

HOW I LIVE:

GEORGINA LIVESEY

Interview by
Emilia Ong

Images courtesy of
Georgina Livesey

In our ongoing series we meet Margate locals and ask them about their lives

I moved to Margate about five years ago when my health was on the decline and my marriage was failing. Now my life looks radically different – and so much better.

Local community groups helped me rediscover interests I'd had when I was much younger. There was one point when I was going to three a week! At Stitch 'n' Bitch I took up knitting again, and now knitting is at the centre of my life.



If you live at the seaside, you should try to take advantage of it as much as possible. It's not just about physical health. The emotional effect is massive. I'm so much happier after I've been out in the open air.

A friend and I live in an old ambulance station which we are renovating slowly. She's got upstairs, and I'm downstairs. Though it's not listed, it's identified as a "building of interest", so we've only done works which are sympathetic to the original structure.

I use art as therapy. If I'm not doing something creative, there's always a sense that something is missing. A bit of knitting or weaving relaxes me and helps me express myself.

I've spent most of my adult life working in construction. I never chose to do it, but it paid the bills. Now along with my making, I only do a bit part-time. Right now I'm designing and installing an eight-seat cinema for a friend's place on the Isle of Sheppey.

I'm most drawn to people who are what others might call less successful. For me these creatives are often the ones doing the most inspiring work. ▶

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During lockdown I collaborated on a project which was displayed at the Margate School. It was a large, sewn scroll, like a tapestry, which depicted various important times in my life. It was a very healing thing to do.

Once in my early twenties, I literally walked away from everything.



My first marriage was over and I'd never left the UK before, so I went to Israel to work on a kibbutz. It was a different time then. We were carefree and idealistic, and the kibbutz itself was quite left-leaning. There was such a vast spectrum of people there, from those who were part of the peace movement to Holocaust survivors.

They all had a huge impact on me.

My biggest creative project is me. I recently came out as non-binary and changed my name, which has given me a lot of satisfaction. Now I feel optimistic about my future and my ability to continue developing as a person.

Gender bothers me. It makes no sense how differently the genders are treated, and the abuse thrown at people who deviate from the norm is simply abhorrent.

In many ways I've had to strip away all that I was taught about

myself. When I changed my name I felt like I'd been unlocked. I don't want to be either male or female. What I am is a mixture of all the genders - and no, I don't believe there are only two.

Sometimes people ask me what my pronouns are, but I still haven't quite figured it out. "They" is fine and on forms I will use "Mx", but "them" brings up some difficult associations: I went to a boys' school and bullies used to say, "You're one of them." I know it's not supposed to, but still today the word makes me feel like an outsider.

I don't think I could have got to where I am now without Margate Pride. They represent the very best of Margate in terms of acceptance and diversity.

I'm both an early bird and a night owl. In other words, I'm constantly sleep-deprived. My mind keeps me awake till 2am and then I wake up a lot during the night thinking about things. But working in construction forced me to become the sort of person who had to get up and be functional very early in the morning. Now it seems to be in my blood.

I'd like to buy my own field and build a home from scratch. That's probably a very primal urge, but it's

also linked to the joy I found during lockdown, when it was possible to be in nature with very few people around. Something about that isolation is incredibly appealing.

The stupidity of people scares me. Until the pandemic I'd never realised just how thoughtless, negligent, and dangerous members of the public could be when it came to the health of other people.

It's undeniable that Margate's changed a lot since the pandemic, and I do wonder what the future holds. Previously the town appealed to people who didn't earn a great deal - artisans and other low-earners. Now the people who are moving in are much more affluent. It's great for business, but from a cultural and creative point of view it's not necessarily a good thing. If artist studios and accommodation become too expensive, then creative people will move on.

I have trouble with the word "happy". It's a bit like "nice": what does it actually mean?

Georgina Livesey is an artisan and maker based in Westgate-on Sea. Check out @liveseygeorgina to see some of their work

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