

YOUNG PEOPLE'S SHORT STORY COMPETITION

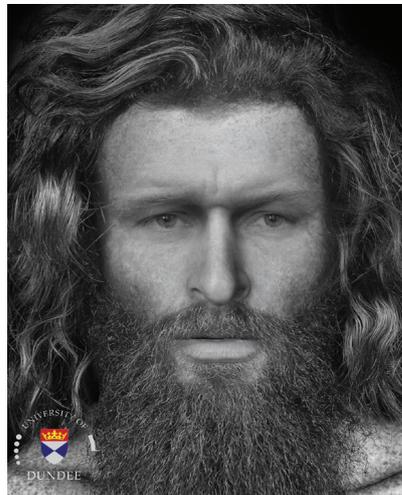
**Prizegiving**

**Sunday 22 April 2018**

**Part of the Cromarty Crime & Thrillers Weekend**

**Competition Judges**

**Ian Rankin FRSE and Professor Sue Black DBE FRSE**



*Image of reconstruction of the  
Rosemarkie Man's face,  
by Dr Chris Rynn*

Read the six prizewinning stories inside,  
as the Rosemarkie Man is brought to life .....

[www.rse.org.uk/events/rse-at/](http://www.rse.org.uk/events/rse-at/)

# 1<sup>st</sup> PRIZE

(AGE 14–18)

## Chelsey Hahmann

Age 15, Buckie High School, Buckie

### The Rosemarkie Caves

*Selkie: a mythical creature that resembles a seal in the water but assumes human form on land.*

Everyone had left. It was almost pitch-black outside and I could already see the stars coming through but there was something so magical about the caves and I couldn't resist going to have one last peek at the ancient structure. It was so easy to imagine someone from thousands of years ago taking shelter here from the rain or settling to sleep beside a roaring fireplace.

*The others were all huddling around the fire, begging for warmth and protection from the harsh winds that come along with living beside the raging sea. If it weren't for the stars which were starting to seep through the endlessly dark sky I wouldn't be able to navigate my way there but the caves were sort of enchanting, in their own way. We used to use them as somewhere to make our stone axes but few people used them now, especially my favourite one at the far end, where entrance was covered in long bits of seaweed. The others always say that that's where the selkies hide their skins when they rise out of the sea. I'm not sure I believe them.*

Something about the entrance was so... naturally incredible. It was as if it was inhibited by fairies who had nowhere better to hide during the daytime. I carefully tread on the rocky ground, and all at once I was inside the huge, hollow space. It was magnificent, so full of life that could only be experienced at the time the cave was formed and used. It was so large and yet intimate all at once.

*I loved the way the seaweed covered the opening, like it was a big secret and I couldn't tell anyone. I could see why everyone chose to believe that this was where the selkies would keep their skins; it has such an enchanting aura surrounding it. I began to step through the seaweed strands and the size of the cave astounded me. It was big and beautiful and fairy tale-like all in one go, breath-taking.*

There's something in the corner a small blue, maybe silver colour. It looks like an old blanket. If I didn't know that they weren't real, I would love to imagine a group of fairies or elves using it to keep warm.

*On the floor, at the back of the cave lies something soft, scaly. It looks like a bunch of leaves which had been woven together, only a metallic, glistening silver colour. It is the precise description of a selkie's skin.*

I heard a creak echo around the cave.

*The noise of footsteps seemingly from behind echoed around me.*

It had a knife.

*The selkie was holding an axe.*

I couldn't see.

*I was blinded.*

I couldn't breathe.

*I was suffocating.*

I was suddenly on my back with heavy boulders forcing me down.

*It put strong stones on my knees, weighing me down.*

Blackness.

*Blackness.*

## **2<sup>nd</sup> PRIZE**

(Age 14–18)

### **Emily Strowger**

Age 14, Buckie High School, Buckie

“Dead” was what they told us. Not when, how, why or who did it. He had been missing for days. He had left to go and hunt for our tribe. They brought back the body, and to be honest, I wish they hadn’t. His head that used to be such a lively place, the birth of his deepest thoughts, stories and fears had been completely obliterated. He looked about as dead as a person could possibly look. His eyes that used to give away the slightest inkling of emotion were dull, and the opposite of what I knew them to be. There was no doubt that he had been killed in malice, and without the faintest hint of mercy.

I screamed for help, but nothing nor no-one had come to my rescue. The two men in front of me sneered at me holding carved wooden stakes in their murderous hands, insanity flickering in their eyes waiting for me to beg to keep on living. I wasn’t planning on giving into them. Death is inevitable in my situation, and there’s no hope for me anymore. I lift my eyes from the emerald grass and golden sand that my feet are trapped in. The sun beats down on me and I begin to shiver, knowing my end is near.

I have been waiting for this moment for a long time now, I never thought it would ever happen, the amount of time I’ve counted down. Innumerable rises and falls of the bright sun in the sapphire blue abyss we call sky. I was thrown out of the Rosemarkie tribe long ago with my brother. I was just a child, I didn’t know what I had done, or the immeasurable consequences that it had. Our leader had 3 children. Due to my careless and reckless behaviour, there are only two now. I thought fighting as a child was fine. Just pretend. Make believe becomes reality if you aren’t careful you see. Our leaders eldest found the dead body of his youngest. It’s his fault you see. It’s why I need revenge. Then I can die a happy outsider.

A waste of a man. He didn’t deserve to die so young, and certainly didn’t deserve to be murdered. He was kind, caring, skilled and tried to look after all of us in our small tribe. Thoughts came to my head as I laid down our leader in a dark, safe cave where he could rest. As I looked out the stones to proceed the burial with, I realised who may have killed him. The only two people with anything against him were the two children who were abandoned and banished when the youngest was murdered. He found the body. I shake my head in sorrow as I lay the flat stones along his arms and chest. It could’ve been anyone. As I lift and drop the final stone at his knees, I stand up to leave. He shouldn’t be forgotten.

## **3<sup>rd</sup> PRIZE**

(Age 14–18)

### **Niamh Robertson**

Age 15, The Bridge School, Inverness

He was to die a mad man's death. He was insane in the eyes of his peers and for such an act as the one he had committed he was to die. No, he did not rant and rave about the voices in his head telling him to commit acts of malicious intent. No, he had discovered something all thought was impossible.

There had been legend of a stone that looked like green fire the colours of burnt orange and olive green swirled together in beautiful sync this stone was of high value and of great legend. Our man was no different to anyone else believing it was but fiction.

He was roaming late one night the stars and full moon being the only light to the dark twilight skies. He daundered carelessly to the shore a cave was situated to his left to what he could see in the dim light. As he walked across the dry sand it crunching under his feet the smell of the sea and night air making him unwind. A light erupted from the dark cave it was a green with an orange tinge, startled he approached with caution. He was to find that inside the cave was a tall figure dressed in a dark cloak which covered their face and in their hands was an olive green and burnt orange stone the colours beautifully swirled together it was exquisite he had never seen something of such beauty. But before he could look at the figures face a deep chuckle erupted from them as they covered the glowing stone.

“This is to be seen by no man's mortal eyes. That would certainly mean death” Their voice was deep and crackled throughout the dark cave. Then it went dead silent before he heard the voice again right beside him in his ear. Their Breath as cold as the grim reaper himself.

“Run little man.”

So, he did, ranting and raving in absolute fear of what he had seen to anyone he encountered, yelling in fear about the figure something he didn't think was human. Ha! It was joke was it not? It was for everyone but the tall, handsome and most importantly sinister figure of authority in the village who resented the man with a passion. He was infuriated with the man's fear and classed him as mad. treatment? Death. A pole through the head killing his insanity the villagers believing it was like an airborne disease. Our man fought cracking his skull and chin while screaming that he was truthful. The village people then laid him in the cave stones placed upon his body to stop his spirit escaping and tormenting them.

Though the man of authority's wife thought his death was cruel she only ever knew what danger they were in when she saw her husband late one night hunched over the glowing stone the dead man had raved about chuckling like a mad man.

# 1<sup>st</sup> PRIZE

(Age 10–13)

## Miea Coyle

Age 11, East End Primary School, Elgin

### The Rosemarkie Man

“Hurry up, we don’t have all day” said Steve.

“I’m sorry we have been mining away all day, and my arms hurt” Jonathon said.

“Well we need these stones for our ceremony tonight, if the people come without their stone you know what Billy will do.”

“Yes, I know and don’t go there about what he did to Max? I still get nightmares because of it” Jonathon said in a scared way.

“Right I think that’s it,” Steve said, “let’s go”.

They walked out. The sun shone in their eyes like a torch, right up close at you.

“I will go hand these out and then go home, oh wait here take one” Steve added quickly.

“What is it we have to do again?”

“You have to carve on your stone one of our symbols and explain why you have chosen it. Ok see you at Smelters Sea cave at 8.00 Steve said.”

### Jonathon’s House...

Jonathon was working away on his symbol stone, mumbling away as he did so.

“OK I have four hours until the ceremony which means four hours to carve my stone. Now I could do an animal, eh no I definitely can’t because I don’t believe in gods and goddesses. How about mythical creatures oh wait I can’t if I get one bit wrong Billy would kill me like he did to Richie. He shoved him off a cliff when it was wildly windy literally. I can’t do enigmatic symbols because Billy is doing that and am not going to go there about what he did to Jim or Martin. I know, I could make my own. I will create a shield in the first corner, I will put two swords crossing each other to show their weapons what they use to try and kill our animals with. In the next corner I will put the metal hats they wear for extra protection. Now in this corner I will put their horses which they come riding on like a stampede of cows. Finally, I will put NO because we want NO Romans in Pictland.”

### 7.55pm...

Everyone was gathering round the fire with their stones. By the time 8.00 came everyone had gathered ready to share their Symbol stones. Billy walked round in a circle and started with Tahlia.

“What have you brought?” he asked.

“I have carved a mermaid because I believe in life and that you should be yourself.”

Billy examined it.

“It’s perfect!” He shouted. “Now Jonathon what have you carved?”

“I have actually created my own it’s about how we hate the Romans and how weak we think they are”! Jonathon looked up; Billy’s Face was pure red like a tomato.

“How dare you go against our symbols!”

Everyone stood up and took a step back.

“Joe get me my pole!” raged Billy.

Everyone ran away apart from Billy, obviously. Billy pinned Jonathon up against the wall and held the pole above his ear, he gasped. The next minute Jonathon was lying on the floor dead. Billy covered him in stones and left.

After Billy (The leader of the tribe) had killed Jonathon in an unpleasant way, the rest of the tribe kept their distance. No one really could trust or do anything with Billy around. Everyone was scared if they told another tribe member a secret that it would get back to Billy, and that would not be good. So, with everyone scarred for life, no one ever really came together except for in battle.

## 2<sup>nd</sup> PRIZE

(Age 10–13)

### Brooke Gibson

Age 11, East End Primary School, Elgin

#### The Rosemarkie Man

Hello, my name is Steven, I'm here to tell you about how my life ended, or more importantly why.

I lived in the time of the Picts, we clashed with the Romans badly, and that's linked to my death. At the time I was quite young, 26, I was farming the cows and collecting wheat for upcoming trades. We ruled most of Scotland so there was a lot of land for growing crops. I lived with my Grandfather Otto, as my father was brutally killed by a Roman foe and his body was thrown into the ocean, never to be seen again. I was determined to one day (when my grandfather passes of old age) follow in his footsteps, and run the farm on my own, as he was a courageous cow farmer.

It felt like an ordinary day, I mean yes. Romans are killing us Picts all the time, but never had there been a murder to this extent before. I strolled into my sphere shaped house that morning, to grab my spear to slaughter some cows, when out of the blue, a man, dark hooded, jumped at me and asked for a trade.

"I will trade you...these magical rocks for that spear!" I hesitated...

"What do these so called, magical rocks do?" I asked

"Any wish can come true, but only one!"

I got curious as to why he wanted it so I asked.

"Have you got a farm of your own, sir?"

"No" he replied "It's a present for an old friend, I believe he would like to see someone but he can't unless he has it."

I did have one wish, now I know what the man meant but before I could change my mind, I was handing over my spear. He was gone. I took my rocks and made a wish...I hesitated as I heard rustling in the bush. RUSTLE...BANG! Then it stopped.

Since the man gave no details or instructions I spoke out loud.

"I wish to see my father just one more time!"

Time, my last words while breathing. The rest was just a blur. I remember some sounds... but that's it.

The man stormed up to me and scolded me in the head with a metal spear...my spear. I remember him whining saying

"Say hi to papa, this is what you get for your father stealing MY land!"

I can faintly remember Grandfather Otto carrying me, to Smelters sea cave in Rosemarkie and laying me down on the rocks. He crossed my ankles, splayed my knees and put my arms by my side. He respectfully placed rocks between my knees and across my chest.

The man got loose and killed my Grandfather Otto the following year... I miss having a heartbeat.

Now archaeologists have found me, and everyone knows me as the Rosemarkie man but the Picts, my father and Grandfather Otto know me as Steven the cow farmer. Everyone wonders who I am, how I died, and why. I died because of my Father. I never got to see him again. I am the Rosemarkie man.

## 3<sup>rd</sup> PRIZE

(Age 10–13)

### Ellina Duthie

Age 13, Buckie High School, Buckie

#### Rosemarkie Man

I was doing fine and like every other healthy person I was not ready to die. I was a Pict and had a family, but now I can tell you exactly how I was killed. I was killed by an enemy, one in which I didn't know was one. Her name was Katherine and she was my wife...I didn't fight back because I didn't know what was going on. My wife hit me over the head with a rock, stabbed me in the leg and drowned me in a bucket of water. After that she mummified me and got my best friend Peter to dump me in the cave, beside smelters sea cove near Rosemarkie. I was murdered because Katherine and my best friend Peter were planning a plot to take all my things once they had killed me. They also thought I would get in the way as they were also planning to run away and get married.

However, when my mortal remains were discovered by people in this day and age my legs were crossed with some large stones on my ankles, chest and along the line of my arms which were by my side. They buried me like that so they could put the stones on me, then if I was still alive, which was an extremely slim chance, I wouldn't get up and eventually bleed to death. I was mummified and I thought that was normally a sign of respect.

Although she was going to run away and get married I bet you wonder how this love affair came to be. You are probably wondering why I wasn't good enough. Well it turns out my daughter told Katherine I was a spy and working for the Queen of England. My mission was to betray the Picts and the Scottish Queen. I was going to go through with my plan and in fact started because the English Queen chose me not anyone else, only me. At first I thought it had to be the Queen of Scotland who ordered Katherine and Peter to kill me, but now everyone who reads this will know.

I wonder about you... Would you have tried or planned to betray the Scottish Queen and your tribe? Or would you stay in a tribe and risk your life for people who won't protect you? So far I have had no protection from the Queen of Scotland, and now there isn't one so the tables have turned.

Coming to the end of my story there could be more deep dark secrets to come but that's for you to find out and until then I will let you in on a secret.

*The only way for my secrets to show,*

*Means you need to look,*

*In the deep, dark cave below.*

*I have been unfaithful as I've said,*

*But you my friend,*

*Are not really dead.*

# RSE@ INVERNESS

*The Royal Society  
of Edinburgh*

Prizes were awarded for the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> places  
in two categories: Age 10–13 & Age 14–18

Prizewinners and runners-up were awarded book tokens  
and given the opportunity to read out their stories during the  
Prizegiving event at the Cromarty Crime & Thrillers Weekend 2018

[www.cromartyartstrust.org.uk/crime-and-thrillers.asp](http://www.cromartyartstrust.org.uk/crime-and-thrillers.asp)

For further details of the RSE and the RSE@ programme,  
please contact **Kate Kennedy**, RSE Outreach Officer  
Telephone: **07502 111 610** – email: [kkennedy@theRSE.org.uk](mailto:kkennedy@theRSE.org.uk)

[www.rse.org.uk](http://www.rse.org.uk)

