul please, fare well!

I love you more than any other person on the planet.

Remember that.

Always. Xx

Other vegans

7 October 2017

Sometimes I despise being vegan, only because of other vegans. Much like I became an atheist, mainly because of other religious people.

It's far too easy to cherry pick, far too easy to become self-obsessed and look down on other vegans who don't do exactly as you do.

If people are making the effort to actually BE vegan, to avoid animal cruelty or exploitation at all costs, leave them be.

Whether they love meat alternatives (as I do) or buy things with an ingredient you despise, or from a company you abhor, back off. They, WE are doing the best we can.

We're not you, and how dare you expect us to be.



#MeToo

17 October 2017

I worry ladies, I truly do, especially after reading some of the posts I have over the past few days. (even about writing ladies rather than women)

I may be a gay man, but obviously, I'm still a man. Is it wrong when I post 'thanks hun', to your comment? Is it misogyny when I comment on a picture that you look beautiful? Do I offend you when I see you and say 'hiya love, thanks sweetheart, etc'?

As a drag queen over the years, I 'personally' have always loved it when I'm 'her' and people use terms of endearment or gendered phrases to address me, but, that's me, and I AM a man.

I saw a friends post this morning, a female friend. I think she is beautiful and her smiling pictures always make me smile too. I wanted to tell her that I thought these things, but I paused, stopped, and here we are.

I have incredible and massive respect for ALL fellow beings, male, female, human, animal, and I would hate to think that my language or tactility have ever offended, upset or degraded anyone, in any way. If they had, however, I would want to know so that I could address and change the things that have caused unintentional discomfort or disappointment.

For the record.

#MeToo

Beautiful, Incredible Kefalonia

*Written in the guestbook on the first Kefalonia trip in **October 2017***

She's asking us to stay. "Just a little longer" she whispers. "I have so much more to show you, there are parts of me that I want you to experience, places I need you to see that you haven't seen"

She doesn't beg, it isn't in her nature. She will let you go, if she has to. There are a million souls to soothe and yours is only one.

She will wait though. She has spent an eternity waiting.

And whilst she waits for your return, she will perform her magic on countless others. All will be enthralled, amazed, caressed and cared for.

Falling in love with her is your only duty. She requires nothing more of you. Only undying, unconditional, deeply devoted love.

A small price to pay for her attentions.

She knows you will return. Her magic is too strong to resist. Too potent to ignore.

She is an addiction with no side effects. A drug that causes no harm.

She will leave you needing her until you arrive on her shores again, and then, like now, she will give you everything. No part of her is out of bounds, no corner untouched.

You must learn to share her and you will live to love her.

She has given you all that you needed, everything that you wanted, and she will again.

When you return, and you will return.

Keep her in your thoughts. Lodge her in your heart. Slide her into your spirit.

Make your plans to come again.

She'll be here. Waiting.

Beautiful, incredible Kefalonia.



We went to Kefalonia twice, 2017 and 2018. This was the view from our balcony at Aeolos Studios where we stayed both times.

Stunning island, as I hope this piece clearly demonstrates.

20 October 2017

Exactly one year ago today I filmed what would turn out to be my final episode of Now We're Talking. It was never aired, and not long after my entire body of work, all 52 episodes, were deleted from YouTube by That's Manchester.

As a regular marker of moments, and as someone who will always leave a danger sign for others, if at all possible, my video about all that happened there has been coming for a while. Of course, only two weeks later the orror happened and you'll know, the fallout from that, and the healing have taken many months.

I've done the video this morning. The perfect time to really. I'll share the link once it's uploaded. It felt good to get it all out.

DONE:

Video: Now We're Talking — retrospective on how and why it ended

[Watch the video]



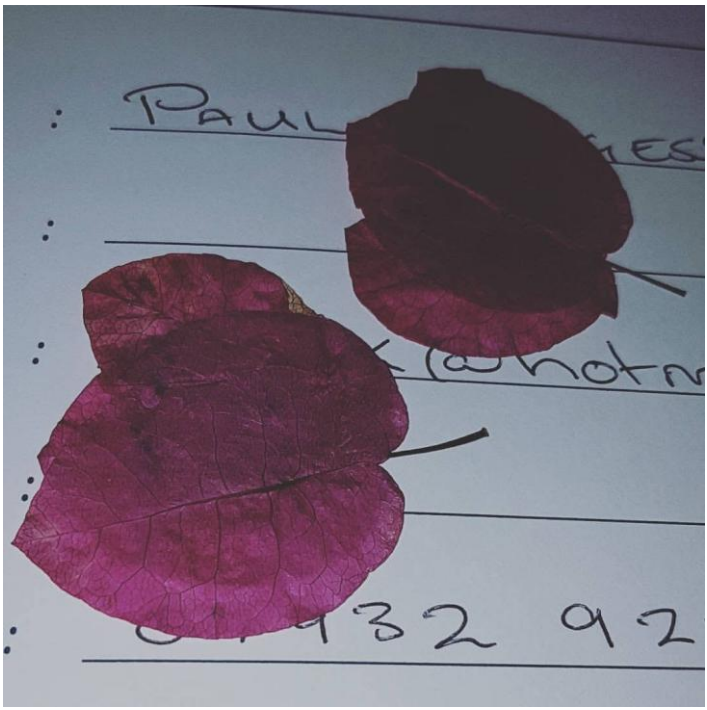
Two flowers

21 October 2017

I was already emotional today after acknowledging the date being exactly a year since my last #TV show, and then making the video about how and why it all ended. Then, there I am at work, I get my journal out which I haven't written in since before our holiday, I open it up, and there they are. Two flowers that fell from the Bush on our balcony whilst in #Kefalonia.

I was in bits, again.

Here they are in my book.



Moment marking

3 November 2017

There are parts of me that I don't over analyse. Things that have always been core and I simply accept as a part of me. One of them of course is moment marking. Jason has Monday booked off work and I'm hoping we get to do something, lunch out, or maybe dinner. Personally I need to mark the day as Monday is 6th November, a year since the 'orror'. It happened around 6.30pm. I don't know what I'll be doing at 6.30pm on Monday, but whatever it is I will stop for a moment and look back at that guy on the floor thinking he was going to die, and I'll acknowledge that the chant of **'use your fucking legs'** will now always be a part of me.

Have a good Friday facebookers. 🙄



This Was The Day — A Retrospective

6 November 2017

I looked at my facebook memories this morning, from a year ago today. There was only one post, a picture of my lunch that I was taking to work. A Tupperware sandwich box filled with leftovers from the night before. A Greek theme. A delicious lunch and one that I undoubtedly thoroughly enjoyed.

I was feeling great. Stuart had been around the night before and had dinner with Jason and I, we'd done a live video in my kitchen afterwards and drank wine, obviously.

That was yesterday though, and this was today.

No doubt I had gone to work in a great mood. We'd had a lovely evening with loved ones and I had a great lunch to enjoy. I knew it was going to be a quiet shift so was looking forward to it ending before it had even begun. Jason would be picking me up when I finished and we had plans to go and see some friends we hadn't seen in a while. It was all part of a well discussed plan, to do more, see more, make more of an effort. We had already started to do things that needed doing at home, and this part of the plan was crucial. See friends, make the effort.

On the day ticked. Cigarettes were smoked on the balcony and the stunning view was breathed in along with all the chemicals and toxins. No doubt I though about my husband and smiled. No doubt I thought about The Vegan Queens and all the silliness we might get up to in the coming months. No doubt I listened to music on my phone, and I would have served some customers with beverages. That is, after all, why I was there.

At the end of my shift I did all I had to do. Cleaned this, washed that, put those away. I was excited about seeing our friends and their lovely kids. It had been too long.

It was about to be longer.

I left the bar and turned to close the door properly. I was smiling.

In an instant, I felt an arm around my neck, tight, tighter.

The rest you know, and if you don't: 2026 Vlog here

I didn't post again that day, or that night.

This was the day our lives would change.

This was the day that would mark the beginning of a long and tough period of our lives.

That period is over!

This IS the day that we celebrate a tough year faced head on. The day we celebrate the many battles won. The challenges faced.

This is a day for living. X



Nov 7 2017

I checked out my timehop this morning. You know what my first post was on this day last year? VEGAN FOOD!!! Lol.

I get twatted up by four thugs, and I post about food. Sooooo me.

I have to admit now, I was a li'l wary yesterday as I'd read somewhere about the possibilities, and the dangers of trauma anniversaries bringing things back up. I was only wary because last year I was so sure I was fine psychologically, and we all know how that turned out. Anywho, all was well. Did a lot of cooking with a batch of pesto I made a few days ago, shared the shizz out of the meal we had, and just spent some quality time with the hubster.

So yeah, in retrospect, food and making videos with Jason and I as Those Vegan Guys, and with Stuart and I as The Vegan Queens, have been core to recovery. Utterly core. Plus, my own ramblings on my ActorReactor channel of course.

For the record (I know you writin' this down bitch) 😉, I'm having leftover mash, peas and sweetcorn from last night, fried up on BREAD for lunch.

Have a great day if you fancy one. 😀

I choose tears over numb

Nov 12 2017

I've cried so many tears today, and yet I'm not in the least bit sad. Just connected. Waved Jason off in Manchester, he's at a conference all day tomorrow in Wales so not home until late tomorrow night.

That wasn't where the tears started though.

Nothing sad about hugging and kissing your husband in the street, then shouting 'I LOVE YOU' to each other. Quite lovely in fact.

It's my own imagination and filling in that gets me, and it started with the Cats Protection League at the vegan fest. Cut the thoughts short though and signed up for the CPL Lottery. £4.30 a month.

Then I bought some jewellery from a stall that was selling bric a brac to fund Mothers and Baby refugees arriving in Greece. Imagining their plight, and thinking of Greece, did it again. Got a grip.

At the bus stop a little later there was a woman with a little set up against the wall facing the bus stop, a colourful picture, a small lean up of friendship bracelets and a sign offering a poem or a bracelet for £2, homeless written at the bottom. I imagined her plight. I had £2.70 in silver, so I went over and handed it to her saying I didn't want anything, only to help. She held my hand for a moment, looked right into my eyes and simply said:

"Thank you darling"

Smiled, walked away, gone again.

Now after all that who, I say WHO comes home and purposefully watches War Horse, almost immediately followed by Happy Feet 2???

points at self

This guy.

This guy does.

Thinking about all the horses in the wars killed me, then for some bizarre reason thinking about Penguins and their plight got me too. I'm sure their happy and fine in their brutal risk ridden world. 🙁

Connected. Aware. Thinking. Empathising.

I choose tears over numb any day of the week.

Good evening to you. 🙂 xx

Acknowledge. Own. Action.

17 November 2017

Acknowledged: I need to get over berating myself for not writing in my journal. THIS is my journal most of the time, it doesn't matter where it is written, only that it is. The cosmos, as I see it, is not going to make sure things work out right for me because i happen to have done 'some' good in the world. That isn't how things work. Unfortunately. I put way too much of myself into shared endeavours and not nearly enough into me, just me.

Owned: Only I can change things up, whether it take ritual, head tapping, constant inner nagging, whatever. Only I can do it. Whether I feel undervalued, used, ignored, put aside, berated, ostracized, whatever.

'I ALLOWED IT TO HAPPEN!' (Ron Silver - Garbo Talks)

Actioned: Last night I set out a three-word, three-day plan on our white board. By moving words up in steps, and removing one each day, I came up with this.

Yesterday: Rest. Chill. Think.

Today: Chill. Think. Action.

Tomorrow: Think. Action. MORE Action.

I have a Presenter showreel that isn't going to edit itself, and has waited too long.

I have **a book** in me that is too important not to write, in fact, I have lots of things in me that need to be written, I allow myself an action tick just for writing this. I need to do so much more in this area.

If you saw me right now you may well call me a hobo, metaphorically slap me in the face and tell me to get my shit together. I'd agree with you, but I'd slap the shit out of you for hitting me. LOL.

I need a shave, a trip to town for a haircut, and I need to start editing my bloody showreel.

It is written.

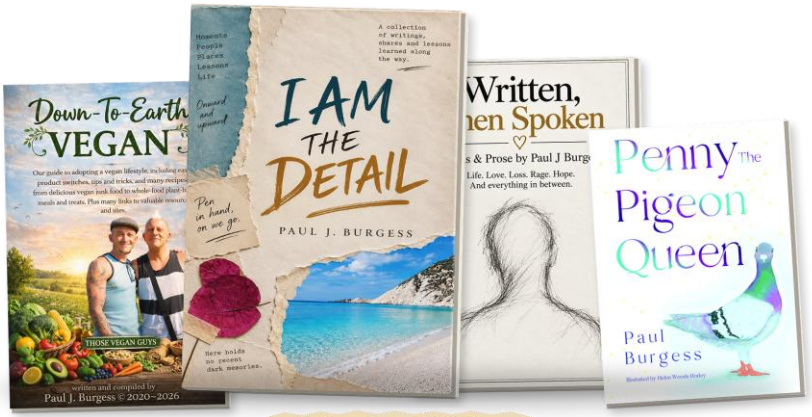
Have a great day, and please be excellent to each other. xx

addendum: I asked Jason to join me in a breathing exercise last night as we got into bed. I read it and thought I'd try it, it may well become a nightly ritual

In through the nose for 7 seconds, hold for 4 seconds, exhale through the mouth for 8 seconds.

We did a set of three.

Maybe 4 tonight. 😀



Books, 2026.

THIS is my journal most of the time

23 November 2017



Gaydio, November 2017.

I almost, 'almost' wrote in my journal again at work yesterday, alas I was bouncing between being cold, being desperate for change, music fuelled elation and resigned confinement (physical and mental), so it didn't come off. Besides, I like to keep visible, I love sharing and, people, tell me I inspire them.

You can't buy that. You can't bottle that.

The weather has already started taking it's toll on my general well being. Dark nights and perpetual cold and rain can have a massively negative effect on me if I don't keep a close eye. Slacking off the gym, eating too much of the wrong stuff soon come into play, as they have, and then I start to feel like most humans feel with a junkish diet and lack of activity. Shit! We'll be visiting the gym on Sunday for sure and I'm already focusing my food thoughts on all the really good stuff I love. Masses of steamed veg with a good gravy, huge pots of 9 to 12 vegetable stew, spinach (in all ways, at all times), all kinds of beans and pulses, daal, brown rice. On and on.

I'm still getting lost in my own thoughts too much. I can just sit and off my mind wanders into a barrage of conflicting thoughts.

You need to do more and you need to do it now.

The cosmos will make things right, it always does.

Nothing happens sitting around waiting for it.

Before you judge another, ask yourself what right you have, and if they have the same right to judge you in the same way.

judges people

I'm too old for a, b and c now.

You're NEVER too old to achieve anything.

He/She doesn't respect/like/understand me

What other people think about me is none of my business

Still hurts though, right? (fuck you)

fantasises about already having done a, b and c

fantasises about living abroad

decides to write a facebook post

I know we all, ALL have intrusive thoughts, but these days I seem to be having a lot of negative/dismissive/distracting ones too. Plus, you know, the weather/season as aforementioned.

Anywho, good to get all that out.

Have a great day. xx



Bike ride with Cycle Club Oldham, November 2017.

30 November 2017 – Three Little Stories

Three little stories will form this post, all important to me, maybe to other vegans too, and especially non vegans with vegan friends/relatives etc.

In October this year hubby and I had the most amazing holiday in Kefalonia (amazing for vegans for the record). We completely fell in love with the island, her people and the Greek culture in general. Incredible holiday. We stayed in a stunning studio owned by an incredibly lovely man. On day three of our holiday, in the early evening, our host knocked on our studio door with food for us. He had filled a bowl with Greek yogurt and topped it with grapes and local honey. He didn't know we were vegans (he had no reason to know) and so this was a cultural gesture which came from the heart. Hubby answered the door to this kind offer, and we could have pretended and took it, said thank you and then got rid of it, but we didn't. We thanked him for his kindness and then explained that we were vegan and could not accept it. Our host didn't really understand, especially about the honey, BUT because of our honesty he respected us and came back later with just fruit. Beautiful plump grapes from his own garden, which of course we thanked him deeply for, and thoroughly enjoyed. Honesty is always the best policy. Thus, ends story one.

A few days ago, after seeing quite a few posts over several groups about vegan relationships with non-vegans, I posted my thoughts about the subject in a group. Personally, I could never be intimate with a non-vegan. I'm lucky to be with the same guy for 20 years, married for 8. He went veggie when he met me, and we went vegan together four years ago. I got some really defensive and angry responses to my post, I was called judgmental, biased, even hateful. All perceptions. Of course. I was interested to know if vegans in relationships with omnis, bought/cooked non vegan foods for their partners. How they justified and quantified this. Whether people were happy to be with an omni who had no intention of being vegan, and how they dealt with that. The main defensive posts came from women with omni partners. I learned that cognitive dissonance isn't just the fuel for omni anger at vegans. People can defend such BS when they are in love. If it isn't

fine for anyone else on the planet to do, then it isn't fine for your partner! This brings me on to story three.

Last night, in work, a colleague asked me why I went vegan. I explained that I'd watched a documentary called **Vegucated** about four years ago and basically went vegan overnight. We gave all of our veggie food away, shopped and started afresh. I also explained that we were already veggie, so she asked how that came about. I explained. (local art gallery installation well over twenty years ago). Then, she suddenly started saying how it was very important for us humans to eat ALL foods for a healthy diet. How humans NEED cow's milk. All the usual BS. I counteracted all of her indoctrinated fallacies with actual facts about the horrors of factory farming, the truth about dairy, and so on. She couldn't handle it, kept talking over my responses, continually saying no no no that's not what happens. In the end I just said, don't ask me about this if you're not prepared to listen to answers and facts. It's like you asked me just so you could argue. The moral of this story, people will do that. They will ask you how, why etc, and then will get incredibly defensive and angry at the answers you give. Don't take it. Be strong. Being vegan is tough sometimes, but questions and angry interactions will never, EVER be as bad as having your baby taken away, or being strung up by your back legs whilst your throat is slit, or being ground alive because you're not the right sex.

Remember that and be strong.

Be excellent to each other. xx

There is a switch.

3 December 2017

I know it's really easy to just get pissed off when you have a vegan friend who posts a lot of stuff you'd really rather not see. I'm actually fully aware of that perspective, of YOUR perspective. Are you aware of mine?

Don't forget I've been you. When I was veggie I was bothered by some vegan posts, even direct and exceedingly polite comments from vegans on my posts about my happy eggs etc. I, like all humans, had the capacity to question my own reactions and to actually look into what I was being told. And here I am. Vegan four years. Never, ever, EVER enjoyed food or cooking so much. LOVE cooking for family and friends. Thoroughly enjoy every cruelty free mouthful of bliss I push into my gob. 😉

So, please, for a moment, imagine my perspective.

I know you, we're friends/family. I know that if you truly, fully acknowledged that ALL animals have a right to live, just like your dog, cat or other domestic companion, if you truly owned your part in the horror story that is animal agriculture, you would already be making changes. To me, to them, too few of you are.

You know the horror, you know the damage to the climate, to the planet. Yet I see your pictures, read your posts. You have a steak, that's a life gone. A force bred animal with feelings, probably used up for years in dairy. An annual cycle of forced insemination, infanticide and injustice, filled with pain, fear, loss and death. That's dairy! That's meat!

I give a shit about you. I care about your kids. I care massively about the planet we all share and have to leave for the next generations. I care about animals. They all have the same capacity for feeling as the cat I adore on my knee, as the dog you love.

There is a switch.

You have to be the one to press it.

I'll keep pointing at it, and using a torch if I have to.

Love you, but actually love you though.

More fool me?



9 December 2017

Did you hear about the woman who claimed she was imprisoned by an alien species for over four years?

She says they tied her into a metal frame and forcefully impregnated her. They made her carry the baby to term and then took it away to kill it on the day it was born.

This happened four times over the four years.

After (and before) they took each baby they attached pumps to her breasts, every single day, to pump out the milk meant for her babies. They did this whilst she was grieving, crying out for her children, and they did it until her breasts were sore and swollen, covered in cuts and abrasions.

After the fourth baby was taken and killed, and the many more months it took for her breasts to stop producing milk, they slit her throat and let her bleed to death.

She's okay now, the woman, after a lot of intensive therapy and the psychologists final conclusion.

She had dreamed the life of a so called organic, free range, grass fed dairy cow.

Thank goodness that wasn't the case.

An End of Year Rambling

31 December 2017

I was chatting to Jason last night about this post (I've always done one since being on fb), and about 2017 in general. I like to be able to use a word, just one word to epitomise a year, and the word for 2017 is powerful. All parts of it fit with that word. The very beginning of the year was powerful in far too many negative ways. Coming out of the storm of the attack and all that came with and after it. Losing Alice whilst still deeply damaged and completely out of sorts. Struggling with so many things that side swiped me out of nowhere. It was tough. All of it made a bit better by the kindness of friends and a short break. I can't imagine where I would have been, or ended up if that hadn't happened. That kindness pulled me out of a dark place and set me on a track to heal.

Some of my essential 'healing tools' have been the video making and fun I've had with both Those Vegan Guys & The Vegan Queens. Relearning that I MUST do things like that. I have to be creative, I love to be filmed.

Acknowledged, owned, actioned. To be continued....

My writing has taken a hit these last twelve months, relying on outlets such as right here and my personal journal, yet still with a head full of plays, poems, books! They all need to come out. They WILL come out.

I will be starting the new year in battle mode. Cica will not diminish what happened to us or the fallout from it, and I'll fight it so hard. Not just for me. Remember, I leave signs in the road when I trip on a rock. Always have, always will.

I believe I've faced this year with a lot of courage, and to steal a line from Sense8...

COURAGE IS CONTAGIOUS! (I LOVE that)

Thank you for being a part of my 2017, for being a part of my healing from some of toughest shit I've ever been through in my life.

I'm stronger now than I've ever been and I intend to keep it that way.

2018, come at me. Let's do this!

Love ya. Please be excellent to each other, and please consider signing up to Veganuary.

No, I'll never stop being a passionate vegan and wanting to inspire others to make the change. You have been warned. 🙄



Paul & Jason, December 2017.

PART FOUR

WHAT CAME AFTER

#SOULNOTES

15 May 2018

Working with people with Alzheimer's/Dementia can be tough. Discussions can be impossible. Broken and bitty at best. As I wrote in a previous post, and have said in a staff meeting at work - "It feels like some people are wearing a veil that they had nothing to do with purchasing or putting on" It filters normality, chain of thought, memory and even awareness.

It would be easy to harden oneself to it, to stop expecting or trying to promote a lifting (of the veil that is).

Sometimes the veil slips! Out of nowhere. Without warning. Unannounced. Beautifully. Harshly!

What you see and hear in those rare moments may be tough, devastating, even. On you must go. Reacting to but not 'reacting' to.

Sometimes incredibly tough though it may be, I love my job.

Correction. I always love my job. Sometimes it tries to sideswipe me.

And so I learn, and adapt, and evolve.

Much love to you all. Xx

16 February 2019

Nine pages and growing. 4.835 words, yet to expand.

I don't do things by halves.

"The world is full of little injustices. Some people they bother, some they don't. Me, they bother" - Estelle - Garbo Talks

2026 note: I wrote the post above whilst I was writing Down-To-Earth Vegan which was released in 2020.

23 March 2019

I see the 'suicide awareness, someone is always listening' post is doing the rounds of sharesville again. Important note.

In the weeks after the orror, when I sank to the lowest mental health depths I had ever experienced, I shared some of my darkest days on here. That post was doing the rounds at the time. Everyone was 'showing they cared.'

Other than my closest friends who were, of course, always there for me, only one other person reached out to me and arranged to have lunch with me. That person was Jacqui Wright.

I needed so much more of that. I would have loved more invitations out to lunch, or a call and a pop around for a brew.

If you're going to be aware, actually be aware. Pay attention, reach out.

Just something to think about. X

LOCKDOWN

8 April 2020

I miss you.

Yes. YOU.

Lady at the bust stop. Man in the queue. Young woman with a child at the checkout in front of me. And on. And on.

I miss the random conversation about the weather. The clearly expressed joy regarding the upcoming school holidays, suddenly never ending. I miss hearing you complain about the bus service.

I miss the random smiles, nods, the speedy 'good mornings' as we pass.

I was at Sainsbury's last week, queueing in the new way. My position marked out with a cross on the concrete, in yellow and black tape. Moving one cross at a time, in slow procession, as the ones at the front hear the new rules before they enter, in 5's and 6's.

One way out. One way in. Proceed through the store.
No coming back.
No passing go.
No collecting £200.

There was a lady in front of me. Grasping the freshly sanitized trolley handle. She was shaking. Not enough that everyone could see, but enough to see, if you could really see.

It was almost our turn to go inside - and the staff member allocated the role bid us good afternoon before outlining the rules - again. It was a well-crafted script, no doubt one she had repeated exponentially throughout the day.

We listened.

We nodded.

When the instructions were complete, I said, as is my new normal - "Thank you, your work is appreciated, very much"

The lady in front of me turned and added.
"Yes, it is. Very much"

Now you could hear the shake. Delicate. Adorned with years of experience, tough living, grit and purpose, but still there.

Clear to open ears and eyes.

I wanted to hug her. I wanted to say it was okay, we were going to get through this.

Instead, I just smiled.

But of course, smiling behind a mask cannot always be seen. I hope she saw it in my eyes.

I hope she didn't see the tears welling. I didn't mean for them to come.

I ventured inside and followed my set path to the shelves I needed. Swerving around others, keeping a safe distance.

I saw the lady again, in the biscuit aisle. She was taking a pack of digestives off the shelf; I stood on one of the crosses - now inside the store too.

This time I spoke to her.

"A biscuit and a brew, we've still got that"

This time there was a little smile, cautious, but visible in her eyes.

She responded.

"It's always the little things"

Then she was gone.

I grabbed a pack of digestives myself. Scanned them with my app and popped them in my bag.

I looked forward to being back home.

Decontaminated.

Dipping a biscuit into my coffee.

It really is the little things.

And I really do miss you.

Yes.

YOU!



You Wouldn't Have Known

I'm very lucky! 'The Orror', and much that followed, took a massive toll on me as a person, still does to some extent.

Over the last 3 to 4 years, on many occasions - I have suffered crippling depression, debilitating stress and anxiety and yes, even suicidal thoughts & actual planning, I am lucky because I have the strength and willingness to openly talk about it all. To make vlogs about it.

Not everybody does. Not everybody can.

And even in some of the deepest and darkest times, when I was planning my demise in the back rooms of my mind, I still smiled, I still laughed, I still made plans with friends and sent silly voice messages.

You wouldn't have known.

Unless I wanted you to know.

I had my anchors throughout, always.

One is often enough, I have 3. My husband, my Mum and my cat.

Some don't have any.

I guess what I'm saying here is don't judge. Be a good friend. Talk. Listen. Love!!!

YOU're worth it. WE're worth it.

I love you. X

If this piece has brought up difficult feelings for you, or you're experiencing suicidal thoughts yourself, confidential support is available around the world at FindAHelpline.com

10 July 2020

I've been sat at the computer for much of the day and now my neck and shoulders are fucked. I do hunch, terribly.

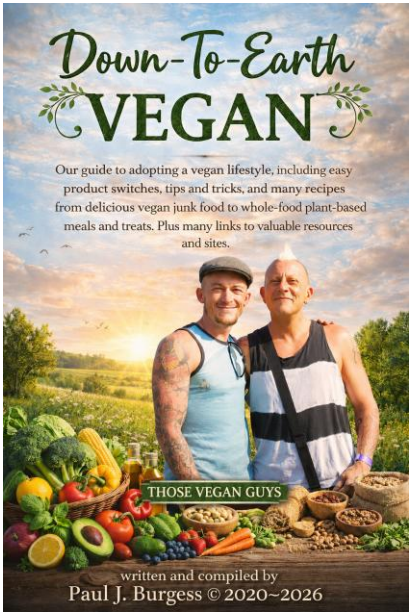
I'm writing a guide to being vegan, part guide, part recipe book. It has me feeling a certain kinda way. Mostly good, but seemingly achey, too. Lol.

You alright? (doesn't wait for an answer)

Good, good.

walks off like a right bitch

Flash Forward



2026

Black Lives Matter

11 September 2020

Black Lives Matter - What it actually means.

It doesn't mean black lives matter more than yours. It simply means black people are asking for their lives to matter as MUCH as yours.

AS MUCH.

THE SAME.

EQUAL.

Who says black lives matter less?

Massively abridged history.

Hundreds of years of forced slavery, generations of families born into forced servitude. Raped, beaten, belittled and often worked to death. Generation after generation. Building the very countries you now live in and often take for granted.

Then freedom. Of a sort. Freedom from forced slavery, but belittled every single day with doors, seats, drinking fountains and much more for WHITES only. Fighting to be seen and heard, fighting for EQUALITY. Not able to vote. Not able to own land. Rules made by white people.

And now?

Black people are asking for the right not to be shot to death whilst lying in bed.

Not to be knelt on in the street by men meant to serve and protect, until dead.

Not to be shot in the back, not to be stopped in cars more than anyone else.

To be given the same opportunities as everyone else, not forced to live in poor areas with little hope of betterment.

When people say, write, DANCE or paint on a sign, BLACK LIVES MATTER, it has never meant 'more than yours', stop adding that line in your mind and getting angry about it.

Black Lives Matter AS MUCH AS YOURS!!

THAT'S IT!

26 September 2020

I'm not a Parent, but I've been a child. I've never forgotten what being a child was like and I can still tell you right now, the things that stuck with me the most or the things I would have loved.

I want to share this because I see so many Parents worrying about what they can do, or feel they should be doing 'for' their kids. I get that there is that 'look what I do with mine' element always evident. I have chosen to ignore it for this post.

It means nothing.

Never has.

The simplest pleasures.

Choose a movie, or two, choose your snacks together and settle down for some simple but crucial time together.

Search for some silly clothes, costumes etc and create some characters, be silly and think outside the box, make a play, or improvise a scene or two and maybe even film it so you can include it in the next movie viewing.

Nature trails and parks, which are aplenty. Pack a little picnic and go somewhere quiet, or adventurous, do a little research before you go so you know what landmarks/nature/animals to look out for and talk about them a bit, encourage questions and discussion.

Cook together, and make it a fun and learning experience, talk about where all the ingredients come from and how they get to the plate, or cupboard.

Have a pamper session, (Dads, you are NOT exempt from this), do this with your girls AND your boys, it's never too early to teach self-care. Face masks, bubble baths, moisturiser, make up. Have at it. Have fun!! (followed by snacks and a pyjama party)

Notice all of these things are about your kids being with you, doing things with you.

That's what I remember the most.

Waffled. #sorrynotsorry

29 October 2020

Criticising Israel is NOT antisemitism.

Being supportive of Palestine is NOT antisemitism.

Adapting the 'rules' that Israel defined and now claim to be antisemitism - to allow for those two points above - is NOT antisemitism.

Present-day note, 2026:

The relationship between criticism of Israel and antisemitism remains contested. The IHRA working definition explicitly states that criticism of Israel comparable to that directed at other countries is not antisemitic, while some of its Israel-related examples have themselves generated considerable debate. Alternative frameworks, including the Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism and the Nexus Document, were subsequently developed in part to clarify the distinction between antisemitism and legitimate criticism of Israel and Zionism.

15 December 2020

Short Movie Idea:

We'll Meet on the Bridge!

Wide shot (drone)

A bridge over a river. On each side, walking towards the bridge entrance are two people. The ones walking out in front are casually dressed, one in red, one in blue, each of them has a suited, briefcase wielding (clutching) man just behind them, leaned forward, whispering in their ears.

"They hate you, they want to take everything from you, they lied to you, they cheated you, they want your rights, they want your freedom, they hate you, they hate your kids, they hate your people" And on, and on.....

The pairs reach the bridge and look out into the middle of it, where a table and two chairs are set.

Red & Blue start to walk towards the setting. The suits, now loudly whispering, repeating their words over and over. Clutching their briefcases to their chests.

Red & Blue arrive, a few feet away from each of the chairs. They just look for a moment, to the chairs, to each other. They each glance back to the suits and then make eye contact with each other.

Red: You hate me, why should I sit?
Blue: I don't hate you. I don't know you. You hate me.
Red: I don't hate you. I don't know you.

They each reach for a chair, pull it out, and tentatively sit down.

The discussion will continue as it started, with each blaming the other for their fears and misconceptions.

Eventually, after much chatter, and realising that they both want the same things, fairness, honesty, fair wages, good health care,

good education, work opportunities, green spaces, compassion for all species, no violence, oppression or war and on and on and on, they realise that the suits are the problem. Red & blue stand.

They shake hands, which quickly turns into a hug.

Red & Blue each eye the others suit, they pass each other with a smile, and head to the opposite side of the bridge that they each entered.

The suits throw their cases in the air, blank pieces of paper and rolls of red tape fly everywhere. The suits scream and run away.

Close up of Red & Blue's faces. They are both smiling.

HUGE smiles.

Fade to black.

PART FIVE

THE THINGS I NOTICE

18 February 2021

If you had to pick 3 movies/series from your childhood that had a real impact on who you are today as a person, I'd love to know what they are, and why?

Mine are glaringly obvious I think - what with me always 'wanting' to do nice things for people and help if I can. (unless they show me who they are and I don't accept) And of course the fact that I love doing characters and ended up in a career which requires 'dressing up'.

The Railway Children (1970)

Three children, three chimneys. Still a constant in my top three movies of all time. Not the twee story some might think, as it also covers how malicious other people can be in trying to bring you down when you're successful, but the core of the story is how a family have to drastically change their lives and, in the process, find them again. Three beautiful children who only want to be nice and kind and make people happy. What's not to love?

Bagpuss (1974)

Baggy, and a bit loose at the seams, but Emily and millions of us, adored him. A saggy old cloth cat in a shop that doesn't sell anything, but displays lost items in the hopes that one day they will be reunited with their owners. Of course, before they are reunited, we get to hear the story of the item, with all the wonderful characters, singing and storytelling of this my 'core' love.

Mr Benn (originally 1971/72)

A man who dresses up, in a shop, and becomes a different character living a different story every time. Then he simply goes back to his normal life, but he'll be back for more.

PRIDE

4 February 2022

Where did I learn that pride was a bad thing?

Who taught me that?

Was it a direct lesson or a combination of teachings?

Was it because of old sayings like 'pride comes before a fall'?

Was it years of hearing the adults around me talk about people being 'full of themselves', or 'up their own arse'? (often unjustified)

As a gay man of (cough) a certain age, Pride (yes with a capital) has come to mean something very different to me.

Something quite specific.

It means a time to be seen and to celebrate the incredible diversity and core inclusivity of the demographic I belong to.

So, what of personal Pride? Pride in oneself - for whatever reason?

At 52 (I've told you now, see I'm kind) I still actually and honestly have a little bit of an issue with it. It has been made to feel negative and dirty to me, in many ways, on many occasions and through too many people.

I acknowledged that this very morning whilst reading through a play I wrote in the year 2000. 'Every Single One Of Me' is a piece of work I am so incredibly proud of. I laughed and cried as I remembered writing and performing this comedy-drama which has only ever been performed with an actual cast and audience, once.

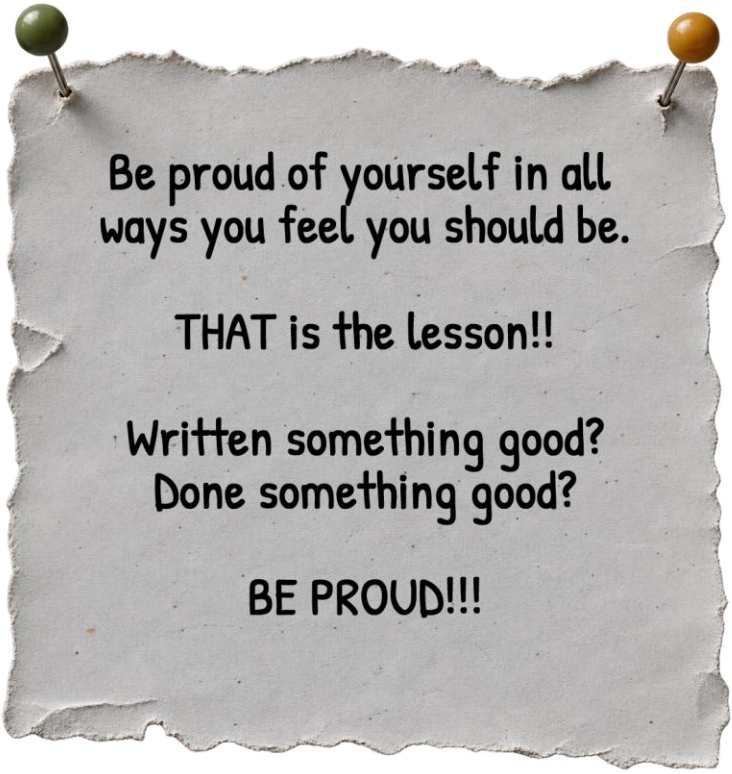
I'm okay with being proud of pieces of work I've written, organisations I've founded etc. But it was only today, after reading my play and acknowledging my Pride in IT, was I able to take some of that for myself. I wrote the bloody thing after all.

I am Proud of ME! I am proud of me for so many reasons, for so many things I have created or founded, worked on or with, performed, written, vlogged. ALL of it.

And that is neither negative nor dirty.

It is essential, justified and important. 😀

We never stop learning and evolving if we allow it.



And this is normal???

7th March 2022

I watched a news segment this morning from Ukraine. It was a UK segment, Sky or BBC, I don't recall. It isn't really important. What is important is that there were four HUMAN BEINGS lying dead in the street, in shot, clear to see. Two adults and two children. Dead. In the street. Fully clothed with bags around them, as if shot down whilst fleeing to safety. Which is of course what must have been happening when their lives were taken. Maybe those children had a favourite toy in one of the bags, maybe a book, or some drawings they had done. Children!

The fact that we live in a world where one man can order hundreds of thousands of other men to go and slay all that they see, is all that is wrong with the world. Terrorizing the world, literally.

"I'll do what the fuck I want, and if you do anything I deem as against what I want, I have the ability to ruin your country"

And here we are, the sane peoples of the world, sat with our daily dose of WTF and *TSD, I missed out the P as we're far from post all of this. *TSD to lay on top of our collective PTSD from so many things, 4 years of Trump, 2 years of Covid, the ongoing BS of Brexit, TOO MANY YEARS of Tories and on and on and on. And now, the very present and terrifyingly real possibility of a madman pressing buttons because the world speaks out against his ancient methodologies and his pure, unadulterated entitlement.

Sometimes I just need to write some shit to help deal. Although it doesn't. Not really.

First they came...

BULLY

14 March 2022

Perhaps foolishly for a HSP (highly sensitive person), I'm still watching the news. Still seeing what is happening and trying to make sense of it all. An impossible task.

I just keep thinking about what this - what ALL of this is saying in very clear terms - to the younger generations. I scale it down, try to make it relatable, to get a glimpse of the messages being received.

There's a bully in the playground. He is terrorizing one particular student, relentlessly beating them at every opportunity. When he isn't beating them, he is lying about them, concocting any excuse to keep up the beatings.

The Teachers have politely asked him to stop. They have the power to stop him, but they choose to keep politely asking. The bully has stated in no uncertain terms that if any of the Teachers intervene any further, he will attack their homes. So they stand back and watch him bully, occasionally shouting, "please stop that". He doesn't listen. He WON'T listen.

His bullying isn't just affecting the victim of his constant and diabolical actions, but EVERY other student in the playground is affected too. All of them are terrified, and looking to the Teachers for help. See above.

What message does this send?

If you're a strong enough bully, making enough threats to all around you, you can totally get away with it and nobody will intervene. Nobody will help. They may throw you a bandage when you bleed, or pass you a hot cup of soup when you starve, but then they will stand back and watch the bully beat you. Shouting their disapproval into the wind.

So what use are the Teachers in this particular scenario? What lessons are they teaching to the rest of the playground? Again, see above.

There's a bully in the playground

His name I will not speak

He is threatening all around him

And pounding on the weak

He is taking peoples backpacks

And stealing all he sees

He will beat and bloody anyone

'Til all are on their knees

"This has to stop now child"

They are yelling with emotion

Then watching as he throws to all

Another crude explosion

There's a bully in the playground

He will stay there 'til he's stopped

There's little use in counting

All the hatred that he drops

The strap and cane are useless

In this scenario

And the bullied wander aimlessly

With nowhere safe to go....

That came out of nowhere as I was writing this post, so I'm leaving it in.

To any of our younger generation reading this. I'm so deeply sorry that this is the world we have allowed to become home for you.

You deserve so much better.

We are, all of us, characters played only by ourselves.

May 2023

We are, all of us, characters played only by ourselves.

We are collections of beliefs, traits, mannerisms, thoughts and feelings that we've picked up or adopted along the way.

We are our own writers, our own directors.

Whether pre-planned or improvised, we choose what happens next.

We write the script.

And we can make it a better one anytime we choose.

> “Star Trek was an attempt to say that humanity will reach maturity and wisdom on the day that it begins not just to tolerate, but take a special delight in differences in ideas and differences in life forms."
> - Gene Roddenberry

Aug 2 2023

I needed to just take a moment as me, Paul. Not TVG. Not TVQ. Just me.

Those who know me well, know I can be a very emotional person. Last time we went to Vegan Camp Out in 2019 it got me as we were leaving, and all the way home. This time it waited until I was home and settled. The sneaky sod. LOL

Getting to perform as The Vegan Queens with Jason Bromley Music singing CHOICES and representing us as Those Vegan Guys was not just a weekend highlight, it was a LIFE highlight.

Reading so many wonderful comments from so many gorgeous people saying that our set was one of their highlights too is soul food. Tangible, edible, soul food.

So many hugs.

So much love.

Such a gorgeous group of humans in our little camping circle just chatting about life and eating great food, drinking and laughing.

And every time I watch that stage reel from the queens I get goosebumps.

Thanks everyone.

All of this was everything!



Following The Vegan Queens' fabulous musical stage performance at Vegan Camp Out (VCO) in 2023, we suggested an idea to Jordan, the festival's founder and CEO, which you can read about in full here.

In 2024, that idea became a reality when we hosted our very first **Mind & Body After Dark**!

Two nights, four hours each night, packed with cabaret, burlesque, live music, poetry, drag and karaoke. Eight glorious hours of entertainment, creativity and celebration!

Both nights went down an absolute storm, and we've been invited back to host them at every Vegan Camp Out since.

What began as a suggestion in 2023 has grown into something we're incredibly proud of.

#VCOMABAD is now an established part of Vegan Camp Out, celebrating its third year in 2026!



PART SIX

NOW

22 February 2024

So fucked off.
I hate him so much.
He whipped it out and it was massive.

This post contains none of that, nothing at all like that.

And some of you are already gone, some of you are still reading but feeling judged or attacked.
Please don't.
But please read on.

We all, ALL have a tendency towards a little drama, conflict, airing of dirty laundry or even, regrettably, actual hate.

It isn't our fault, for the record, but wilful continuation of our conditioning once aware of it IS.

TV Shows and movies have played their part, and our own self-protection has played a much-needed part too, but not always a good one.

I'll explain.

Things happen, or are said, or are done to others every single minute of every single day that all of us, each and every one of us finds unacceptable. We have been literally forced to accept the unacceptable, because it happens, every day.

Cue self-protection, much needed as previously stated, but has it made us complicit in the growth of the unacceptable?

We can see without looking.
We can hear without repeating.
We can observe without absorbing.
We have every right to find things unacceptable.
We have a right, and a responsibility.
We can refuse to click.
We can not engage.
We can turn our backs.

We can stand up and speak out, and we should, whatever level our unacceptable resides at.
How is it that the loudest and longest voices all too often spew nothing but hate and division?

We ALL have a voice.
We all have control of our own volume, content and conversation.

We.

All of us.

Together.

We decide the future. What we accept absorbs into normalcy.

Division, hate, intolerance, polarization, racism, homophobia, transphobia, speciesism, superiority and narcissism, so many negatives.

Love, kindness, compassion, acceptance, togetherness, community, cognition, equality, peace and hope, so many positives.

Our choice.

Ours.

I believe in change, hope and in US.

So I'll stand up.
I'll speak out.
I'll keep myself aware.
And I'll hope.

Because I believe in us.

Because I have to.

Do you?

28 April 2024

I'm easy to know through the movies I love.

I'm The Railway Children, every cast member and the ethos of the time.

I'm Estelle in Garbo Talks.

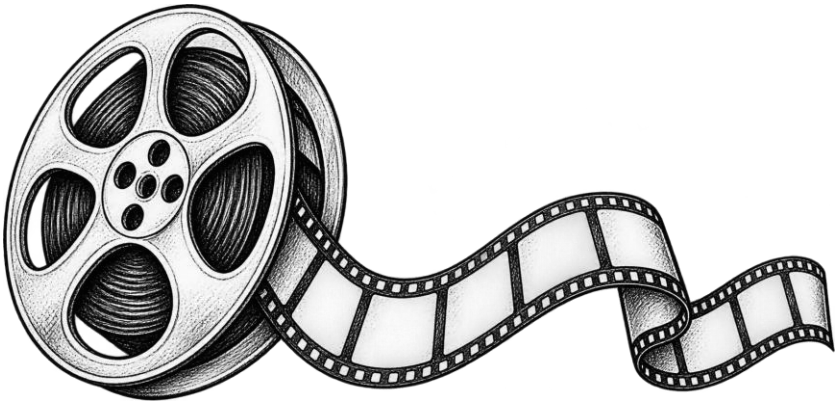
I'm the magic in Bagdad Cafe.

I'm the trumpets in Ice Castles.

I'm the secret ingredient in Mystic Pizza.

I'm the Seagull in Leaving Normal, the magic bauble in Starman, the edited-out scenes of The Abyss and the lip licks in Scandal.

I could go on and on.



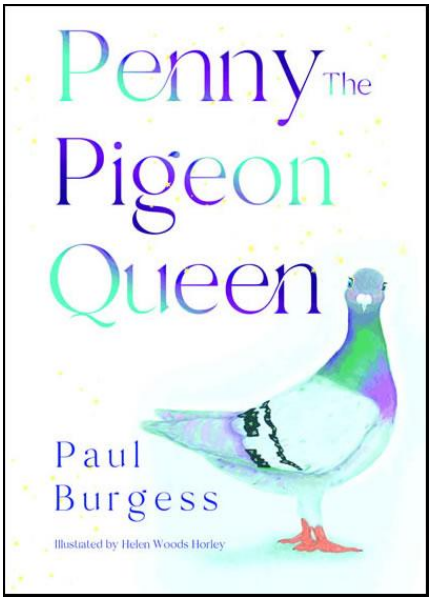
28 Nov 2024

On this day my beloved children's book *Penny The Pigeon Queen* was officially released.

Seeing a story I'd written become an actual published book, with its own beautiful illustrations, was a wonderful moment. Something that had once existed only in my imagination was now out there in the world, ready for other people to discover.

Another little piece of me, finding its way into the hands of others.

Click the picture to open the publisher page.



First Christmas Without Her

25 December 2024

This is not the Christmas we wanted or indeed hoped for. It has been a real effort to put the tree up, then to put some lights on it. We haven't bought the gifts we usually would. It will be a real effort to make dinner today, but we will.

It is the first Christmas in 26 years that Rhona isn't here. The missing hugs are palpable.

As we've mentioned before, 2024 has been, jointly, our toughest year thus far.

Too many losses. Excessive goodbyes. So many endings.

Harassment. Abuse. And on and on...

Yet.

In amongst all of that there have been some truly incredible moments.

Fabulous events.

Beautiful days.

Unforgettable memories made.

The smiles will return when they can. Hope is ever present. We must celebrate the wins, the landmarks, the good that kept us afloat.

Being interviewed for and on the cover of The Vegan mag from **The Vegan Society**.

Jason spending some time in the studio and laying down some new tracks.

Getting **#PennyThePigeonQueen** published.
Vegan Camp Out.
Northern Vegan Festival.
Stockport Pride.
Levenshulme Pride.

And so much more.

We acknowledge and appreciate all of the good. It matters.

We've had so many gorgeous lives with our wonderful community too, often a tonic.

Hug your loved ones.

Enjoy all the moments.

Wishing you a beautiful day.

P&J x



We made a tribute vlog for Rhona on 10th December 2025.

You can watch it here.

Our Most Important Playground

July 2025

The Grange Arts Centre, Oldham • July 2025



I took this picture today as I sat on one of the stumps you can see in the bottom left. I cried. Again.

I sat there for a good twenty minutes or so as the time ghosts of the people we used to be and the many we used to know reenacted the scenes and moments forever captured beyond the bricks and mortar.

The Grange Arts Centre in Oldham opened in 1975 and this year 2025, her 50th year, she is to be demolished.

We both have literally decades of memories here. So many people do. Whether you knew her for a day or a decade. She stays with you.

When we first discovered what was then only rumour that she may be demolished we made a vlog, still on the channel. Heartbroken goodbye to The Grange.

Our relationship started after a show here.

The Vegan Queens met here for the first time.

First musical performed here.

First play I wrote was produced and performed here.

First play I saw as a child was right here.

All here.

It is and will always be a massive loss to #Oldham and beyond.

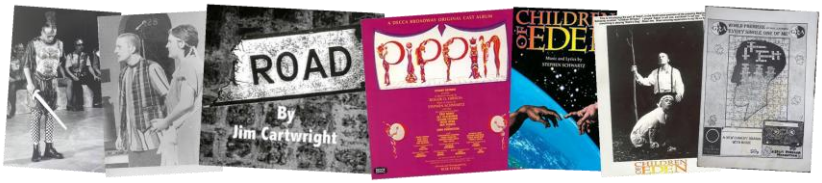
Goodbyes are tough.

This will always be our most important playground.

"Say goodbye to yesterday.

Those are words I'll never say."

Watch the Grange Arts Centre vlog here



6 October 2025

Things that are not now, never have been and never will be antisemitism.

Criticising Israel and the policies.

Criticising Israeli land grabs and illegal settlements.

Calling what has happened and is happening in Gaza a genocide.

Calling out Netanyahu.

7 October 2025

What Hamas did in Israel two years ago was utterly horrific terrorism!

What Israel has done to Gaza since is utterly horrific terrorism!

What happened at the Manchester Synagogue last week was utterly horrific terrorism!

What Israel continues to do in Gaza is utterly horrific terrorism and genocide.

I wanted to be clear where I stood on all these counts.

25 November 2025

I held my mum's hand today as she got off her stairlift. I instantly thought of this picture. Taken over 50 years ago.
Dementia takes people, piece by piece.

No official diagnosis as yet but all that has happened thus far, test results, lived experience, make it clear.

She had us, now we have her. Obvs.



The dementia diagnosis came through eventually, and although we all already knew it was good to get professional confirmation of what we would be dealing with moving forward.

We move forward.

2 February 2026

You know what's truly fucked.

We have an adulterer as our king.

A prime minister I believe has repeatedly lied to us.

America has a president who has been found liable for sexual abuse, convicted on 34 felony counts, and faced many other serious allegations.

Russia has a leader wanted by the International Criminal Court over alleged war crimes.

Israel has a leader wanted by the International Criminal Court over alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity.

And on and on and on.....

All leading 'by example'!!

So if you ever wonder why there is so much hate and division, crime and violence, selfishness and ego.

Don't.

It is all being not only enabled and placated, but encouraged and promoted.

By some of the most powerful men in the world.

8 February 2026

What do you eat as a vegan? It can be a common question, so I just went through our weekly meals' vlogs (every Tuesday on YouTube) and documented all of January.

January Dinners

1st: Roast dinner with paprika steaks, roast potatoes, carrots, Cavallo Nero and cider gravy.
2nd: Kiev, chips, mushy peas and spinach bites.
3rd: Pasta with homemade coriander pesto and charred tomatoes.
4th: Aldi lamb/mint style pie, mashed sweet & white potatoes, marrowfat peas.
5th: Kebab wrap with peri peri chick'n & salad.
6th: Spanish chickpea & potato stew.
7th: Harissa butter beans
8th: Tofu, kitchari and peas
9th: Gardener's pie, long stem broccoli and peas.
10th: Burgers, homemade slaw and nuggets.
11th: African Peanut stew.
12th: Superfood, carrot fried rice, edamame and slaw.
13th: No steak & gravy slice (OMV), chips and mushy pea mix.
14th: Spanish chickpea & potato stew.
15th: Burger, fries, nuggets & salslaw.
16th: Gardener's pie, sprouts, edamame and sweet pickle.
17th: Greek/Med style platter. (couscous, hummus, falafel, salad, cheeze etc)
18th: African peanut stew, rice, rocket and tomato.
19th: Korean braised tofu, rice and edamame.
20th: Pasta with homemade coriander pesto, charred tomatoes and rocket.
21st: Spicy Ethiopian lentil stew/garlic toast.
22nd: Sothern style fillet, chips, mushy pea mix and fried tomato.

23rd: Tofu/rice bake, carrot fried rice, bao and edamame. (kimchi)
24th: Soup & chips. Homemade blue cheeze and broccoli soup.
25th: Chick'n pot pie pasta bake and salad.
26th: Brinner. Bacon, sausage, hash browns, tofu scramble, beans, tomato, mushrooms, breakfast muffins.
27th: Aldi beef style pie, garlic mash and Cavallo Nero.
28th: Spicy Ethiopian lentil stew and rice.
29th: Chick'n pot pie pasta bake and salad.
30th: Japanese chick'n rice with edamame, tomato and spring onion.
31st: Pizza (one world) and salad



18 March 2026

It can easily feel like nobody cares about anybody else anymore.

Many don't.

Taught. Adopted. Addictive.

Hate is addictive.

I've said that for years.

It's addictive because it's easy to assign yourself as hard done by, missing out, second class.

Thing is, we ALL feel that way, in many ways.

Thankfully many if not most of us see the facts, that leaders and powerful men and billionaires are the barriers.

Not your neighbour.
Not 'them'.
Not boats.

Blame is easy to assign.
Look. Listen. Read. Talk.
Pay attention. Seek discomfort!

I love you.

Goodnight. X

16 May 2026

I acknowledged something very important last night chatting with hubby in the kitchen. I haven't been feeling 'right' for quite some time, I'm not feeling like everything is wrong necessarily, just not quite right.

I have been dealing/living with PTSD since the armed robbery in 2016 (the 'orror), but coping well, dealing with it as it comes and doing okay.

Then factor in the literal two years of online abuse and stalking, violent threats, sexual threats etc, police involvement, and it notches up a little.

Then a series of things that I experienced and just 'dealt with', but in retrospect, I didn't.

Seeing someone I supported in ICU every week for a few months until his death, and then funeral.

Just a couple of months later finding out that my lovely MIL had stage 4 cancer in multiple organs and she spent a full month in hospital, partly in ICU (in the same bed) after a brutal surgery that wouldn't save her, just buy her a little time.

Weeks later, after two and a half years of spending many hours every week with someone I supported who became a real friend (sue me), he ended up in Dr Kershaws until his death, and then funeral. I helped carry his coffin and spoke at the funeral.

Whilst all this is going on my own mother is in and out of hospital with several issues including a hip replacement, and ever increasing memory problems.

Weeks later, after battling with grace and dignity, Rhona my lovely MIL and of course Jason's mum, left us. We carried her coffin.

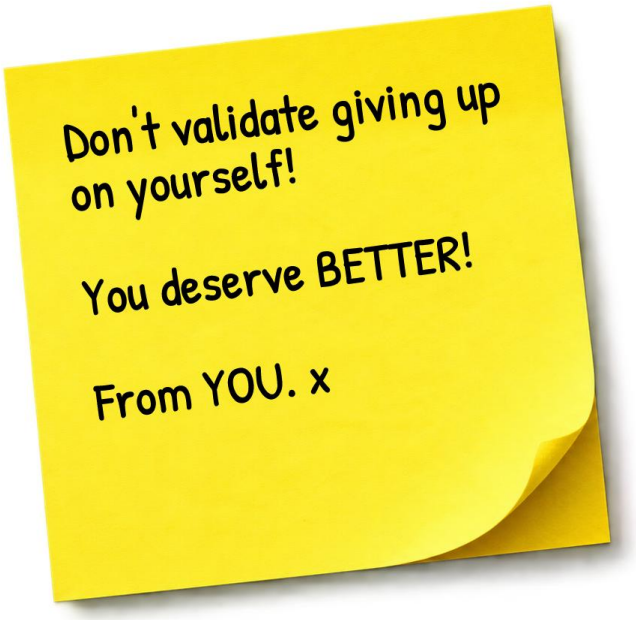
Then the company I had worked at for three years forced me to leave before they unfairly dismissed me, after all of the above and after literally zero support from them.

Then it became clear that my own mother had dementia, and following tests and many other health concerns the diagnosis was confirmed. I became her main carer, along with much support from some of my other siblings and extended family and unfortunately not enough from one, as if dealing with dementia in a parent wasn't enough.

So, here we are, after all of that, ALL OF THAT.....

You can't change, fight or better what you don't acknowledge.

Now I have.



TIP TOE

12 June 2026

I stated in my recent TIP TOE Review vlog that the main warnings in it were against toxic masculinity and mob mentality, add a little racism to those two and you get what's happening in Belfast right now.

All three together, or any intolerance/hatred instead of racism (homophobia, transphobia etc.), mixed with toxic masculinity and mob mentality and you get DANGER in our streets. Threats in our towns. Violence and thuggery in our cities.

It starts small. Voting for, supporting or simply sharing blatantly racist memes from Reform. Watching nothing but right-wing hateful media, GB News, Fox News, TalkTV or ANY of the podcasters or vloggers from the 'Manosphere'. Using words like 'lefty', leftist', 'WOKE' as negative put-downs, etc. etc.

It is all there in plain sight, and really you have no excuse to be sucked in to ANY of it unless you are truly stupid or generally deeply hateful.

DO BETTER!

FFS.

First they came....

June 17th to 20th 2026

We have been huge fans of Beck Hall in Malham ever since we first vlogged there on the very day it became fully vegan back on 1st Dec 2023. (you can see our vlog here)

We've visited many times since.

This time we booked to celebrate my birthday on the 17th, and our anniversary on the 19th, and we opened it up to our friends and subscribers.

Wonderful folk from all over the country joined us for all three nights and we had the most wonderful time.

This pic is from dinner on night two.

A truly stunning few days spent with wonderful people.



As we had been the first to vlog at Beck Hall, the owners Louise and Andy invited us to vlog at their newest venture & venue, Ffarm Hall in Wales and we were delighted to be the first official guests in May 2026.

We were invited to stay for three nights, fully inclusive, and of course we were encouraged to document it all.

You can see that vlog here.



Ffarm Hall in Wales.

July 2026

As a drag queen I have one main pair of 'tucking' knickers. They keep my dick pulled back up near my ass and my testicles firmly back inside when I push them there. They are worn under the tights and under the panty girdle.

I've owned, and worn the same pair for thirty years. Bought as bikini bottoms in Preston Primark in 1995 when I was a drag DJ in Preston and Morecambe.

So technically, 31 years.

31-year-old tucking knickers.

I make things last. LOL

And yes, they get washed regularly, obviously.

Nov 2026 update: YES, I still have them

July 2026

- MOST animals used for animal agriculture are forcefully bred.
- COWS have their (forced) babies taken away and birth milk taken.
- Plants DO NOT feel pain, they don't have a central nervous system.
- Pick a tomato, another will grow, chop up an animal, they die.
- MOST soy (and many general) crops grown on earth are fed to animals for human consumption.
- IF insects and small animals being killed during harvest are your concern, see point above.
- MOST of the amazon rainforest destruction is for animal agriculture.
- 80 BILLION + land animals are raised, fed and slaughtered every year for human consumption.
- EVERY nutritional expert on earth supports and encourages veganism.
- Well-planned vegan diets are suitable for ALL!

These are just the facts, and only a short list, all easily searchable and verifiable.

You're welcome. x

Because I Know You

Originally written in 2016 • reshared in 2026

I wrote this on my own profile ten years ago. Still valid. Maybe even more so....

You ask me why I get angry, why I scream.

I'll tell you why.

I get angry because I know you. You have shared your life with me directly, or simply through posts, pictures and stories, and I have paid attention.

I have seen you. I SEE you.

You are a wonderful person.

You are a warm spirit.

You are a loving friend, parent, husband, wife, colleague.

I know, from all that I have seen, all that you have graciously shared with me, that your heart feels compassion.

I know you would never wilfully hurt another living creature.

Yet.

Every day.

You do.

In your refusal to acknowledge the animals I scream for.

And so I scream.

Because I know you.

I Don’t Want to Play the Game! (but I do)

September 2026

Sometimes — and by that, I mean most of the time — I don't want to play the game.

The social media game, that is, which is surprisingly different for each platform.

It's all been studied, you know. Tested and verified, apparently.

Use emojis here. Be tongue-in-cheek there. Short and sassy at that one.

On and on.

When you're real, like just *real*, and down-to-earth, the void in which you try to be heard is ever larger. Much more filled with 60-second laughathons and minuscule, scripted, well-lit lies.

sigh

Just over here wanting to promote how truly amazing the vegan lifestyle is.

waves from over here

What incredible foods, products, shoes, clothing, toiletries, household products — and everything else possible — you can so easily find now.

sighs again, a little heavier this time

Just trying to save animals and our planet, ya know.

And you, of course.

Trying to save you too.

I could wear a vest and dance to a hot tune whilst looking off into the middle distance, and I would if I thought it would save more

animals, but I'm 57 and out of shape, and you don't want to see that.

Trust me.

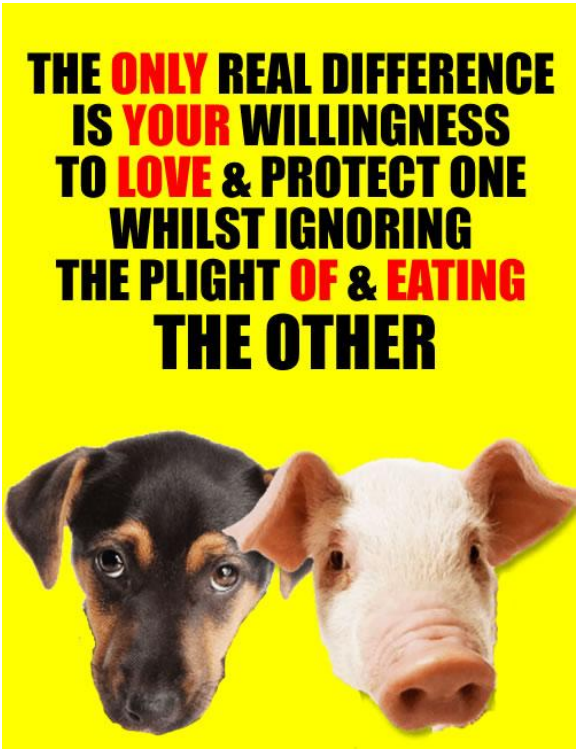
So, I do a daily.

I try this method and that style in posts.

I try to stay authentic.

Always.

And at the core — always, no matter what — is saving more animals.



By the power of three I cling to thee.

2026

Remember who you actually are.

Remember how you too want a peaceful world.

Remember how that really is possible.

Don't get addicted to anger, it changes you.

Don't focus too long on things you can't possibly change.

Don't ever give up on yourself.

Change what gets your attention if needed, own where your focus goes.

Change your lifestyle and habits to the ones of the person you want to be.

Change your outlook, remembering you're one of the main architects.

Do things that make you happy as well as doing your have tos.

Do things for you, only you.

Do things that matter, for others, for your community, for the world.

Make yourself matter today more than you did yesterday.

Make decisions that take it all into consideration, all of it.

Make bolder moves whenever you get the chance.

Open your eyes fully, you live in an amazing world.

Open your mind to new ideas and new possibilities.

Open your door to the friends and/or family who really matter to you.

Let the past stay where it lives, learn from it and leave it.

Let yourself experience every emotion your soul feels.

Let your past selves rest, they led to you, even with their mistakes.

Speak kindness into the world, it needs it.

Speak up when you are treated badly, have your own back.

Speak up for others when they are treated badly, have their backs too.

Live the life you want to live as far as is practicable and possible.

Live each day as if it's your last, you truly never know when it will be.

LIVE, simply live, and love that you live.

Written after Vegan Camp Out 2026

Vegan Camp Out's over now and so we wait again,
For that very special feeling that we all encounter when..
We are pulling in and pitching, seeing friends from far and wide.
So much to see and do and eat, how good that feels inside.

Thousands of us gathered with so many tales to tell,
Acts and facts and activism, all whilst living well.
So much choice from vendors, so much to wear from stalls.
Speakers talk with passion, urge us all to break down walls.

Charities and social groups, singers and their songs.
So many smiling faces swiftly bring the joy along.
Drums beat out the rhythm, strings are played all day.
Sit down on the ground and simply while the hours away.

Planning what you're eating as there's such amazing choice,
You'll find a stage to sing on should you want to share your voice.
Sitting, listening, chilling, soaking all the goodness in.
Making plans for after, when the 'new you' will begin.

Getting so inspired by many speakers on the stage,
Learn important lessons about how to use your rage.
We're all here for the animals, they'll always be the key.

The battle is to save them, on the front lines you and me.

So now we look to next year, when we all can plan our stay.
A weekend full of wonderful, all four, or just one day.
I'll see you in the field again, with hugs and love to share.
Another camp out coming soon, I hope to see you there. X





Posted to Those vegan Guys FB page, 2026.

If you've ever wondered why you get so defensive about the animal products you use and consume, or why vegans sometimes make you so angry, take a step back for a moment.

Look around.

Pay attention to the advertising you see and hear — on TV, online, on billboards, in shops, on the radio, everywhere.

Notice how often animal products are presented as completely normal. Necessary, even. Part of family, tradition, celebration, comfort, health, convenience and everyday life.

Then acknowledge just how much of what you've seen and heard, throughout your entire life, has helped normalise the very things you now instinctively — almost knee-jerk — defend.

We're not judging you.

We were there too once.

Just notice it.

Take note.

And maybe, next time you feel that immediate urge to defend it, ask yourself where that reaction actually came from. 🌱

"Don't worry there's more of us than them"

A line I've heard many times from many voices, including my own.

I like to believe it.

I like to truly believe that common decency, simple humanity and real empathy prevail.

Then I happen upon a comment thread.

Today's was the tragic story of 139 people dying in an ocean, around 15 of them children.

And yes and yes and yes it has to be acknowledged that there are many good and decent humans commenting, but, then there are them.

I will not dignify any of them with copying their words here. I keep a tidier home than that.

They no longer surprise me, to be completely honest, we have let it all go on for too long for it to be a surprise any more.

Our collective acceptance is what I call into question more.

How have we, the good people of the world, helped sustain an environment in which such blatant, unfiltered and often blind hatred can thrive, unchallenged?"

Excuse the language for a moment but how the fuck did we get here?

I ask myself that very same question, it isn't only externalised.

I am after all one of the architects, just like you.

I think we need to call a board meeting.

I'll bring vegan snacks.

Internal Dialogue – A Scene

An imagined scene, based on many internal conversations over many years with so many versions of myself. Two people sit on chairs a few feet apart, facing the audience. One is current-time Paul. The other is an amalgamation of many previous Pauls, his face constantly morphing between all previous incarnations.



PAUL
Hey you…

PAST PAULS
Hey, how are you doing?

PAUL
I'm doing good, I just wanted to say thanks.

PAST PAULS
For what?

PAUL
For getting me here, and for so much learning along the way. Thank you.

PAST PAULS
We did it together, love. All of us. Every Single One Of Me!

PAUL
Nice plug, I see what you did there.

PAST PAULS
A wise man once said if you don't blow your own trumpet nobody else is going to do it for you.

PAUL
Hey that was m..... Oh, I see what you did there too.

PAST PAULS
Well done on the books! Four of them now. Four books Paul!! You did that!

PAUL
WE did that! Hence me wanting to say thank you.

PAST PAULS
We did, didn't we. We've been a great team over the years.

PAUL
We sure have, and I'm so glad you all stuck around to see these outcomes.

A strange light starts to form between them. A face appears and begins to speak.

FUTURE PAUL
Hey Guys

PAUL
Oh, hey...

PAST PAULS
Howdo

FUTURE PAUL
Look I can't stay for long, temporal prime directive and all that. Couple of things though, Past Pauls, well done, all of you. I mean that. And Paul, look after your health, love. In particular your heart and lungs. COPD is no joke! A little more exercise, a little more whole-food plant-based eating. Put yourself first more and get yourself here in the best way you can, I'll be waiti—

The voice stops abruptly and the face fades. The light goes out.

PAUL
Well, that was interesting.

PAST PAULS
And maybe very important!! Pay attention to him. He looked well.

PAUL
I will.

He pauses and takes a deep breath.

PAUL
I best get on, tons to do. Again, to all of you, thanks for getting me here. I love you.

PAST PAULS
And we love you. Always here for you kiddo!

PAUL
I know. I'm counting on it.

PAST PAULS
See you again?

PAUL
Of course, always!

The lights fade down. Scene ends.

Time Train

2026

I boarded a time train today, not really knowing where it would stop.

I wanted to visit the past versions of myself and to sit with me, for a while.

I hadn't realised how impacting that could be.

The first visit was a family holiday in Rhyl, 1970 or 71. The train didn't stop here but it slowed down enough to look. I was a little chubby toddler holding my mum's hand on the beach. I was so full of joy and clearly felt completely safe and loved.

No need to stop here, this little boy needs no words from me.

The train continued.

1980 was our next destination. I was 10 years old and trying to find the Gay centre on Bloom St in Manchester to attend their youth group. I didn't know yet that I would feel like I was home. I was unaware of the dangers I might face in this 'village'. Still, this kid is wise beyond his years. I don't need to tell him anything.

I stepped aboard the carriage again.

We stopped on a typical Sunday, in the early 80s. It was a normal, everyday, Sunday lunch at home.

Dad was still alive; he came home from the pub after mum had been cooking for hours.

He stank of bitter and immediately changed the channel on the TV without any thought for anyone else or what they may have been watching. It was a very 'dad' move.

We all tucked into a plate, accompanied undoubtedly by some western or other. I felt the tension in the air but it wasn't half as bad as I labelled it at the time. It was home. It was life.

The train slowly started to move out. I reboarded.

It was the early 90s now. I didn't live at home anymore. I still went to visit and occasionally went for Sunday lunch, and it was the same scenario. The exact same.

Nothing changes here. Not yet.

We stop to admire the scenery in 1997. I'm about to start college, so full of hope and optimism, every drop of it justified. This will change my life, I will meet my future husband here. I see me smile. I smile too.

The next stop was the early noughties. I didn't go for Sunday lunch anymore but still visited. I could still have a good conversation with mum, dementia was a way off, we didn't even know it was coming.

Not yet.

I watched myself talking with her, and I remembered. We laughed; all of her memories still intact.

A stop or two later and I was watching myself and my now husband celebrate our joining with so many souls. It is a glorious day.

The train whistled; I stepped back on.

The twenty-tens. We are in Tenerife and I overhear a conversation between mum and dad, something about his chest, and pains, and a doctor's visit, and tests, and impending results.

I looked into my eyes and I knew that I knew.

And I knew that I didn't want to know.

11 months later, after too many brutal battles, dehumanisation and a lengthy stay from the uninvited guest, he was gone.

Just like that. Dad was gone.

I was boarding again, wiping my eyes.

It was 2016. I watched as The Vegan Queens became a thing, I saw the pain in my eyes as I was told I would no longer be hosting the

show I had poured my soul into, and then it was 6 November. I looked at myself lying on that floor, terrified, with that moron stood on my neck.

I shouted at myself to use my fucking legs and then I used mine to go back to the platform, safe in the knowledge that I would do just that.

The conductor beckoned me back on board.

2017 was the next stop. Those Vegan Guys had already started and yet it was all just about to begin.

I saw the determination I had, I knew where all of this would lead and I knew that I didn't need to say anything.

Healing had begun.

TVG would help so many people on their own vegan journey.

TVQ would continue and go from strength to strength.

I smiled and prepared myself for a final stop.

The earlier twenty-twenties. Mum lives alone now and would soon face a whole host of issues, cancer, treatment, infections, memory issues, a hip-replacement, rehab and then WHAM!

Dementia.

Slowly she began to fade.

Further along this same line my MIL, Rhona, is diagnosed with stage 4 cancer. I see how mad I am that we weren't informed of her decline, and along with my husband we vow to do all we can for as long as we can. We do. Too short a time later she is gone.

I acknowledged it, all of it, and then I travelled back to now.

Dad is gone.

Rhona is gone.

Mum is being whittled away like some old man carving a spoon from a block of wood.

Every splinter a part of her past, erased.

And I remember.

I remember all that was, all that would come to pass and I can see all that may come to pass, but my stop is here, and it's time to get off.

I still need to live.

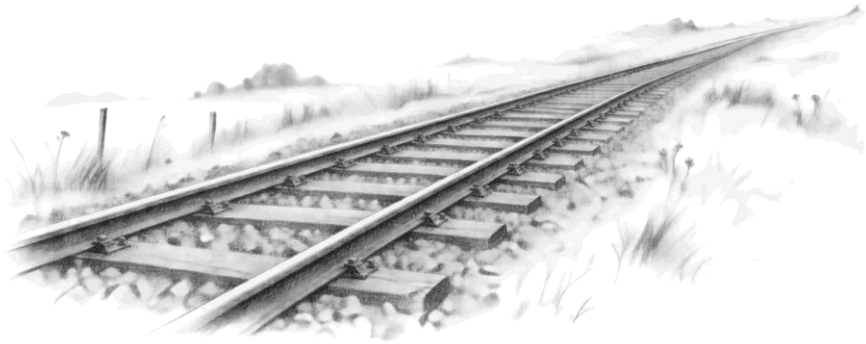
And so I will.

Whilst I can.

Because at some point my train stops, and there will be no future me to travel back.

So, with that in mind.

Onward!



Take a Moment

Do something for yourself, often.

You deserve it.

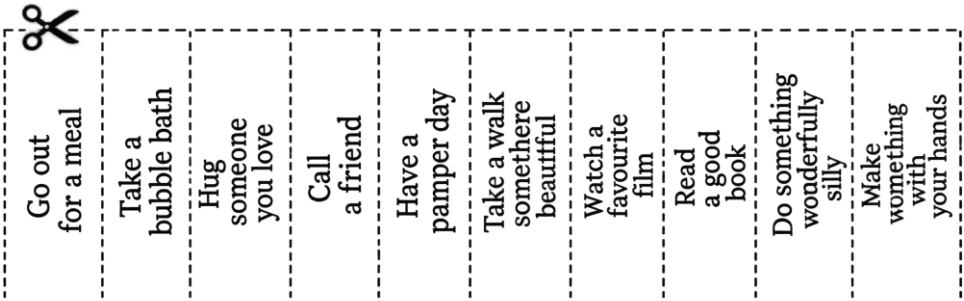
It is so easy to forget ourselves in a world filled with need, but WE have needs too, and those needs must be met.

So take time out for yourself (and others).

Don't forget to do things that you enjoy

Print this page (189 for the record), cut out what you need, when you need it.

Thank you for reading my book. Xx



Take many pictures, document yourself LIVING! xx

Provenance is also personal.





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Poems, memories, articles, observations and dispatches written from inside the learning – by the different versions of one man who kept leaving signs in the road.

PAUL J. BURGESS

