

PORTENCROSS CASTLE IN POEMS AND PICTURES

WWW.PORTENCROSSCASTLE.ORG.UK

INTRODUCTION

This booklet is the product of collaboration between children and parents at West Kilbride Primary School, North Ayrshire Council (Education Services), a community artist and writer, The May Lockhart Trust and The Friends of Portencross Castle (FOPC).

The idea of the booklet came from the Adult and Community Education services in North Ayrshire Council who were advising FOPC on engaging families in learning together. With advice and funding from North Ayrshire Council, FOPC commissioned a local artist and a local writer to run a series of workshops with children and parents from West Kilbride Primary School. The theme for the project, *Portencross Castle in Poems and Pictures*, was the castle's rich history and environment including the surrounding sea and wildlife. The buzz, excitement and laughter during the creative sessions were just fantastic.

The project illustrates clearly how wonderful projects can take shape when people work together in partnership. In this case that partnership ranged across children and parents from the community, those employed in councils by the community, volunteers from that community who give freely of their time, and artisans who also live and work in the community. The product is one of which we can be enormously proud. It is one that will also return benefit to the whole community and to future generations.

Family learning lends great benefit through encouraging children to achieve well at school and through building confidence in both children and parents. It also helps parents to explore and discover talents and skills that they were not aware of or had forgotten about. In projects such as this, children are encouraged to comment positively as editors of their own and their family's writing. They also become, with their parents, illustrators of that writing or of the imaginative brief surrounding a wonderful subject such as a Portencross Castle.

FOPC has also produced an intergenerational family-learning leaflet that you can use when visiting the castle. You can get the leaflet at the castle, or download it from our website at www.portencrosscastle.org.uk.

We hope that you find the booklet inspiring. One thing is certain – the children and parents had a fantastic time at the workshops where they produced the exciting and imaginative pictures and poems. Well done to everyone involved!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

FOPC is greatly indebted to the children and parents who took part in this project and who have given us their permission to publish their poems and pictures in this booklet. FOPC is also grateful to the headteacher and staff at West Kilbride Primary School and to David Reid, artist, and Gerry Cambridge, poet. North Ayrshire Council funded FOPC to set up the project and The May Lockhart Trust funded the printing of the booklet.

LINKS

www.portencrosscastle.org.uk
www.north-ayrshire.gov.uk/EducationAndLearning
www.davidreidart.com
www.gerrycambridge.com
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/West_Kilbride



ABOUT THE PORTENCROSS CASTLE CONSERVATION PROJECT

Portencross Castle is on a rocky point in the village of Portencross at Farland Head, the most westerly point of North Ayrshire. It commanded the sea routes to the upper Clyde estuary, the gateway to the Central Lowlands of Scotland.

The Castle is a scheduled monument of national importance. Robert the Bruce gave the surrounding lands of Arnele to the Boyd family for supporting him in the Scottish War of Independence. The Boyds built the castle on its present site in the mid 1300s. They enlarged it later in the 1300s and into the 1400s. The original great hall and cellar are still intact. The Boyds chose to put the castle where it is to defend sea routes and access to the islands of the Firth of Clyde and beyond.

Portencross Castle is important because King Robert II (who reigned from 1371 to 1390) used it during the period when the Stewart dynasty was being established. The old harbour was once an important ferry port for access to Rothesay Castle and to the royal deer forest on Little Cumbrae (known locally as Wee Cumbrae).

The castle was abandoned as a baronial seat in the 1600s. The roof was blown off in a storm in 1739. After that, fishermen used it as a store. It became the responsibility of electricity generating companies in the mid-1900s until the end of the 1900s. The castle came under the ownership of the community group, Friends of Portencross Castle (FOPC) in 2005.

FOPC is a recognised Scottish Charity (No. SC028181) dedicated to conserving the castle and providing access to the building. In 2006, FOPC was awarded grant support from The Heritage Lottery Fund and Historic Scotland and, with additional support from local charities, North Ayrshire Council and many individuals, was able to raise just over £1 million pounds for the costs of the project. Grant support does not include maintenance. As a result FOPC has to raise costs for staff, maintenance, education materials, website and overheads. We will remain open with the help of donations and by having events and functions at the castle.

**PLEASE DONATE IF YOU CAN.
YOU CAN ALSO BECOME A GUARDIAN
OF PORTENCROSS CASTLE. TO FIND
OUT MORE VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT
WWW.PORTENCROSSCASTLE.ORG.UK
OR PICK UP DETAILS AT THE CASTLE
DURING OPENING HOURS.**





PORTENCROSS CASTLE

Was it only kings passed through but not queens
As kings were important, and queens were not,
To their last place of rest in Iona?

Strong stones all shapes and sizes –
Beautiful colours, oranges to greens, purples
And blues, brown and red too, makes

This castle within sight of Arran,
Shelter in stormy weather, a sunny wall
For picnickers' backs. In the winter

It would be chankin cold. Big thick walls
Kept you safe, a huge fireplace
Gave the big dark rooms some heat and light, the little

Windows stopped the wind and storms.
There was many a scar
From the rocks it was built on.

SHARON MCBRIDE & ABIGAIL MCBRIDE



PORTENCROSS CASTLE

Go inside – you can hear the ghosts groan.
Look through the window and imagine
You can see English Knights
Charging towards the castle
With anger in their eyes, and axes
In their hands. If you look in
The corner of the kitchen
And peer through the tiny hole
You can see a single spider
That has lived there
Hundreds of years, and once
Got his leg cut off by the cook
When she saw him, but it has grown back
Now.

ROSS MACLEAN

The Great Hall (Sharon McBride)



Birlinn (Wendy Woods)

WHAT THE CASTLE SAYS

Sitting proud on the edge of the sea
Lying dormant for many a year
Soon my splendour will be
Recreated, memories I hold important to me
Shared amongst people to create history.

Sitting proud on the edge of the sea
Hundreds of years I have been
Lonely, standing along without king or queen
Habitant of local wildlife who shelter in me
Has for many a year been my purpose for the country.

Sitting proud on the edge of the sea
There's an aura of excitement building in me
For once again my place shall be
In the minds of people and in history.

WENDY WOODS



1

Drop of stones



4

Kings and Queens



2

Mortar

RECIPES FOR PORTENCROSS CASTLE

Add a drop of stones
 Blend in with mortar
 Place a flag on top
 Season with a king and queen.
 Sprinkle in some ghosts
 Gather a fire
 Collect a giant table and lots of chairs
 Toss in a swirly staircase.
 Whip in lots of people and serve
 In a rocky surface near the sea.

RECIPES FOR PORTENCROSS CASTLE

A gathering of many ancient stones
 Placed on top of a massive rock.
 Many men working
 Like Trojans. Look at the sunset
 And the roaring wind.
 The great rooms and halls,
 The roaring fire,
 A platter for kings and queens.

DONNA MILLER

3

Flag



6

Fire



5

Ghosts



7

Staircase



THE SPIDER AT PORTENCROSS CASTLE

Hay big man, watch whaur yir goin –
Ah've lived here langer than you.

I mebbe hairy, some say ah'm scary –
Ye widny say that if ye'd seen ma view.

Ma webs are everywhaur, never tae be clean.
Ah've even slept above the queen.

Pure magic here it's daurk an creepy
But goan outside jist makes me weepy –

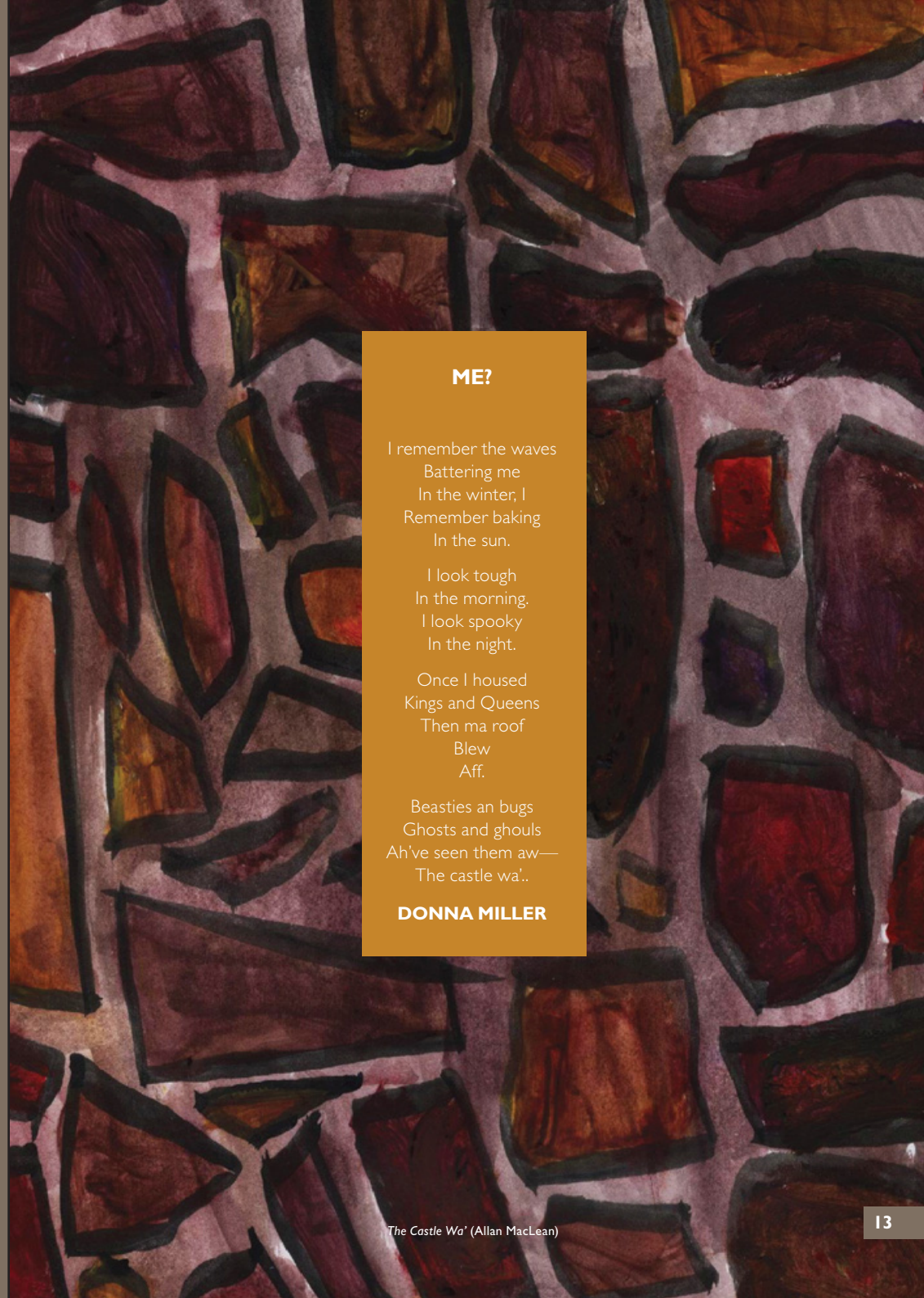
It's BalticEven fur ma furry legs
And the watter's nae gid

Fur the eggs
That haud ma weans.

DONNA MILLER



Spider (Ross MacLean)



ME?

I remember the waves
Battering me
In the winter, I
Remember baking
In the sun.

I look tough
In the morning,
I look spooky
In the night.

Once I housed
Kings and Queens
Then ma roof
Blew
Aff.

Beasties an bugs
Ghosts and ghouls
Ah've seen them aw—
The castle wa'..

DONNA MILLER

A THOUGHT

It must be great to be

Portencross Castle. You stand so
Firm and proud. Your rooms are full

Of secrets, memories. You've seen
Scotland's kings

And kissing newly-weds. You've been
Involved in your own battles, you

let all creatures wander
Through you without a moan, for

You make everyone happy.
You hold the secrets of how you were built. Only you

Have the answers to all our questions.

JACQUELINE HASTIE



Goldfinch (Kerry Nimmo)



I HEAR THE BIRDS

I hear the birds; they give me sound,
And watch the waves that crash around

And feel the wind that blows my way.
I see the fishermen cast away.

Look at the pools that fill so blue!
I watch the boats that come in view

And Arran under stars at night.
Around me seasons come and go.

Sunsets rise and glow.
And children jump off the pier—

I hear their mothers shout with fear.
Locals pass me, day by day.

Families that laugh and play
I watch their children explore the rocks.

And couples hand in hand
Walk relaxed along the sand.

I love the fact you come around,
And that is why I stand my ground.

JACQUELINE HASTIE

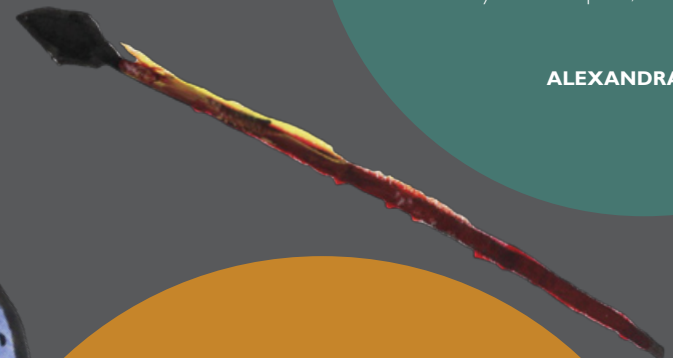
Swallow Over the Castle (Jacqueline Hastie)



THE CASTLE

On this ground for six hundred years,
 Thick walls battered by wind
 And waves, protecting
 Whoever within. Torches
 Breaking the darkness,
 Roaring fires
 Blazing throughout;
 Celebrations of life
 And marriage. Cheers
 From the Royal Court.
 Music fills
 The castle rooms.

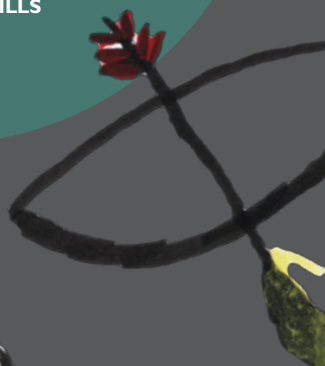
NIKOLA GIBSON & BETH CURRIE



WHAT STORIES DO YOU HOLD?

Portencross Castle, what stories do you hold?
 What battles have you witnessed?
 How old are your stones?
 What guests have stayed within your walls -
 Invited or otherwise.
 How many banquets have you held?
 If you could speak, what would you say?

ALEXANDRA MILLS



AULD AND ANGRY

Auld an angry
 A gift frae Bruce ti the Boyds.
 Cauld an cannie
 Lanely lintel peerin oot ower the locals
 Damp an dreich
 Dippin its tae in the Firth
 Spume drenchin
 Gales lashin
 Stanes staunin strang
 Deid kings lyin in state
 Afore the final sail tae Iona

CLARE & ALEXANDRA MILLS



Weapons (Alexandra Mills)

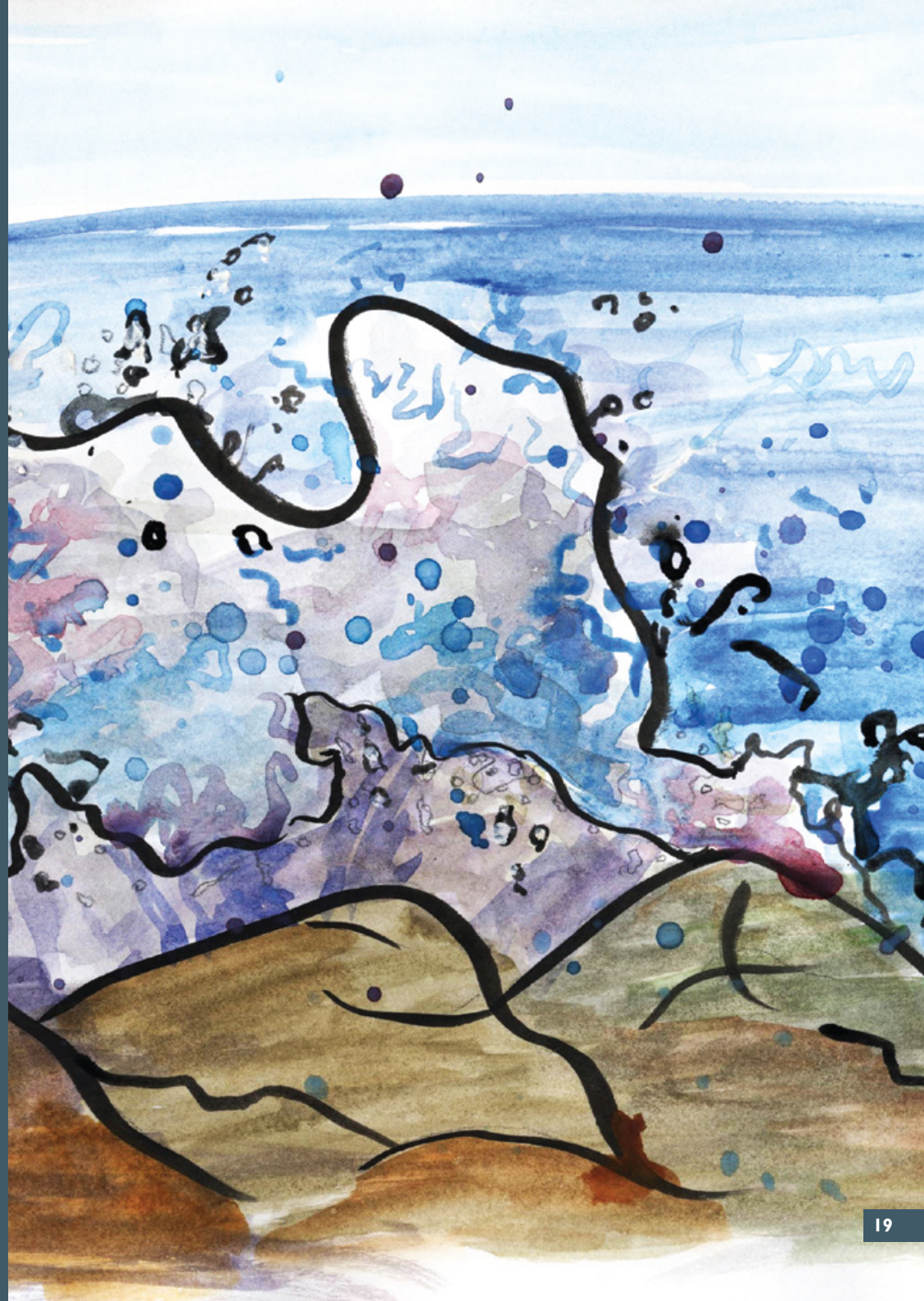
ANGRY WATER AT PORTENCROSS

Oi wind stop blowing me into that castle.
Dae ye want a fight or something.
Thought so sunny-boy, don't take
Her chance wae me. Come on then
Ya wee wimp. I'm telling you
Go away, why don't you? –
I'll fling fish at you if you don't.

THOMAS PARKER



ABOVE. *Mackerel* (Jonathan Nimbo) OPPOSITE. *Splash* (Nicola Gibson)





FOUNDATION STONE

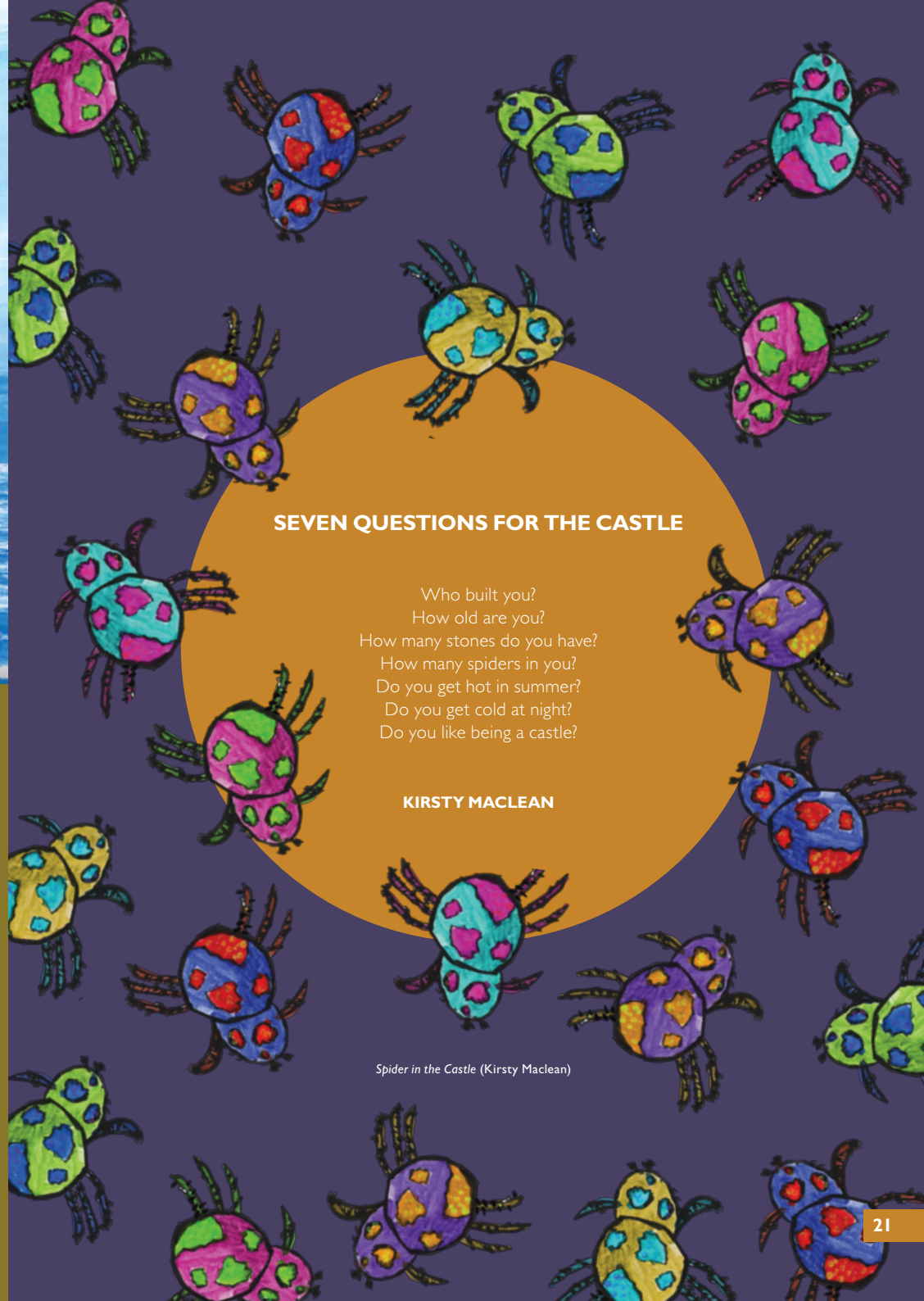
Too cold and lonely.
Too close to the edge.
Surrounded by nothing
For what purpose?

Another appears to the left and the right.
A gathering bonded by mortar and sweat.
Slowly and slowly a structure appears.
For what purpose?

Higher and higher above the red rock
The shadows are growing.
Eyes are forming.
To what purpose?

ALLAN MACLEAN

Curlew (Kerry Nimmo)



SEVEN QUESTIONS FOR THE CASTLE

Who built you?
How old are you?
How many stones do you have?
How many spiders in you?
Do you get hot in summer?
Do you get cold at night?
Do you like being a castle?

KIRSTY MACLEAN

Spider in the Castle (Kirsty Maclean)

THE CASTLE SPEAKING

Ah'm Portencross Castle, whit can ah say –
Ah sit aw the time. In fact, ivryday.
Ah'm part o the history an part o the scene.
Here am fae Scotlan – ye know whit ah mean.
Sittin here tho's no sae bad,
Ah've seen hunnerds, some quite sad.
There's been a lot goin while ah've been about,
Kings an stuff, an Robert the Bruce – that's II and III.
Ma castle's the last place that they stood.
The kings that is, it's understood –
They'd be taken fae here tae be buried ye know,
Tae the Holy island, sae the story wid go.
Ah've seen battles, crimes an fights
Till the daith, aw fur their rights –
Well, that's whit they said. Ah've heard laughter,
Cryin, screams an shouts, an here am aw that's left.
It's no loud noo it's quiet these days
Ah just sit here maist times an watch the waves,
Ma view is no sae bad. Ah can see Arran,
Weans in the summer come doon the pier,
Jump aff, they dae, ah can see them fae here,
Can hear their mas shout 'Get doon fae there!'
People come here tae get married an aw –
It's the view ye see, it's awfy braw.
Ah'm getting auld noo wi a bit o decay,
They come doon though and fix me they dae
An folk come doon fae aw ower the toon
Cos the summers are something tae see
But the winter's no braw, it's nothin at aw,
Though folk still come doon tae see me.

JACQUELINE HASTIE



THE STONES SPEAKING

My name begins with 'P'.
I have witnessed world wars,
I have witnessed deaths –
I have seen the dead kings.
I live next to the sea.
I am made of stone.
Robert the Bruce gave me
To the Boyd family.
I have survived centuries of weather,
Though I had my roof blown off in 1739.
I will enter a new century, and survive.

JONATHAN NIMMO

Gulliemot (William MacDonald)



I LIVE HERE

I live here on this rock.
I get frustrated I can't talk.
I have words I want to say.
I sit here in silence night and day.
All these memories within my ground!
All these feelings
that have no sound!
I have history within my walls.
Can they hear my shouts and calls?
I am a castle with a lot to give,
A piece of history that wants to live.

JACQUELINE HASTIE & ALEX HASTIE

Yellow Flowers (Donna Miller)



CASTLE

Thick walls battered by waves and wind
Protecting all, whoever within

Torches breaking the darkness of night
Music fills the air with delight

Hunters surround the slaughtered beast –
Delicious smells of the roasted feast

The Royal Court fills the room with cheers
Of the castle here for six hundred years

NIKOLA GIBSON & BETH CURRIE



King Robert II (Jacqueline Hastie)



I OFTEN WONDER ABOUT THE CASTLE

I often wonder about Portencross Castle –
When did it get built? What
Happened? Did they have
Lots of feasts?
I don't know.

Sometimes I'd like to go
Back in time and see it for real.

Did they wear tight clothes? Was it
Fun being a king or a queen?
I don't know.

I guess
As they say
Some things
Have just
To be left
Unknown.

LORI WOODS

Cannon (Lori Woods)



Torch (Beth Currie)

