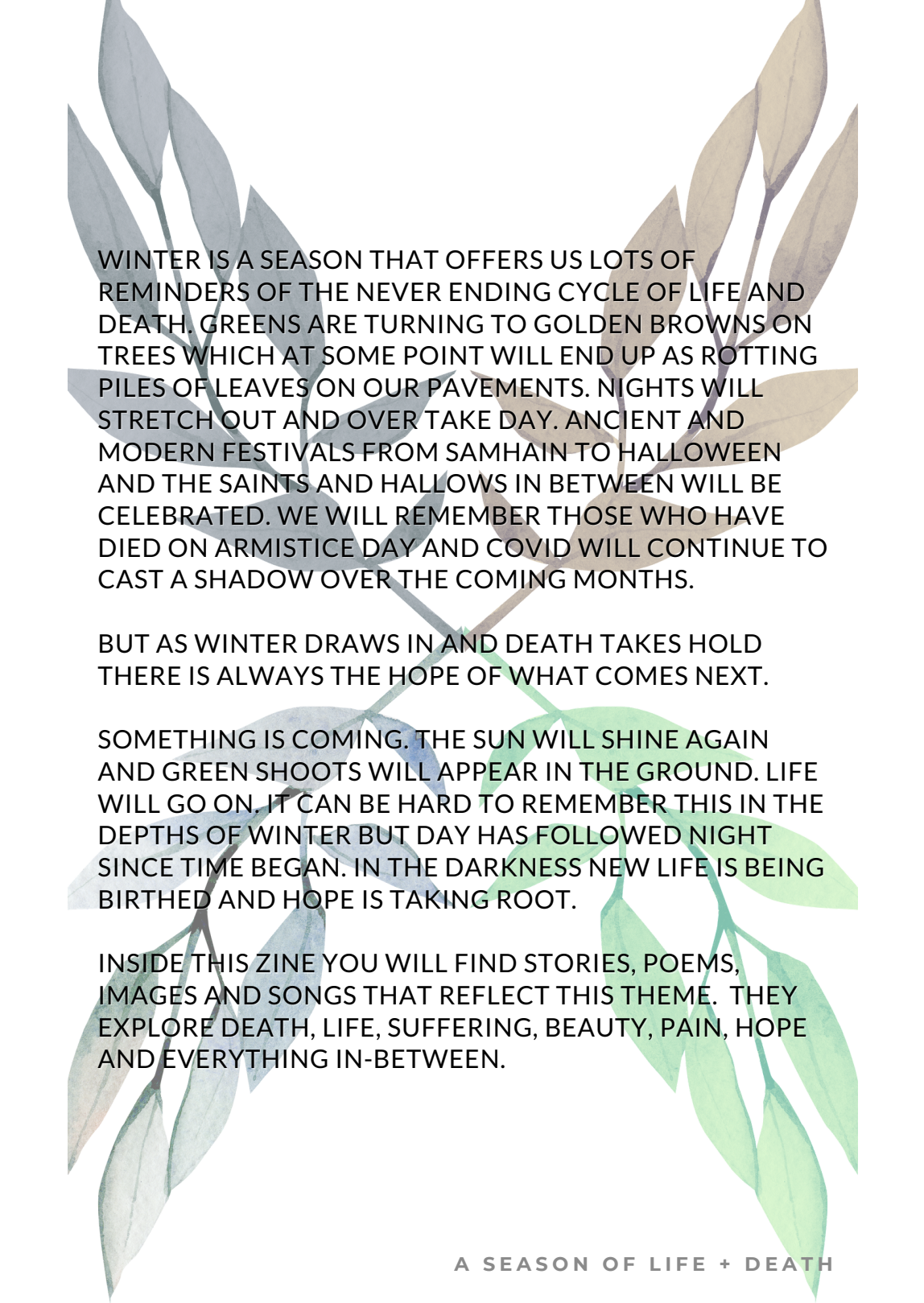




A
SEASON
OF



LIFE
+
DEATH



WINTER IS A SEASON THAT OFFERS US LOTS OF REMINDERS OF THE NEVER ENDING CYCLE OF LIFE AND DEATH. GREENS ARE TURNING TO GOLDEN BROWNS ON TREES WHICH AT SOME POINT WILL END UP AS ROTTING PILES OF LEAVES ON OUR PAVEMENTS. NIGHTS WILL STRETCH OUT AND OVER TAKE DAY. ANCIENT AND MODERN FESTIVALS FROM SAMHAIN TO HALLOWEEN AND THE SAINTS AND HALLOWS IN BETWEEN WILL BE CELEBRATED. WE WILL REMEMBER THOSE WHO HAVE DIED ON ARMISTICE DAY AND COVID WILL CONTINUE TO CAST A SHADOW OVER THE COMING MONTHS.

BUT AS WINTER DRAWS IN AND DEATH TAKES HOLD THERE IS ALWAYS THE HOPE OF WHAT COMES NEXT.

SOMETHING IS COMING. THE SUN WILL SHINE AGAIN AND GREEN SHOOTS WILL APPEAR IN THE GROUND. LIFE WILL GO ON. IT CAN BE HARD TO REMEMBER THIS IN THE DEPTHS OF WINTER BUT DAY HAS FOLLOWED NIGHT SINCE TIME BEGAN. IN THE DARKNESS NEW LIFE IS BEING BIRTHED AND HOPE IS TAKING ROOT.

INSIDE THIS ZINE YOU WILL FIND STORIES, POEMS, IMAGES AND SONGS THAT REFLECT THIS THEME. THEY EXPLORE DEATH, LIFE, SUFFERING, BEAUTY, PAIN, HOPE AND EVERYTHING IN-BETWEEN.

A



TIME

FOR

EVERYTHING

A SEASON OF LIFE + DEATH

FOX

by Noreen Rees

Jane told us she'd never seen a fox, let alone a dead one, now lying against the grass verge as if it was taking a nap. Jane had come to us for the weekend. She hadn't seen many things in her nine years, including the mountains we'd climbed the previous day. She'd stood on a rocky pinnacle overlooking Watendlath and told us she'd really like to live in that place. This had been followed by acute eye rolling from my own children, then aged nine and twelve. They hadn't had limited horizons like Jane. They were worldly wise on every subject. And don't get them started on fell walking...



But to return to the fox. We all observed it—even them—in a kind of awe. Yes it was dead but it was also one of the most beautiful things any of us had seen. Its russet coat was still glossy. Its tail was laid out on the grass like a clump of heather. Flies were gathering around its mouth and closed eyes but the maggots hadn't burrowed into its flesh then.

As the days passed, the strength of the midsummer sun hastened the fox's decay. Not only Jane but my own children insisted we visit the fox as we passed along the road which threaded its way down the valley. After a few days its eyes were sunken black hollows, and its ears had been nibbled away. Its ribs began to be revealed stark white against the red fur. Its whole body was sinking down into the mudded grass but its tail remained stiff and bushy.

On our last day of holiday, we paid our respects. Jane told us she'd always remember the fox. I felt we all would. It showed us the fragility of life, its closeness to death, and how all of us—humans, mammals, birds and insects are inextricably linked together.

ABOUT LIFE AND DEATH

by Ayshayh Middleton

Having worked as a care assistant in care homes and as a support worker in supported living I see life in many different forms.

I help people live it as best as possible.


I see death up close and personal.

I have seen people pass away in front of me in many different ways and that can take its toll.


I can have hope that I've helped them enjoy life.

HAIKUS


by Rob Wylie

A photograph of a stone path winding through a mountainous landscape in autumn. The grass is golden-brown, and the mountains in the background are partially shrouded in mist.

Under its own strength
Life went wandering today
Season to season

A photograph of a field of small white flowers, possibly snowdrops, in a winter setting. The ground is covered in snow, and the overall tone is cold and serene.

Mushy leaves give way
Transforms Autumn to winter
When mr Mr frost bites

A photograph of a large, gnarled tree trunk that has been cut and is decaying. The wood is dark and covered in moss, with some green plants growing from it.

Rooted for decades
life blown over to decay
feeding the future

A SEASON OF LIFE + DEATH

HANDS


by Ben Pearce



I stare at my hands
Inspecting each and every line
Each and every scar

The left bares little
The scar of a learning child
The rough skin of the gym

Nothing to show
Nothing to see
A pain free life



I then look at the right
Battered with bruised knuckles
Scars reaching up the wrists

A knuckle hardly there
Each with no feeling
From the times they have
Been an outlet of pain

Two sides of life: Pain free or painful
Both portrayed in two hands
For all to see.

A SEASON OF LIFE + DEATH

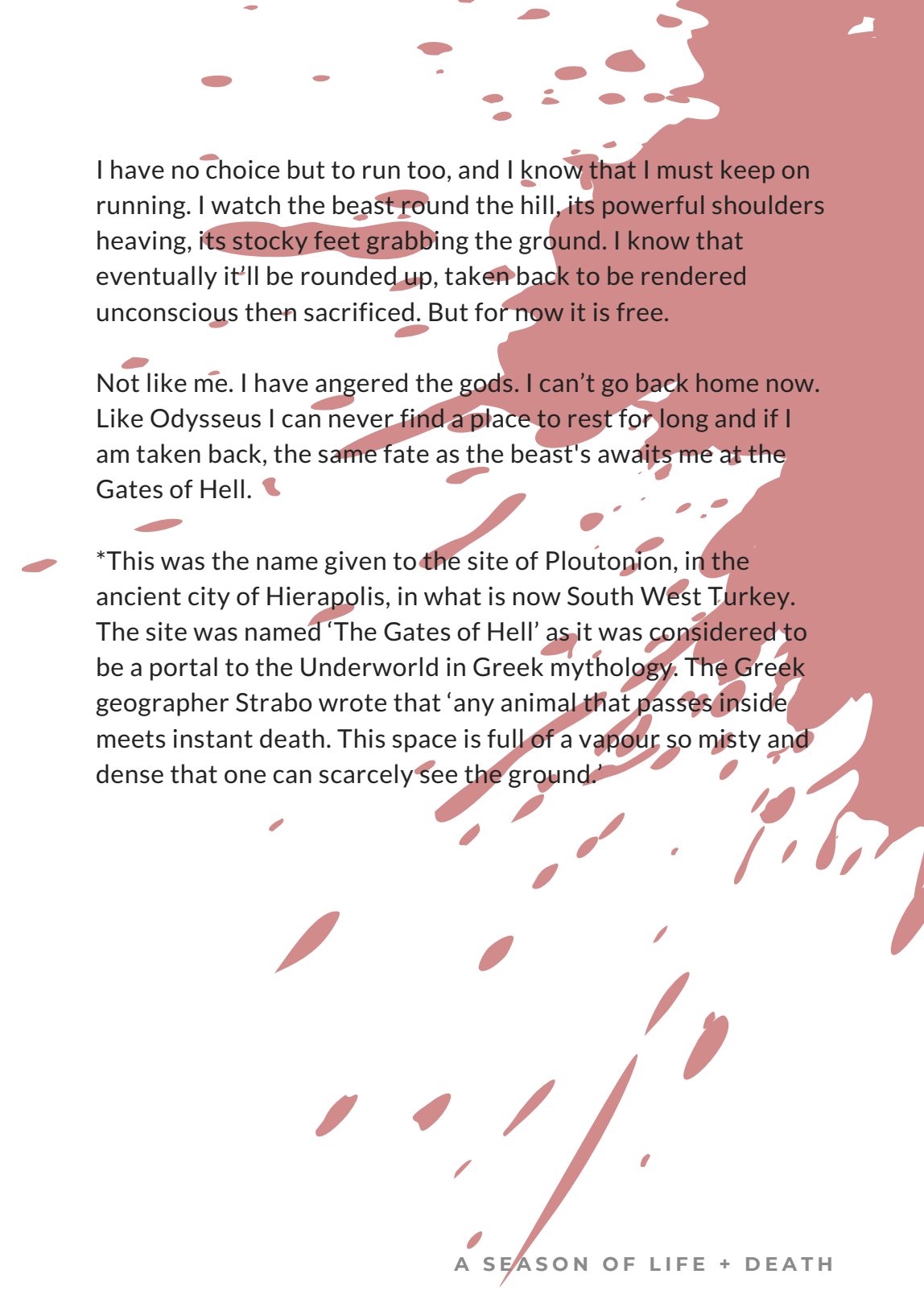
GATES OF HELL*

by Noreen Rees

It's my job to lead the oxen down, one at a time. I'm used to the beasts and a strong boy but as they approach the temple their tails begin to swish and they pin their ears back. Their eyes swivel to the back of their heads showing the whites. I have to tighten my grip on the halter of this one. My legs begin to shake. My feet are sliding on the soft mud. My master looks over.

'Aeacus, watch what you're doing. You need to hold him closer.' Hard as I try I can't get the beast to move any further. It digs its hooves into the soft sand at the edge of the pool. While I'm holding him, the Chief Priest takes three pigeons and releases them from a basket. At first they try to fly upward but then their wings slow down and their heads loll. They crash down onto the stone steps where the priests are standing. They lie there motionless, tiny specks of blood boozing from their beaks. Now I notice that beside the pool are clouds of vapour being forced through fissures in the rocks. The white clouds lie across the pool and make the priests look as if they are standing in the sky.

'Aeacus,' I hear the Chief Priest shout. But at that moment the beast heaves its huge shoulders and snorts loudly. As it twists its head from side to side I slacken the rope to avoid its thrashing horns. The beast gives an almighty bellow, and it is free, running back up the slope, away from Pluto and Kore, away from Hades' grasp.



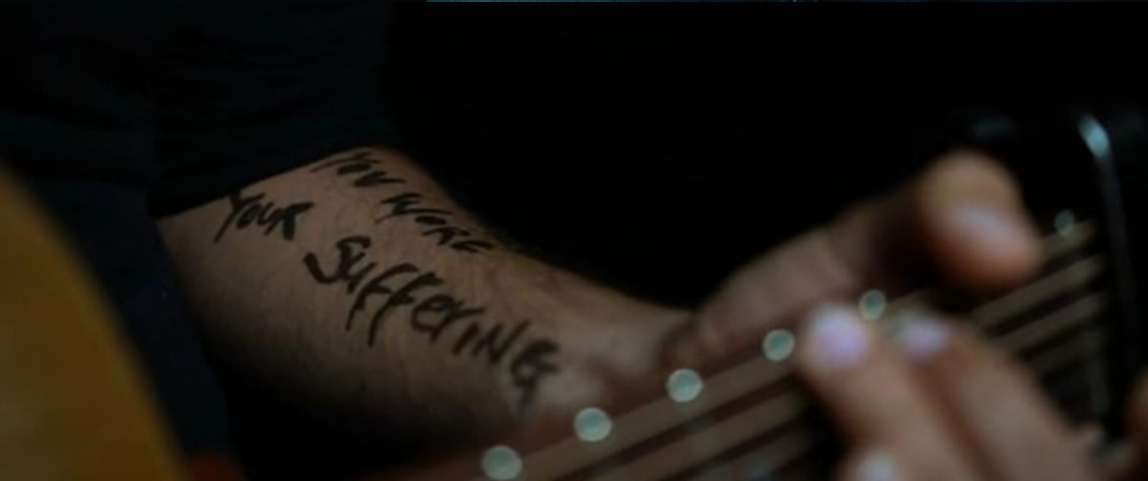
I have no choice but to run too, and I know that I must keep on running. I watch the beast round the hill, its powerful shoulders heaving, its stocky feet grabbing the ground. I know that eventually it'll be rounded up, taken back to be rendered unconscious then sacrificed. But for now it is free.

Not like me. I have angered the gods. I can't go back home now. Like Odysseus I can never find a place to rest for long and if I am taken back, the same fate as the beast's awaits me at the Gates of Hell.

*This was the name given to the site of Ploutonion, in the ancient city of Hierapolis, in what is now South West Turkey. The site was named 'The Gates of Hell' as it was considered to be a portal to the Underworld in Greek mythology. The Greek geographer Strabo wrote that 'any animal that passes inside meets instant death. This space is full of a vapour so misty and dense that one can scarcely see the ground.'

“You do not need to know precisely what is happening, or exactly where it is all going. What you need is to recognise the possibilities and challenges offered by the present moment, and to embrace them with courage, faith and hope.”

THOMAS MERTON



A SEASON OF LIFE + DEATH

STILL YOUR HEART SANG ON

by Aaron Shah

There is rarely a week that goes by that Rachel and I don't think about our friend Phil. A striking photo he took of the lighthouse near our house hangs on our kitchen wall, we frequently use a favourite phrase of his - "*It's gonna be okay*" - when we face a setback or uncertainty (it also has a place on our kitchen wall), we often talk about how he would respond to something, and memories of him regularly come up in the course of our everyday life.

One of the memories that stands out the most - perhaps because it encapsulates a big part of what Phil stood for and perhaps because it taught me so much - is from when I went to visit him at his home a few weeks before he died. That night, unlike other nights I had visited, Phil was barely able to speak as he was in so much pain.

Usually, I took my guitar with me when Rachel and I visited Phil, as he loved to sing and connect with God through music so much. That evening though, I had forgotten to bring it, so instead we spent some time listening to music videos on YouTube. After we had listened to a few different songs, I remembered an old song that meant a lot to me, and I thought Phil might like it as well. It was a song about bringing all the things we usually hide from ourselves and others - our brokenness, our uncertainty, our questions, our frailty, our doubts - to God, and trusting that God is big enough to handle them. I found the song on YouTube and began to play it...

"Sometimes my life,
just don't make sense at all
The mountains seem so big and my
faith just seems so small.

So hold me Jesus,
because I'm shaking like a leaf
You have been King of my glory,
won't You be my
Prince Of Peace?"

The words seemed so fitting as I sat next to Phil lying on his bed, in pain, and uncertain of what lay ahead. And as we listened to the song in silence, aware of the growing sense of God's presence surrounding us, I looked up and caught a glimpse of something that will stay with me forever – Phil was slowly mouthing the words to the song. Although no sound was coming out of his mouth, his heart couldn't help but sing.

That was who Phil was. That is who Phil is.

What I saw in Phil that day was courage – courage to hold onto his faith in the middle of the battle, courage to still believe that how he lived out his values mattered, courage to hold onto hope, courage to look death in the face and sing on.

That courage has inspired me ever since I saw it, and I hope that his example can inspire each one of us, wherever we are in our own journeys and whatever situations we may be facing.

The song below is a song I wrote in memory of Phil and all that he taught me that evening.

LISTEN TO THE SONG



SUPPORT AARON HERE





Despise not death,
but welcome it,
for nature wills it
like all else.

MARCUS AURELIUS



“No, we don’t need more sleep. It’s our souls that are tired, not our bodies. We need nature. We need magic. We need adventure. We need freedom. We need truth. We need stillness. We don’t need more sleep, we need to wake up and live.”



BROOKE HAMPTON



A SEASON OF LIFE + DEATH

**WHERE WERE
YOU GOD,
WHERE WERE
YOU?**



WHERE WERE YOU GOD, WHERE WERE YOU?

by Rob Wylie

Where were you God, where were you?

I've been waiting...

Watching pain etched on war torn faces

Nameless Places, lives destroyed and obliterated

Opposition warmongering, rhetoric roaring, fear and loathing.

Where were you God, where were you?

I've been waiting...

Watching pain etched on disaster victims

Vacant faces, hollow eyes, emaciated bodies

Stomachs extended, malnutrition ridden.

Where were you God, where were you?

I've been waiting...

Watching pain etched on friends faces

Weakening, worrying, aching

Body collapsing, limbs twinging

Where were you God, where were you?

I've been waiting...

Watching pain etched in lonely people

In a crowd but yet so alone

Looking for meaning in all the wrong places

Risking life for survival

Where were you God, where were you?
I've been waiting...

Watching the hopeless and helpless
Scavenging for a moment of contentment
Why does it have to be this way
Will you ever act?
I'm in despair... anguish, guilt and failure all around

Where were you God, where were you?
I've been waiting...

Crying, how long lord... how long?
My heart... it waits for you
I scarcely remember when you stood alongside me
A distant memory when you held me
I want to know you... to cling to you...
to know that you will act...
I want to learn to trust, to hope... my heart though falls
My sorrow is great for what I see around me
Please God... Rescue me... rescue me...





MOTHER NATURE DOESN'T
THROW STUFF AWAY.

DEAD TREES, BIRDS,
BEETLES AND ELEPHANTS
ARE PRETTY QUICKLY
RECYCLED BY THE SYSTEM.

William Booth



There is no worse death
than the end of hope.

PELAGIUS

A SEASON OF LIFE + DEATH

THANKS

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Zine designed by Phoce

ZINE

A Zine is a small-run work of original or appropriated texts and images. This is our first Zine and was born out of our BFX Creative group and we hope there will be more to come.

ABOUT BEACHCOMBERFX

BeachcomberFX is a new kind of faith community exploring spirituality and life in its fullness. You can find out more about us at www.beachcomberfx.co.uk or on Facebook by searching Sunday@thePub.



