

# Well Grubbed Old Mole

€25 Number 48 A Special Edition 2016-2020



**Rob Stead on Why He Left England  
Brexit Populism and Change  
What Would Laclau Say  
Special Report: The People**

Free to prisoners and soldiers

*‘[People] make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living. And just as they seem to be occupied with revolutionising themselves and things, creating something that did not exist before, precisely in such epochs of revolutionary crisis they anxiously conjure up the spirits of the past to their service, borrowing from them names, battle slogans, and costumes in order to present this new scene in world history in time-honoured disguise and borrowed language.’*

The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte, Karl Marx, 1852

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# London, England

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## **From June 2016**

At the age of 55, and the week before the Brexit referendum, on the 18 June I got married for the first time to my long time friend, Jan. We heard the result of the referendum, a vote to leave, on our honeymoon in France. We cried.

The result had a profound impact on my sense of identity and I felt a deep disappointment with people I knew and those I didn't. This was not the revolution, the old mole that occasionally pops its head out, that I wanted. Nor was it led by people with smart ideas.

I nevertheless decided to make the best of it. I put a rough plan together with the aim of leaving England.

Over the next four years I gave up my job of 25 years, cashed in my pension and in order to free myself to new possibilities we rented out our London house and moved to Folkestone.

I kept a record of events in a daily photographic journal.

## **Greater London**

**Remain 59.93%**

**Leave 40.07%**



**23 June 2016** - The majority of those who voted in the Brexit Referendum chose to leave the European Union.



**29 March 2017** - In writing to European Council President Donald Tusk, the Prime Minister formally triggered Article 50 and began the two-year countdown to the UK formally leaving the EU (commonly known as 'Brexit').



*‘The whole of language is a continuous process of metaphor, and the history of semantics is an aspect of the history of culture; language is at the same time a living thing and a museum of fossils of life and civilisation.’*

Selections from the Prison Notebooks, Antonio Gramsci, 1929

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## Folkestone, Kent England

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### **From April 2017**

Jan signed-up to do a Masters in Conflict Transformation at Queens University in Belfast, Northern Ireland, and applies for Irish citizenship.

I sell my house and with borrowed money we buy a house in Hythe, Kent, to renovate with the aim of renting to holiday makers. Brexit Britains would holiday at home we concluded.

The house had been in the same family for 62 years and was in desperate need of renovation. This I did over nearly two years.

I joined Jan in Belfast once the house was finished.

I'm called a Remoaner, a prick and I fear civil war with increased tension, particularly on social media in Folkestone.

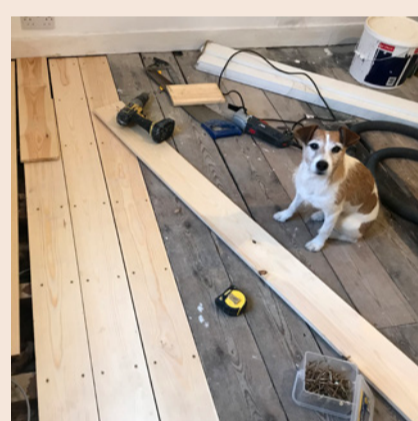
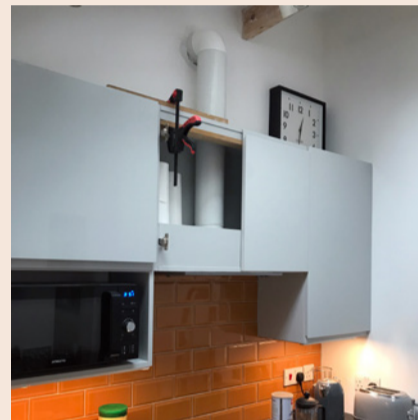
### **South East England**

**Leave 51.78%**

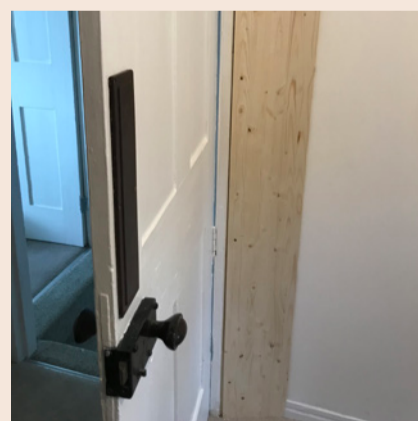
**Remain 48.22%**



**14 March 2019** - The UK was expected to leave the EU at 11pm however following a House of Commons vote the Government sought permission from the UK to extend Article 50 and agree a later Brexit date.

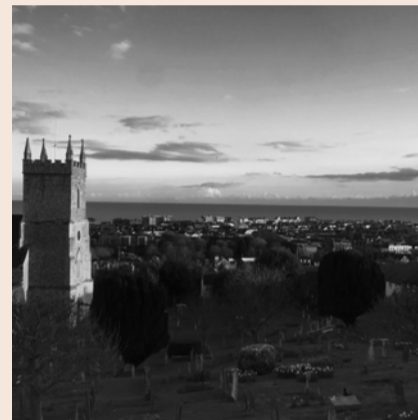


**20 March 2019** - The Prime Minister writes to the European Council President Donald Tusk asking to extend Article 50 until 30 June 2019.





**2 April 2019** - The PM announces she will seek a further extension to Article 50. At a meeting of the European Council on the 10 April 2019 the UK and EU27 agree to extend Article 50 until 31 October 2019.



## Picture Special - Kent Life









## Picture Report - The People's Vote



# Special Report - The People Vision 2020 by Rob Stead

Rosa Luks (RL): What's the idea behind these photos?

Rob Stead (RS): I was interested in how people were coping with Covid-19 and the end of membership of the EU. Calling it Vision 2020 I asked people to hold an object that represented their hopes or fears for the future. To make it Covid safe - this was in Aug/Sept 2020 - the portraits were taken outside in a location between Folkestone and Dungeness.

RL: Why between Folkestone and Dungeness?

RS: It's an area I know well and they voted heavily for Brexit.

RL: Is this then a Brexit project?

RS: It started that way. I'd moved from England to Ireland and found the whole thing very upsetting. I got married the week before the referendum to Jan but we decided to make it a positive experience. We both did a Masters, and this is my Photography Master's Project, which I did at Ulster University.

RL: You say started that way. Did it change?

RS: Yes. I found it hard getting some people involved - saying it wasn't real work - but most people who agreed didn't really hold Brexit themed objects in the way I'd imagined. But that's ok as this was a kind of experiment in Outrospection.

RL: What is Outrospection?

RS: Roman Krznaric argues today it's possible to build empathy from short discussions with people; to listen to their testimonies and to think from their perspective. Calling it Outrospection he argues it's a powerful vehicle for social and personal change. I'm not sure

about social change but it was wonderful chatting with everyone so for me it helped me come to terms with events since 2016. On social media I'd felt a lot of anger and hostility.

RL: How many people did you photograph and how did you find them?

RS: I photographed 40 people over four weeks. I created a website which explained what I was hoping to do and then on social media asked people to volunteer. I probably got 25 people that way. 12 are friends or people I know and the rest I directly approached.

RL: What did you discover?

RS: Most people held an object of hope and whilst there was some common threads - missing gigs, concerns for the climate for example - I was struck by how everyone appeared to be adapting themselves to the coming changes with ideas of renewal and regrowth being a common theme. I also realised asking people to hold a single object was a blunt method for showing people's full character and concerns, hence why I paraphrase what they say in a quote and make some of my own observations.

RL: What next?

RS: 10 of these portraits will be on display at Belfast Exposed in June 2021 and after I've finished my Masters I would like to make a book and include all the portraits, plus the ones I did in Donegal, which appear later in this newspaper. Personally I hope to work abroad for a while but I'm also keen to get Irish citizenship which means, rightly, a commitment to Ireland by paying taxes and residing there. We shall see what happens.



## Mitch and Pearl

At home at Cost-a-Lot, Cheriton, Folkestone - 5 September 2020

*'We want England to win the world cup again'*

Mitch and Pearl value community and regularly check on neighbours, running errands and asking after their welfare.



## Antoine

St Leonard's Church, Hythe - 6 September 2020

*'I want everyone to be touched by the grace of God'*

Antoine has a strong Christian faith which sustained him and provided a sense of community, particularly during difficult times. He got married in 2016 and works as a supervisor in a food factory.





## Carmen and Family

The Leas, Folkestone - 6 September 2020

*'I would like there to be a better understanding between nations; peace and love if you like. My children - Finlai, Amelie and Issac - would like to be a footballer, singer and actor.'*

The Leas was once part of a private estate with its own police to keep out the working class.



## Catherine

The Leas, Folkestone - 30 August 2020

*'I would like to retire to France and I'm pleased this option is open to my children'*

Catherine would like to grow flowers in France and have this option for her children. They're Irish exiles/refugees from the 2008 crash making a new life in Kent, availing themselves of the right to do so and has hated seeing the free travel rights of English friends destroyed.



## Henry

The Grand, Folkestone - 2 September 2020

*'This Lion, a recognised symbol of Great Britain, is worn and tired but Brexit provides us with an opportunity for renewal so we can take our rightful place in the world and address some of the failings of the past 40 years. This is not about nationalism, but patriotism.'*

Henry is an ex-UKIP leader and once lived at The Grand.



Leo

Sound Mirrors, Hythe - 1 September 2020

*'Billy Bragg, in his book The Three Dimensions of Freedom, perfectly sums up the issues of our times and provides a way forward if only people would listen'*

The sound mirror was an early form of radar by listening for the sounds of invading aeroplanes before they could be seen. Leo is a friend of Billy Bragg's having known him from before he became established.



## Dyana

The Leas, Folkestone - 27 August 2020

*'Water should be available and free as a human right to all'*

Originally from Italy Dyana's now an art director, activist, artist and doula, based in London and Folkestone.



**Mike**

Harbour Arm, Folkestone- 23 August 2020

*'I hold a sapling because we need to plant more trees'*

Mike, as part of a local voluntary group which he leads, grows and plants saplings as a practical step towards tackling climate change.



## Miranda

Tontine Street, Folkestone - 31 August 2020

*'I'm applying for Irish Citizenship'*

Miranda, whose father was Irish, loves Italy for being 'hot blooded/extroverted Ireland'. Although London Irish, and therefore has a very close connection with Ireland, she has struggled to find her wayward father's documents in order to apply for an Irish passport.



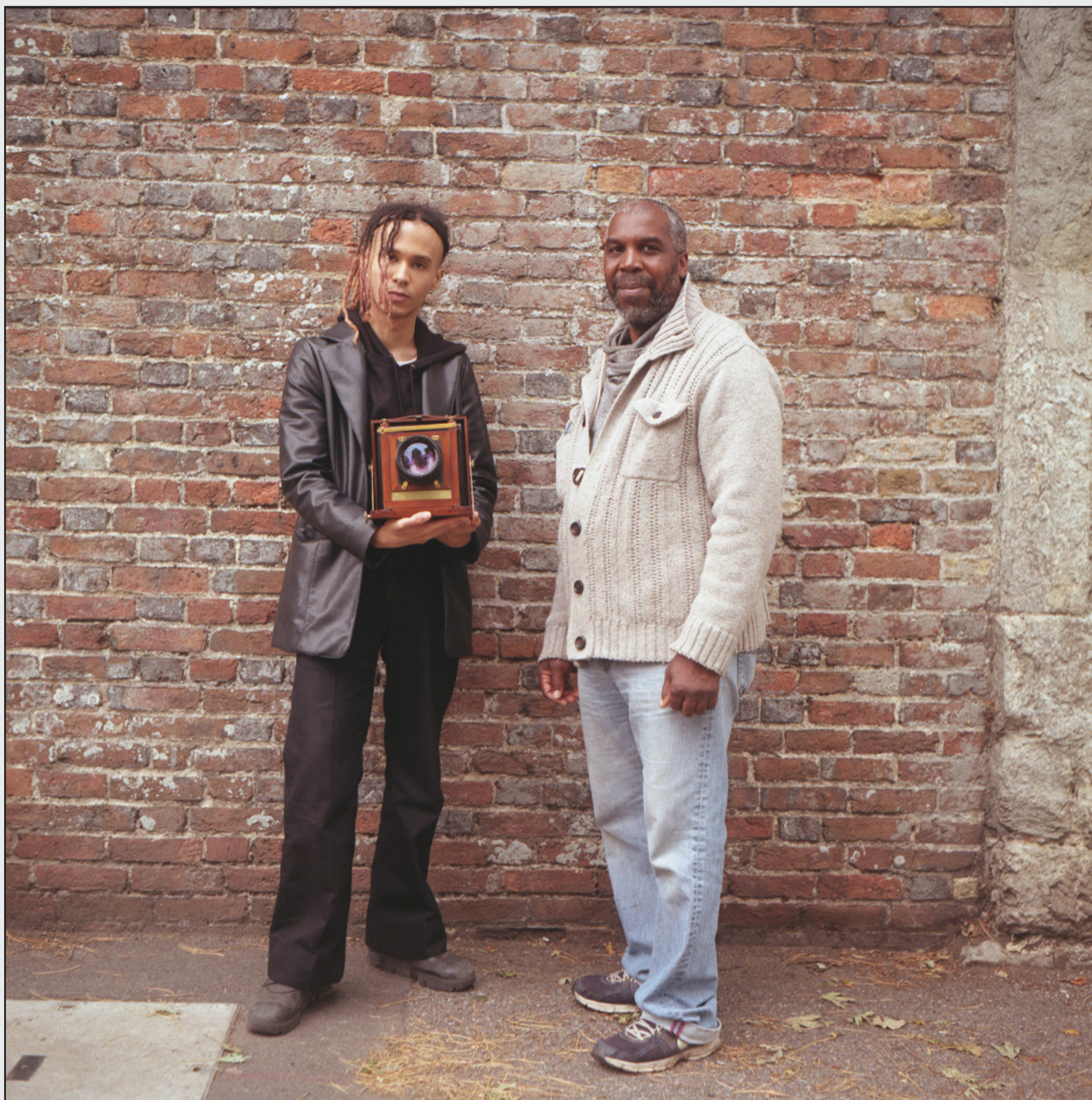
## Folkestone/Hythe Anti-Racist Group

Old Town Hall, Hythe - 29 August 2020

*'Everyone benefits from a world without racism'*

Folkestone has a strong right-wing presence, particularly on social media, so this group was formed to provide support, education and to tackle racism.





## Irv and IJ

New Romney - 3 September 2020

*'I wanted to start a wedding business in France'*

Irv (right) had a dream of using his large format cameras as a unique selling point for a new wedding business he hoped to setup with his wife Rose in France. IJ is an artist and activist in the Black Trans Foundation.



## Martin

Greatstone - 29 August 2020

*'I want there to be peace and love, particularly between races'*

Martin, electrician and collector of Austin Maxis, loves music - particularly reggae, dub, dance and soul. This album by Peter Tosh, Mama Africa, represents his wish for peace and love between races.



Paul

East Cliff, Folkestone - 28 August 2020

*'I have two hopes; books are available and read worldwide and people take inspiration from Paul Robeson, a cultural icon and social activist.'*

Paul, the first Black Cabinet Minister, was a big influence on my life.



## Peter

Mermaid Beach, Folkestone - 6 September 2020

*'The fire for me represents change and new opportunities'*

Peter is married to Jo and swims at this spot most days. A filmmaker originally from Scandinavia he would like to introduce saunas to Folkestone.



Jo

Dungeness - 2 September 2020

*'The plant represents renewal, regrowth, as I'm about to retrain as a therapist'*

After many years as a teacher Jo is about to start retraining as a therapist at a centre near this spot.



## Adele

Foord Road, Folkestone - 2 September 2020

*'Being kind to strangers is rewarding'*

Adele holds a shell given to her from someone she comforted on holiday in Greece. The complete stranger touched her heart and the shell represents how helping a complete stranger also enriches one's own life.



Ned

North Downs, Folkestone - 20 August 2020

*'My hope is Australia will learn from the wisdom of the First Nation  
Aboriginal peoples'*

Ned, from Australia, stands here above the Eurotunnel terminal, with France visible and Gurka's paragliding, holding the Aboriginal flag. His hope is the process of agreement-making and truth-telling between the Australian Government and First Nations is fulfilled and all Australian's benefit from it.

*‘Another way of dismissing populism, as we have seen, is to relegate it to ‘mere rhetoric’. But, as we have also pointed out, the tropological movement, far from being a mere adornment of a social reality which could be described in non-rhetorical terms, can be seen as the very logic of constitution of political identities. Let us just take the case of metaphor. As we know, metaphor establishes a relation of substitution between terms on the basis of the principle of analogy.’*

On Populist Reason, Ernesto Laclau, 2005



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# Belfast, Northern Ireland

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## **From April 2019**

I join Jan in Belfast and get a job. Jan graduates and I get sacked over sharing the fact I was 15 minutes late from lunch on social media. A week later I start a Masters in Photography at Ulster University.

We attend pride and equal marriage demonstrations.

My mother goes into hospital and comes under the care of Social Services.

The Covid-19 pandemic results in national lockdowns giving us an opportunity to explore Belfast.

Jan and I spend the last night the UK was a member of the EU in Carrick-on-Shannon visiting a photo exhibition by Tommy Weir called Cillín.

## **Northern Ireland**

**Remain 55.78%**

**Leave 44.22%**

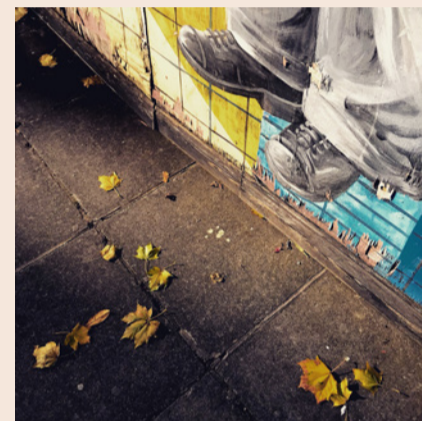
**19 October 2019**

- The PM's new Brexit deal was lost on amendment in the Commons. In accordance with the 'Benn Act' the Prime Minister wrote to European Council president Donald Tusk to request an extension to the Brexit process.



**28 October 2019**

- EU Ambassadors agree a further Brexit extension to 31 January 2020.



**12 December 2019**

- Boris Johnson wins a majority in the UK General Election and reaffirms his commitment to 'get Brexit done' by the 31 January 2020.





**23 January 2020** - The European Union (Withdrawal Agreement) Act 2020 received Royal Assent. This is the legislation that will implement the withdrawal agreement negotiated by the UK and the EU.



**31 January 2020** - The UK leaves the EU and UK enters a transition period.







## Picture Special - The Changing Face of Belfast



*‘States and international bodies cannot impose directions of identity change. Part of what they can do is to remove the traps that tend to reverse identity change and marginalise the individuals who change, creating more spaces where innovation can be sustained and grow in safety. This means that institutional design has to build in the prospects of identity change, not as an alternative to group accommodation, but as concomitant with it.’*

Identity Change After Conflict, Jennifer Todd, 2018

*‘Now authoritarians and algorithms threatens democracy while we argue over who has the right to speak. To protect ourselves from encroaching tyranny, we must look beyond a one-dimensional notion of what it means to be free and, by reconnecting liberty to equality and accountability, restore the individual agency engendered by the three dimensions of freedom.’*

The Three Dimensions of Freedom, Billy Bragg, 2019

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## Malin, Donegal, Ireland

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### **From April 2020**

Lockdowns mean we leave Belfast earlier than we thought to live in Donegal, Ireland. Everything, including classes, are now online.

We're forced to close temporarily our holiday business because of Covid but the EU provides a grant which keeps us afloat.

I travel back occasionally to visit my parents in England.

We get to know Ireland and make new friends during breaks in lockdown.







**31 December 2020 -**  
The transition period ends and the United Kingdom has left the EU single market and customs union.





## Picture Special - Donegal Post Brexit





# Second Special Report

## The People of Inishowen by Rob Stead

Rosa Luks (RL): Is this a continuation of your Vision 2020 work?

Rob Stead (RS): Kind of. Lockdown, particularly in Ireland, was very restrictive which made it impossible to return to Folkestone to continue my Vision 2020 project so I thought it might be interesting to continue the objects idea here in Inishowen, Donegal, perhaps as a comparison. Jan and I moved here once my classes in Belfast had gone online. Inishowen is the most northernly part of the Republic of Ireland, very near Derry.

RL: What did you discover?

RS: People were similarly very nice and it was lovely chatting to them. Themes of renewal and regrowth also featured but understandably rooted in their sense of identity, particularly in how it relates to place and being Irish.

RL: Was it such a big project?

RS: No. I photographed about 10 people in early 2021. Personally I felt less of a connection to the locations and I was aware I didn't have as much at stake in engaging with their stories but each one was interesting and revealing, in a nice way.

RL: Did you come to any conclusions?

RS: Photographically I hope the images are interesting enough to revisit with more and more information revealed during repeated looking. People's personal stories and willingness to share them is also very touching and encouraging if we only take the time to listen. We all have hopes and dreams and try to make sense of them faced with what's going on around us. Personally it helped me move on by moving away from my own concerns. I'm left though with a nagging worry that things we now take for granted - political and structural arrangements - if we get them wrong could change this but I'm reassured people seem to have the resilience to adapt.



Tara

Culdaff Beach, Donegal - 3 March 2021

*'I love sea swimming'*

Tara teaches swimming in the sea and is looking forward to the day when lockdown ends and she can restart.



## Jackie

Drumaville, Donegal - 2 March 2021

*'I'm looking forward to the arrival of my daughter's baby'*

Jackie has a small home farm where she grew up. Her mother still lives next door and her daughter, Danielle, has just bought the land next door.



## Danielle

Drumaville, Donegal - 2 March 2021

*'I'm looking forward to starting a new family on our new farm'*

Danielle is Jackie's daughter and she and her partner have just bought a farm from their uncle, who lives in England.



## Melissa

Near Slieve Snaght, Donegal - 2 March 2021

*'I want my children back. Hopefully soon.'*

Melissa has two lovely children who have been taken into care because of her drug habit. She's doing everything she can to get them back. With the support of a Derry based Christian group she has moved to Donegal in order to remove herself from friends who encouraged her habit.





## Sharon

Culdaff Beach, Donegal - 3 March 2021

*'I want to buy my own house'*

Sharon is starting a new life following a divorce. She would like to buy her own home in Culdaff but she can't get a mortgage for the houses she likes as they suffer from concrete rot; a condition following poor building control during the housing boom between 2000 and 2007.



## George

Bunagee, Donegal - 25 January 2021

*'I love being active; walking, kayaking and sailing.'*

The kayak for George, at the age of 74, represents continued mental and physical healing.



## Michaela

Mass Rock , Carndonagh, Donegal - 6 February 2021

*'I hope to publish my childhood memoirs'*

Michaela's hope is to publish her childhood memoirs from when she lived in Australia. Alcohol and religion played a big part in shaping her Irish identity down under. Her faith, if you like, is now more linked to nature.



Una

Culdaff Beach, Donegal - 10 February 2021

*'I find history fascinating, particularly the history of war'*

Una has a strong faith which has sustained her through poor health. She compares her interest in war history to surviving her own war.



## Vivian

Goorey, Donegal - 5 March 2021

*'I love growing flowers'*

Our landlord whilst we live in Donegal, Vivian, loves her garden and the seasons that bring renewed colour. Born in Malin Hall, Donegal, 92 years ago Vivian has seen many changes and ran a craft shop during the 1970s and 80s which was very popular with people fleeing The Troubles.



## Brendan

Carndonagh, Donegal - 26 January 2021

*'I hope to continue reflecting back stories told to me'*

Brendan is the news editor for the Derry Journal. Although born and raised in Derry he now lives in Inishowen. The mirror represents his hope to continue reflecting back local stories, particularly as the only paper that straddles the border.



Jan

Malin Head, Donegal - 5 March 2021

*'The stone represents to me that life is very short'*

Jan stands at Malin Head, the furthest northerly point of the Island of Ireland with Inishtrahull in the background. Inishtrahull is the furthest northerly inhabitable island and its rock, a bit which Jan displays, is 1.8 billion years old and considerably older than the rest of Ireland at 600 million years.

I would like to thank:

**England**

Steve Boltz, Françoise Lloyd, Antoinette Sinesi, Kevin Ireland, Susan Claris, Anita Burns, Peter Cocks, Emma 'Dolly Doowop' Dowdell, Dave Parsons, Tim Prater, Ned Fairbairn, Caroline Boorman, Kamilla Szyber, Mike Hamilton, Melita Godden, Andrew South, Clive Dean, Adam Freeman, Dyana Gravina, Russ and Celeste Davis, Lord Paul Boateng, Martin Chamberlin, Aimée Margott and friends, Catherine Frances Igoe, Miranda Kenny, Leo Lyons, Mark Cousens, Henry Bolton, Adele Green, Jo Blach, Julie Spence, Irvine (Irv) and IJ Bartlett, Richard Manning, Jane Long, Hugh Riddle, Mitch and Pearl Mitchell, Antoine Ndodao, Carmen Scarfe, Finlai Scarfe, Amelie Scarfe, Issac Scarfe, Peter Blach, Zoe Rowlands, Dave Stead and Christine Corfield.

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Vivian Holt, Jan King, George O'Doherty, Tara Mc Conalogue, Jackie Monagle, Danielle Monagle, Donna Porter, Una Farren, Melissa Macdaibheid, Michaela Mc Daid, Sharon Mulhern, Brendan McDaid

I'm very grateful.

All opinions are my own. This is not a fiction about metaphor.

Rob Stead

**My Manifesto**

- Scratch an itch
- Slow things down
- Stand on the shoulder of giants
- Try and put myself 'in the picture'
  - Be humble
  - Be positive
- Be minded to the historic moment
  - Create opportunities

May 2021

rob.stead.me.uk



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