

and other shores

SAMPLE

ALSO BY IAN STEPHEN

SAMPLER

and other shores

Ian Stephen

SAMUEL

Shearsman Books

First published in the United Kingdom in 2026 by
Shearsman Books Ltd
PO Box 4239
Swindon
SN3 9FN

Shearsman Books Ltd Registered Office
30–31 St. James Place, Mangotsfield, Bristol BS16 9JB
(this address not for correspondence)

ISBN 978-1-83738-023-7

Copyright © 2026 by Ian Stephen

The right of Ian Stephen to be identified as the author of this
work has been asserted by him in accordance with
the Copyrights, Designs and Patents Act of 1988.
All rights reserved.

SAMPLE

CONTENTS

POSITIONS

Fix	9
Skylight (circa 1980)	10
Skylight (circa 2020)	11
Lyrics for Sean and Rosie	12
Field Notes	14
Don't forget	17
East side (Isle of Lewis)	18
A stubborn hair that's blonde	19
Beaully Firth	22
Monument, Sutherland	23
Caithness	24
North Coast	25
River physics	26
Five Fish	32

ORIENTATION

The lay of the land	37
From a great circle – Nunatsuak	38
Interior – Grain elevators	40
Lakeside 1 – Kisiskatchewanisipi	41
Lakeside 2 – Sweat Lodge	42
Waternames	44

A HEMISPHERE DOWN

Tales of Brave Ulysses	47
For 'Ted', in Hobart	50
Lunawanna Allonah	52
Gordon River	54
Bruny Light	56
On Ocean Beach	57

A sampler of creeks	58
Interlude in Húsavík	60
‘perfect peace’	61

BHATASGEIR – AND OTHER SHORES

Just when you’re ready to think	65
Messages	66
Fencelines	67
Eilean Nèimh (On Nave Island, west Islay)	69
In response to Orasaigh/Oronsay	70
Aquaculture	71
Elegant eclipse	74
A new mountain	75
I M Alexander Hutchison, 1943–2013	77
As the crow flies	78
I M John Anderson	79
Surf-break, Mol Mòr Bhathasgeir	82
Great Northern, Loch a Tuath	83
Seilebost	84

EAST, WEST, EAST COASTS

Salmon-netters, Balmedie	89
Eardley at Catterline	91
Peplow to Cadell	92
Whistler in The Hunterian	93
In The Hunterian	94
Arnish man	95
On the Gower Peninsula	97
Tideway, Rathlin Sound	98
Lines for Gerry Loose	99
Shakin briggie	101

<i>Acknowledgements</i>	102
-------------------------	-----

Positions

SAMPLE

SAMPLE

Fix

(for Saki)

So many tracks
in pencil or pixels
your own and the others.

Solid or dotted
erased or saved
screened or printed.

Foot treads,
wakes
vapour trails –

it's the way
two transits become
one definite fix

if
there's an angle.

SAMPLE

Tannara Mòr postage stamp project – Saki Satom

Skylight (circa 1980)

(for BZ)

I'm lying with you a mile inland
under rain that drills the roof-sheets
storms all chinks in the flashings.

The sealed window unit isn't.
There happens to be a power-cut
and there's a depth of singing height
above the weather.

We're not moored to
anything I've seen
sink or rise on a tested line.
We'll hold together tonight.

SAMPLE

Skylight (circa 2020)

These clouds look steady enough.
Their sky anchors must be out
though I can't see the traces
of the cables
but the plough is on the move,
fair sweeping along.

You join up the dots
to catch the action.
The whole picture,
even the one in one window,
doesn't bother to wait.
A system drives itself
out of the skylight.

The constellation
hasn't got away.
The iron up there
tight on aluminium.
Polaris is further
out of the frame.

Lyrics for Sean and Rosie

Did you dwell here with me
in this beehive of placed stones
if only for summers
when cattle were heavy?

Did our barley-rigs hold
in deep-cleared furrows
between acidic turf
and the salted rock.

Did you bait lines for us
at the head of this steep loch
where Sron Ulladale bears
to winter whitefish?

Will we set a fire now,
light it this ebb tide
to send out a signal –
heat smoke and hope.

Should we plant a rowan here?
The seed of red berries
for imagination
to germinate when
leaves mould, stars die?

A hawthorn for healing –
spur and leaf balm.
We should put a bit back
for others to find
at a possible later.

Rooting for ourselves
and for us all

*Adapted from lyrics in 'Malin Hebrides Miches' – with photos
by Sam Maynard, Dangaroo Press, 1983*

SAMPLER

Field Notes

(Following William MacGillivray, naturalist and artist, 1796–1852)

1 Barabhas

you can put your hand to
this form in the rushes
still warm though

the speed of cooling air
snaps at your knuckles
but the smoulder
of this morning

will equalise temperatures
and the fog will be gone
like the hare

2 Gearrannan

treading the turf
Gearrannan, Dhail Mhor
looking to footfalls

wary of fleeing wolves
carrying their own young
on their eight legs

below us and them
the underswell
at Àird a' Ghobhann

which Smith
was he?

3 On Todun

a parent plover wades
deer-grass gold

a cuckoo in the scrub
of birch and myrtle

a merlin cuts across the face
of field-vole rock

so sharp
we expect
blood from stone

4 Pabaigh Mòr

a cistern in drystone
wetted by flood
now holds velvets

greens for the stab
of crabbing heron

5 Eadar Dha Fhadhail,

stark caps
small commons
stern wind
between two fords

6 Beinn Dhubh Losgaintir

Paul is a composer
who identifies birds
from their sounds
as well as their shapes.

'It could be in the modes or the key.
I haven't got perfect pitch.
I've faith in frailty.'

He had a brother he never saw.
Lost, over the grey brow
of this very ridge.

That's really
why we're here
where sundews
trap specks
with no noise
that we can detect.

A peregrine shadow
traverses from
moorland to foreshore.

A distinct wingline
then
a blur and shriek.