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Twelve Rivers

Magazine of the Suffolk Poetry Society

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In Conversation with Luke Wright
In Conversation with Caroline Wiseman
A Tale of Two Sisters
The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám
How to Get Published
Turning Japanese



Notice to Contributors

14th September 2018 is the deadline for poems from SPS members for the next issue. This will enable them to be circulated to our referees and receive their recommendations. **If you are sending poems please put your name and contact details (preferably email address) on each page.** Submissions not conforming to this requirement will not be considered.

12th October 2018 is the deadline for the next issue for all items other than poems: articles, write-ups of events or workshops, reviews etc. The preferred format is an attachment to an email to editor@suffolkpoetrysociety.org.uk but you may send them by post to: The Editor, 64 Broom Street, Great Cornard, Sudbury, Suffolk, CO10 0JT.

It is very important that your name and contact details (preferably email address) are written on the item you are sending.

Images, drawings or photographs are welcome. Please send them in as high a resolution as possible to webmaster@suffolkpoetrysociety.org.uk.

Front cover:

Photograph taken by Fran Reader

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Words from the Chair



In December 2017, we received the sad news of Henry Engleheart's death. The Englehearts have been key members and staunch supporters of Suffolk Poetry Society since its inception; Francis, Henry's father, was a founder member of the poetry club in 1928 which eventually became Suffolk Poetry Society. Henry and his wife Victoria have hosted an annual tea party for our members at Stoke by Nayland Priory for many years and Henry's widow Victoria has kindly indicated that she will keep this tradition going with our help.

Early this year SPS was involved in two collaborative efforts. With Kaaren Whitney, I judged a poetry competition run by the Suffolk Flora Preservation Trust, with a prizegiving on 20th January in Kelsale. I enjoyed learning about the Trust's work and the poems were fascinating. Ipswich Choral Society's event, *Ipswich Remembers*, a WWI commemoration at the Corn Exchange on 17th March, boldly included acting, dance and poetry, along with some wonderful choral singing. SPS was invited to assist with the poetry selected by the Director, Robin Walker. Alex Davis and I were readers and we thoroughly enjoyed participating in the event.

SPS got off to a cracking start with a much appreciated workshop and reading at Felixstowe Ferry with Anne-Marie Fyfe on February 22nd, which neatly dodged weather

problems. But the bitter cold and lying snow led to the postponement of our AGM, which was rescheduled to 29th April. I am presented with a difficult choice at our 5th Festival of Suffolk Poetry on May 26th with Derek Adams, Susan Utting and Rebecca Watts offering concurrent workshops from 10am to 12.30pm. The rest of the day will be a continuous feast of poetry which you can find out about in this magazine and on our website. Do spread the word and bring your friends.

Trying to reduce the accumulated tide of stuff that comes from living in the same house for 34 years, I have just come across my university exam papers. A sample question from 1973 asks: *Consider the contention that Montale's poems are, on account of their obscurity, no more than interesting failures.* I have read the latest winning poem in the National Poetry Competition several times and am still struggling to understand it; the Second Prize poem by Mary Chan, about her relationship with her mother, is much more accessible to me, without excessive spoon-feeding. Good poets know how to select and trim the words they use into the most effective shape - and they know exactly when to stop. Sometimes it's hard to keep up.

Another question in my final university exam asked for a commentary on a poem by the French poet Joachim du Bellay, in which the poet is asked why he is

always singing, and he replies that he is singing to get through life, like lots of other people: the workman at work, the pilgrim missing home, the lover dreaming about his lady, the prisoner cursing his prison. I believe that poetry and song have much in common and they are certainly equally important in the space they occupy in my head. I sometimes make up songs - or add more verses to existing ones - as I drive around Suffolk on my way to work, but I don't think I have ever composed a poem that way. I like to see the written words in front of me.

At the moment, we are thinking of the struggles of women to find their place in the world: by getting the vote, by getting equal representation with men in other spheres, by having truly shared parenthood and by having a decent, safe place to live. A boss I had years ago in France seemed sorry that both his children were girls, and I told him that what was important was the full flowering of each individual, boy or girl. The sad truth is that prejudice, poverty, neglect and bullying can prevent this from happening, and domestic violence - which is shamefully far too often a death sentence - is hard to escape from. The committee would appreciate poems on these themes for our public reading at Walpole Old Chapel on Sunday 16th September at 3pm; the reading will be called 'War and Home' but this is not restrictive. The 100th anniversary of the end of WWI is very close to that date. Shingle Street will be providing music for the event. If you would like to read a poem/poems of your own at this event, please email me copies so that I can organise the programme.

Another opportunity to flex your poetry muscles will be to email me a poem or poems inspired by John Cassidy's poems (see our website). Six poems by our members will be displayed with John's at the Frame Workshop & Gallery, 22 St Nicholas St. Ipswich IP1 1TJ from October 3rd onwards, alongside artworks by Stephen Cassidy linked to the poetry; submitted poems will be available in a pamphlet. Writers will be able to read their themed poetry to the public there on Thursday October 4th (National Poetry Day) at

Cont'd bottom p.4

Note from the Editor

*Firm in reliance, laugh a defiance,
Laugh in hope, for sure is the end.
March, march, many as one,
Shoulder to shoulder and friend to friend.*

From: 'The March of the Women',
anthem of the Women's Social and
Political Union, 1911.

Words: Cicely Hamilton
Music: Ethel Smyth

I was introduced to a love of
poetry by the chief suffragette in
my life – my godmother Auntie
Vee (short for Violet Victoria). She

was an impressive figure in my
childhood who insisted that when
I was old enough I should
'NEVER, EVER forget to vote!' I
haven't.

Vee ran away from her
comfortable Edwardian family in
Bristol when she was eighteen.
Her father had forbidden her to
wear glasses – in case this ruined
her marriage prospects. She found
sympathetic friends in London
who sorted out her myopia,
turned her into a suffragette and
helped her to train as a drama
teacher. My mother was taught by
Auntie Vee and, today, my
bookcase contains many hand-me-

down poetry books stuffed with
newspaper clippings and
containing their pencil comments
in the margins.

I recently looked at Auntie Vee's
copy of Palgrave's Golden
Treasury and decided to count the
number of male (108) and female
(8) poets represented in that
famous Victorian anthology. This
made me wonder how the
representation of female poets in
other anthologies had fared over
time and (totally non-scientifically)
I pulled out some anthologies I
possessed and counted.

Here are the results:

Anthology	Editor	Date of Publication	Male poets	Female poets	% Female poets
Golden Treasury	Palgrave	1861	108	8	6.8
Other Men's Flowers	A.P.Wavell	1944	95	8	8.7
The Oxford Twentieth Century English Verse	Philip Larkin	1973	182	26	12.5
The Harvill Book of Twentieth Century Poetry in English	Michael Schmidt	1999	94	26	27.6
Being Alive	Neil Astley	2011	295	170	36.6

So here we are, with Carol Ann
Duffy as the first woman to be
appointed Poet Laureate
celebrating 100 years since British
women (or, at least, women of
property over the age of 30) gained
the right to vote. I wonder if in

2118 anyone will be celebrating
another leap forward in women's
rights with the centenary of the
Me Too movement?

Back to poetry and the here and
now – two of the many things I
love about the Suffolk Poetry

Society are its sense of gender-
neutral humanity and absence of
'isms'. I hope that this edition of
Twelve Rivers maintains this ethos
and provides you with many
pleasurable hours of reading.

Fran Reader

Lynne Nesbit



Lynne Nesbit

Lynne Nesbit has recently moved
to Beccles, having spent the first 70
years of her life in London. She
intends to spend the next 30 in
Suffolk. Lynne has been writing
poetry and prose for over 40 years
and has one collection of poems
about love and relationships, as
well as an autobiographical book
about her 29 years of working for
the Brooke Hospital for Animals,
under her belt. Other collections
on various themes are in the pipe-
line. During her years with the
Brooke she undertook a great deal
of writing, editing and proof-
reading, and intends to offer her
professional services in this area in
the future. As well as writing,
Lynne loves to sing, cook, enjoy
nature and meditate. She is also
interested in learning about all
forms of healing.

Words from the Chair cont'd

around 5.30pm during a drinks and
nibbles party which is open to
everyone. This should give you
plenty of time to get back from the
South Lookout on Aldeburgh
Beach! With the Stoke by Nayland
tea party on September 9th, the
Walpole Old Chapel SPS reading at
3pm on September 16th, Tamar
Yoseloff's workshop and readings at
Alde Valley on September 29th and
the Crabbe prize giving on October
7th (deadline for entries June 15th),
you have an action-packed
programme ahead. Keep well, keep
safe and keep writing!

Florence Cox
Chair, Suffolk Poetry Society

A Tale of Two Sisters – and their link to a Suffolk Poet

Suzanne Hawkes



Last year marked the centenary of Elizabeth Garrett Anderson – the UK’s first qualified female doctor – and this year, it’s the turn of her sister Millicent Fawcett to take centre stage as we celebrate 100 years since women finally got the vote after the titanic struggle by both the pacifist Suffragists that Millicent led and the more violent Suffragettes led by Emmeline Pankhurst, whose campaigns finally opened the doors to women’s equality.

This would be incredible enough but what is more remarkable is that the sisters were born at a time when women had no rights or prospects at all, whether they were rich or poor and, moreover, that they began their struggles from the relative backwaters of the Suffolk coast.

Although Elizabeth was born in London, the Garrett sisters were from a well-established Suffolk family of successful tool and agricultural machinery manufacturers, and their uncle Richard ran the prospering Garrett steam engine factory in Leiston, first established by their great-great-grandfather. The youngest of three brothers, their own father Newson Garrett had gone to

London as a young man to seek his fortune but, once established, chose to bring his young family back to the East Anglian coast and make Aldeburgh his home and the centre of his thriving business empire, firstly as a trader in coal and other merchandise and later as a maltster and brewer from his large factory at Snape.

The fact that the sisters were exceptional is of no doubt, but they probably wouldn’t have made such amazing inroads if it were not for the fact that Newson was a man ahead of his time as far as the education of his daughters was concerned. In the early 1800s girls from well-off families were supposed to stay at home and learn to be good housewives. Newson let his girls wander the shores of Aldeburgh, speaking to the ordinary boatmen. This was a time when there were no career paths open to women of intelligence, no university courses available for them, nothing for them to look forward to but marriage, keeping house, painting and embroidering.

Yet Newson believed his daughters had as much right to an education as his sons. He let them study, first with their brothers and then with their own governess once they were advanced enough, later allowing them to attend a finishing school in Blackheath run by the aunts of the poet Browning.

He hoped the girls would join him in the business but even he blanched at Elizabeth’s determination to become a doctor – a profession exclusively male and seen as shaming for a woman. But Elizabeth talked him round and once he saw his daughter’s strength and single-mindedness, he did everything in his power and pocket to support her endeavours.

Even with her father’s backing, Elizabeth’s struggle was long and complex. She started off her training at the Middlesex Hospital in London working as a nurse, while shadowing as many doctors and surgeons as she could. Very soon she was showing up the male students with her knowledge – an unpopular move which resulted in her position as unofficial trainee doctor being withdrawn. She was

turned down by every University she applied to and was rejected time and time again by the teaching hospitals. She had to study by herself with the help of sympathetic part-time mentors and finally was only allowed to qualify via The Society of Apothecaries, a loophole that was soon closed to anyone else. Her qualification allowed her to practice medicine and set up her own clinic – which she did in London in 1865 in the parlour of a house bought for her by her father.



The clinic was soon booming, but still she fought on – determined to become a fully-qualified doctor. She passed her exams eventually in Paris, gaining top marks in spite of the language barrier. She married her long-term supporter and friend, James Anderson, and opened the New Hospital for Women in London, subsequently training new women doctors herself as she fought to overcome the well-established and very entrenched prejudices of her day, becoming a beacon of light to intelligent women wanting to establish careers in male-dominated professions.

She wasn’t alone. She was one of a growing movement of young, bright women wanting to break the mould and become successful in their own right. As girls, she and her friend Emily Davies had talked seriously about what they would do with their lives. Elizabeth was determined on medicine – Emily equally determined to open up the universities by establishing her own college.

“But what shall we find for Milly?” they had asked each other, as they sat in front of the parlour fire combing Elizabeth’s younger

sister's hair. "Why, Milly can go into politics!" they had agreed.



Millicent Garrett circa 1865-67
- contributed by Suzanne Hawkes

And into politics she went. But, in a sense, her route was easier in that she did it initially through marriage. The blind politician Henry Fawcett, a long-term campaigner for women's rights, had previously taken a fancy to Elizabeth, admiring her debating skills and her fierce intelligence. But she was at the time single-minded in her determination to become a doctor and felt marriage to a man, any man, would hinder her and hold her back. The fact that Henry then targeted her sister Millicent, who was a lot younger than him and not yet established in a career of her own, upset Elizabeth considerably and, at first, she was deeply opposed to the match. But both Henry and Millicent won her round with their obvious affection for each other; after the tragic early death of her older sister and confidante, Louisa, she agreed to the match.

And it was to result in a path for Milly that changed the course of this country's history. Once married, she flung herself into Henry's political challenges as his secretary, helping him every step of the way, before starting to speak at meetings in her own right. Elizabeth and her friends were already seeing getting the vote as a major step on the road to equality in work and education, and Milly was perfectly placed to take up the cause.

She was a founder-member of the Kensington Society, which organised the first petitions for

women's suffrage. And after Henry's death, she became leader of the NUWSS (National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies), from then on devoting her campaigning to peaceful protest, as opposed to Emmeline Pankhurst's militant suffragettes, whose battle cry "Deeds Not Words" saw violent demonstrations and the damaging of property as the only way of getting their voices heard.

Although the campaign of the militant WSPU was suspended during the First World War, Millicent's more pacifist NUWSS continued campaigning and was finally successful in gaining the vote for women over 30 when the war ended. This year, a statue will go up in Parliament Square to commemorate her achievements.

Ah, you might ask, this is all very well - but what is the link to poetry? Well, it is this: when Newson first moved to Aldeburgh, he bought Uplands House opposite the Church of St Peter & St Paul.



Uplands House as it is today

Hence the Garrett sisters were brought up in the very house that the poet George Crabbe had lived in himself in Aldeburgh; it was the house, moreover, where he had trained as an apothecary - a profession he hated but a profession through which Elizabeth was subsequently to find her route into qualification as a doctor, the Society of Apothecaries being the only body willing to examine her for the medical profession and grant her a certificate to practice.

This may be a fanciful notion but I like to think that, maybe, as the young family fresh from London drew up tired and weary at Slaughden Quay, the ghosts of George Crabbe and his father (a customs man on the Quay in years

gone by) watched over their disembarking and wished them "God speed" on an adventure that would irreversibly change the course of history for women in this country and, ultimately, around the world.



Elizabeth Garrett Anderson outside the pub in Slaughden circa 1908-10
- contributed by Suzanne Hawkes

Suzanne Hawkes' play 'A Woman of Purpose - The Life and Times of Elizabeth Garrett Anderson' was toured in the Autumn last year. She is working on a new play to celebrate Millicent Fawcett and 100 years of the vote for women.

Past Participles

or Am I Being Pedantic?

Frank Wood

Within four adjacent pages of a well-known poetry magazine¹⁾ published not one hundred miles from here, I came upon the following opening couplet in a poem entitled 'Lost in the Near':

*I'm sat on a bench on the promenade
waiting for someone to give me the nod.*

Well I hereby give a nod to indicate that this use of *sat* gave me a jolt as I read this unexciting but otherwise painless opening to a piece that ends more promisingly than it began.. But wait! On the facing page I see 'Some Suburban Midnight', whose opening line continues..., *And how many men are stood like this in their socks...* in which the poet is about to hang up his trousers. Again, not exactly an attention-grabbing statement, though the use of the past participle *stood* does suggest some imminent action as against *sat*, though this doesn't materialise.

In 'Greif was the Flash Bloke', by a third poet, the jolt is delayed until the third line from the end, when we are told that *Years later, he's sat at the bar of your local* - not my local, he isn't - and Greif is a name, not a spelling mistake, which is a relief. I'm not looking for Creative Writing qualifications in my poets, but I do expect basic English.

¹⁾ Editor's note - I checked and it is not *Twelve Rivers!*

The River's Lip on which we lean – Ah lean upon it lightly!

Edward FitzGerald
from Quatrain 19

The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám

or

The Realization of Reality

© The Rt. Revd Charles Mugleston



If a poem have a genius, it will force its own reception in the world...

John Dryden

IF... a poem sells millions of copies around the world, will cost about £45,000 (2017 prices) for a rare first edition, is translated into many languages, has inspired countless people to become poets – its sonorous sublimity slipping into and shaping their own; is, has been and will be quoted by many – Martin Luther King Jnr and President Putin, to give but two examples; is a poem greatly admired by people who, in moments of self-transcendence, glimpse and maybe understand its profound depths and heights, or only partially: “Oh yes, dear, we learned that at school. I liked it, but I didn’t understand it” (for yes, it will challenge your current mindset, depending where that is); is a poem that invites you to really engage with its archetypal themes which have moved countless artists to respond in kind setting them to music, or writing books, essays, articles, reviews and even documentaries... THEN it will impel, mine, refine, define, expand your soul and, having stood the

test of time, its gentle generosity, humorous patience and glorious humanity will blow away the accumulated dust of academic distance, condescension, ignorant indifference, and more and you will be aware that you are not only in the presence of a Spiritual Masterpiece, but one which is helping to engender yet another Spiritual Masterpiece – YOU! – a work of genius awakening genius...

*We have drunk Soma and become immortal;
We have attained the light, the gods discovered.*

Rig Veda VIII.48.3

This apparently simple poem has the graceful gravitas arising from the intuitive insights of countless centuries of mystics and poets. To better understand it in the context of the surrounding historical facts and all the other factors weaving themselves into the birth of this poem, please see omarkhayyamrubaiyat.wordpress.com and the reading suggestions at the end of this article.

The Bible, Dante, Shakespeare along with Blake, Dryden, Gray, Rumi, Hafiz, Jami and Attar (whose masterpiece *Canticle of the Birds* he translated and understood) – Edward FitzGerald (E.F.G.) loved them all and more, yet not without a certain degree of criticism, and you will, likewise, hear their voices ‘as gesture that rises up out of the depths of time’ (Rainer Maria Rilke) as you delve deeper into the poem. In his youth E.F.G. actually owned an original hand-printed and coloured copy of William Blake’s *Songs of Innocence*. When you read Blake’s poem ‘The Divine Image’, you will appreciate E.F.G.’s *raison d’être* for translating, adapting and self-publishing *The Rubáiyát*.

For E.F.G, or Effigy, as he called himself, loved to pass on wisdom, just as he had when he published his second book *Polonius* and as he does now through this magnificent poem of thesis, antithesis and synthesis – a celebration of universal wisdom.

An Aries, born and bred in Bredfield – (the Hall is no longer

there, having been compulsorily purchased and flattened to make way for the A12), Edward FitzGerald was a sensitive listener to all around him, a fine observer, a deep feeler, a thinker, witty and eloquent – the last of which is the actual meaning of the Hebrew name Omar! A lover of good company, and similarly art, music, theatre and good causes – to which he and his brother contributed their family’s wealth most generously – he also loved languages and bright colours. He indulged in smoking, was a reasonable drinker, an advocate of vegetarianism and cremation and he had an open-minded interest in spiritualism, philosophy and religions in general. To get away from it all he chose sailing, owning boats, schooners and even herring luggers. His first trip to Aldeburgh when young confirming his love for the sea...

Enter me, O Lord, into the deep of the Ocean of Thine Infinite Oneness

Ibn Arabi

E.F.G. had had homes in many different locations: Bredfield, Paris, Wherstead Park (which he loved), Cambridge, Farlingay, Boulge, London, Brighton, houses on the family estates, ‘visiting’ for months his friends and relatives and, last but not least, Woodbridge, then dying at the home of his friend Crabbe in Merton, Norfolk.

Of Irish parentage, but as English as an aspidistra, Edward FitzGerald has been labelled eccentric and individual. But how does one evaluate these things? Whatever... it should always be remembered that he was one of eight children who were born to two first cousins, a union which can bring both physical and mental problems to its offspring.

*Those images that yet
Fresh images beget.*

W.B. Yeats

Gay? He certainly developed strong, admiring relationships with men who attracted him for their various qualities, but whether he had physical relationships with them remains open to question.

He attempted marriage. Such a state looked possible from the one side but then, almost immediately, impossible from the other side. So he and Lucy sadly parted. But they had tried!



Photograph © Derek Adams

...his Omar is a Masterpiece of Art

Oscar Wilde

Sufism in Suffolk, ipseity in Ipswich... What! Where? My great aunt Doris Crane, who ran the General Stores and Sweet Shop at 43, Beck Street, Ipswich (flattened under Crown Street car park), first introduced me to the poem when I was young by giving me a superb pocket edition with a white vellum paper cover, complete with gold edging and lettering and even its own purple silk page-marker.

Then, in 2008, my distant cousin gave me a family prayer-book detailing my mother's grandmother's passing and burial in Ashbocking Churchyard. The priest who took the funeral service was none other than Canon Maurice Byles Cowell, brother to the brilliant Professor Edward Byles Cowell (born in Ipswich in 1809 down by the docks) who had found the beautiful manuscript of *The Rubáiyát of Hakim (wise) Umar Khayyám* in the Bodleian Library in Oxford, transcribed it and then gave it to his friend E.F.G. The rest, as they say and we know, is history.

Hence my own personal interest. But what is Suffolk doing to honour this man and his work? Canon Maurice Byles Cowell gave the Memorial Sermon at

St. Lawrence's Church in Dial Lane, Ipswich for the 1909 centenary celebrations and, as recorded in the East Anglian Daily Times review of the celebrations, he concluded his sermon by saying "There, beneath that cross on his gravestone, lies one of God's Master-craftsmen who accomplished the Will of God."

That statement should be quite enough to encourage this county to share far and wide the good news of this, just one of our cultural geniuses, and yet...

Is there an Edward FitzGerald Poetry competition? No, not yet...

Is there an Edward FitzGerald Arts Festival? Um, no, not yet...

Is there a devoted space - a room with items that belonged to Edward FitzGerald telling his life story to the grateful pilgrims who visit his grave in Boulge Churchyard from all over the world and even to those of milder interest? Well, there was... an Edward FitzGerald Room in Christchurch Mansion due to the sterling efforts and foresight of Frank Woolnough, one of its better curators, who gathered together E.F.G.'s piano, writing desk and other items; but is it there now? Um, no! Does the Mansion sell copies of the poem to help in Interfaith Spiritual Understanding - the poem's very purpose? Um, doh, no!

Oh, come on, Suffolk, think beyond the box! Please get your act together!

Reading Suggestions:

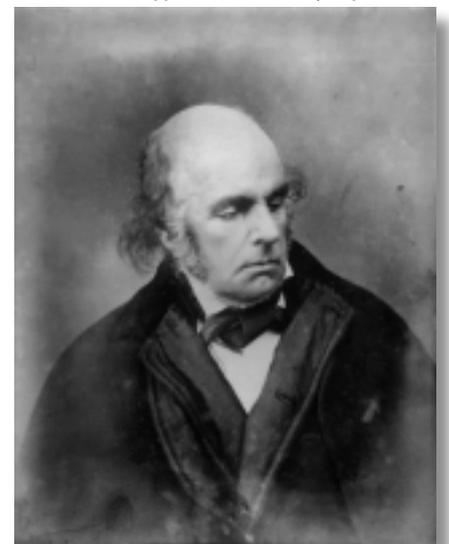
- To know the man first hand, you have to read his letters, so of prime importance is obtaining the splendid four volume set of: *The Letters of Edward FitzGerald*, Alfred McKinley Terhune (ed.), (1980, Princeton University Press)
- *Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*

Edward FitzGerald, Daniel Karlin (ed.), (2009, Oxford University Press)

- *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam Bird Parliament* translated by Edward FitzGerald, Tony Briggs (ed.), (2009, Phoenix)
- *The Man behind The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*, William Martin & Sandra Mason (2016, I.B.Tauris)
- *FitzGerald's Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*, Adrian Poole. (ed.), (2011, Anthem Press)
- *Omar Khayyám Poet Rebel Astronomer*, Hazhir Teimourian (2007, Sutton Publishing)

Woodbridge Library holds a collection of books by and about E.F.G and *The Ruba'iyat* - well worth consulting especially regarding out of print books, which may also be found on eBay and elsewhere with patience.

Finally, if anyone would like to talk to me / share views etc about any matters related to the vast area of the poem or our local bard, they can contact me via www.omarkhayyamtheatrecompany.com



Edward Fitzgerald by or after Cade & White of Ipswich carbon print, 1873 NPG P757

© National Portrait Gallery, London

Our Web Presence

Our website: suffolkpoetrysociety.org.uk

Facebook: facebook.com/SuffolkPoetrySociety

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twitter.com/SuffolkPoetrySo

YouTube:
youtube.com/c/SuffolkpoetrysocietyOrgUk2015

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How to Get Your Poems Published: Making a Start

Antony Johae



Photograph © Derek Adams

By the time I retired in 2009, I had written a good number of poems but had sent out only a few for publication. With my hands free from teaching, I decided to try my luck and to start submitting to poetry magazines and to online poetry publications (ezines). I realised that luck was only part of the picture; I needed to familiarise myself with the poetry scene in order to gauge where best to send my work. I am happy to say that, much against expectations, my research, followed by submissions of poems, resulted in far more acceptances than I had anticipated. I put this down to my having studied the form before sending out work.

Where to Start

My first port of call was the Saison Poetry Library on level 5 at the Royal Festival Hall in London. It is open to all and stocks many of the latest British print poetry magazines, and some foreign publications in English, as well as back numbers. The Library is open from Tuesday to Sunday, 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. I would recommend anyone seeking to publish their poems to spend time there and to sample the range of print publications; failing this, the Saison Library has a website – poetrymagazines.org.uk – a useful resource for studying the character of individual poetry magazines. You can sign up for a regular monthly bulletin listing poetry events and meetings, some competitions, and new additions to the Library.

It is important to stress the need to become familiar with poetry publications before submitting. You may send out the best poem you have ever written, but if submitted to a magazine which is out of tune with your sensibility, your style, or your theme, you will meet with disappointment and perhaps become despondent about the worth of your work.

After dipping into a wide range of poetry publications at the Saison Library, it is time for you to choose which poetry magazines to subscribe to – most are either quarterly or biennial – and having chosen, payment can often be made online, or by sending a cheque. (Ezines do not normally ask for paid subscriptions.) Sometimes it is cheaper, pro rata, to pay for two years rather than one. If you are going to subscribe to several magazines, it is helpful to keep a record, i.e. date sent and payment method, number of issues subscribed to and a note of the number of the issue received. It is also a good idea to vary the subscriptions. If you discover that a particular magazine does not suit your kind of work, you would do well not to renew. On the other hand, continue to subscribe to those that do, as well as taking out new subscriptions.

There are a number of things to watch out for which may limit your chance of having work accepted for publication: some magazines carry mainly themed issues; others do not give much space to poems at all but concentrate more on reviews, interviews and/or short stories. It is worthwhile to study the table of contents of each issue of a magazine to which you have subscribed; you may find there is a tendency to include the same poets. Unless you are one of them (!), you will, more than likely, be turned down. Finally, if submitting to a magazine's Spring issue, it is not a good idea to send a Winter poem. (Editors do not often retain submissions for a later issue.) Occasional poems, such as those celebrating St. Valentine's Day, stand a better chance of being accepted if sent in time, or soon after an event, such as the Grenfell

Tower disaster.

Sending Out Poems

It is important to adhere to submission requirements if your poems are to be considered by editors. Details for sending submissions are usually posted in issues of magazines. They can also be found on the magazine or ezine website. If you don't have a website address, you will find the website by entering the name of the publication into Google.

It is now a growing trend for magazines to operate submission windows, outside of which submissions will not be accepted. These are often two separate months in the year. Other publications entertain submissions all the year round, but may have deadline dates for specific issues.

Most magazines and ezines do not allow simultaneous submissions. Some do but ask that they be advised if a poem is subsequently accepted somewhere else. None that I know of consider already published work. It is worth noting that 'publication' is usually defined as not only in magazines and ezines, but also on social media, blogs, YouTube and film.

Poetry magazines and ezines often specify the maximum number of poems that may be sent at any one time. There may also be a maximum number of lines allowed for each poem. Most prefer short poems that will fit onto a single page, although there are a few, like Long Poem Magazine, which prefer the lengthy.

Some magazines will make clear what time it will take to receive a reply to a submission. It can be as long as three months. You will need to chase when feedback is overdue. Sometimes an editor will fail to reply at all, in which case I have no hesitation in deleting the publication from my list.

The submissions information will specify whether to send by post, email or submittable portal. Postal submissions usually require you to include a stamped addressed envelope for a reply. You will need to state in your cover letter that you do not want the typescript

returned. If you do want it returned, be sure to include sufficient postage. The poems should be typed on separate A4 sheets and, unless assessed blind, with your name and contact details typed on each page. Some publications will ask for a brief biographical note to be written in the 3rd person. When all has been prepared, fold the typescript in two (not three or four) and send in an A5 envelope. (A heavily creased batch of papers does not 'feel' good to the receiver.)

However, magazines and ezines nowadays mostly prefer poems to be sent by email, either as separate attachments, together on a single attachment, or in the body of the email set out below the cover message. Unless otherwise stated, include your name and contact details on each attachment, as well as on the cover message. As with postal submissions, provide a brief biographical note if asked for.

When required to send submissions via a submittable portal website, similar information is usually called for: cover message, biographical note, etc. Upload poems from your browser, either individually or as one attachment, as required. The status of your submission (whether awaiting assessment or accepted) is often available on a specified website about which you will be advised after you have submitted.

Finally, I have found when sending out several poems in a batch, it is a good idea to select a variety. In this way, a poem is more likely to be accepted rather than if the poems submitted are all in the same vein.

Keeping a Record of Submissions

It is useful to keep a record of submissions so that you know which poems have been sent out. This will ensure that you don't submit a particular poem to more than one destination at a time; in addition, a record will help you keep abreast of replies.

I keep a tray reserved for submissions files. The files may include your cover letter, printouts from websites with magazine details and instructions for submissions, and subsequent

correspondence. If submitting a second batch later, you will need to check on the magazine website to ensure that instructions have remained the same.

I keep another tray for files where a submission has been accepted but not yet published. In this way you can await your complimentary copy if offered, or be aware of a particular ezine issue from which you can print out a copy of your poem when it has appeared online.

In almost all cases, the author retains copyright if a poem is accepted and published. You will need to acknowledge that your poem has been published if it later appears elsewhere, for example, in your own collection of poetry, or in an anthology which takes on already published work.

It is not normally the case that poetry magazines and ezines make a payment for work published, although there are some American publications that do.

Keeping a Record of Published Poems

It is expedient to keep a record of published poems, because you will need the details if a poem is published for a second time; for example, in the Acknowledgments page when you come to publish your own collection (the more published poems, the more likely a publisher will consider your collection for publication). Details should include titles of accepted poems, the magazine or ezine title, month or season, and year of publication, and in the case of an ezine publication, the web address for access to your published poem.

After publication, it is advisable to delay sending new submissions. Some publications specify how long you should wait before submitting again. Otherwise, you will need to use your own discretion.

Creating a Network

Having ventured into submitting your work, it is important to build relationships with magazines/ezines and their editors; a few publications, such as the quarterly, *Orbis*, encourage feedback from

subscribers and it is sometimes the case that a comment about an issue you have read may lead to further communication with an editor. It is even possible, on occasion, to meet editors face-to-face at launches of magazine issues or at poetry festivals.

Part of the process of becoming known for your work is by going to poetry cafés and sharing your poems at open mics. If you are a good reader, audiences will remember you. Open mic sessions at poetry festivals may also offer you the opportunity of reading your poems out loud.

Some poetry groups offer help with editing and this can be a valuable way of getting the opinions of other poets and of making improvements to your work. On the other hand, very few magazines offer editing advice, although some will suggest changes to a poem before going to press, or as a precondition for publication.

It is worth keeping an eye out for calls for submissions to anthologies – on the net, at poetry groups, and poetry cafés. If your poem is accepted, it may be that it will have more readers than it would have in a magazine or ezine publication.

Once you have built up a store of your work, it is advisable to draw up a list of the titles of all your poems. You may wish to file them alphabetically. I order them according to the collection I am working towards as though it were a Table of Contents under construction.

Finally, the more poems you have accepted for publication, the more likely it is that you will be working towards a collection of your own. If this happens, your efforts will not have been in vain.

Letters to the Editor

responding to any articles in this issue would be welcomed.

See contact details p.2.

Turning Japanese Part 1: Modern Haiku

Dr Tim Gardiner



One of the most satisfying ways to create imagery and express emotions in verse is to write a haiku, a short form of Japanese poetry. Haiku (meaning playful verse) is one of the oldest written forms of poetry and Matsuo Bashō (1644-1694) is widely recognised as its foremost poet, closely followed by Yosa Buson, Kobayashi Issa and Masaoka Shiki. Issa, one of my favourites, wrote deeply melancholic and witty poems, demonstrated succinctly in this classic:

*O snail
Climb Mount Fuji
But slowly, slowly!*

In the 20th century, Japanese haiku influenced James Joyce, D.H. Lawrence, Amy Lowell, Marianne Moore, Ezra Pound, Carl Sandburg and William Carlos Williams. R.H. Blyth's four volume Haiku became popular from the mid-late 1940s and attracted the attention of Beat poets such as Allen Ginsberg, Gary Snyder and Jack Kerouac. Kerouac produced several notable haiku including this poem tinged with irony:

*missing a kick
at the icebox door
it closed anyway ²⁾*

The increasing interest in haiku poetry in western culture was further advanced by the formation of the Haiku Society of America (HSA) in 1968 and the British Haiku Society in 1992; both produce journals of international repute (*Frogpond* and *Blithe Spirit*

respectively).

Despite haiku's embedment in English language poetry, the debate over what constitutes a haiku continues. There are many poets who only write using the commonly perceived syllable count for the standard three line haiku of 5-7-5, similar to the Japanese usage of 'on' (or *morae*). Anger has been expressed on social media in recent years about the haiku displayed around Washington in the Golden Haiku Contest, most of which did not follow the 5-7-5 syllable count. This brought a rebuttal from several members of the haiku establishment which views syllable counting as outdated and restrictive.

On a visit to Tokyo in September 2016, I talked with renowned haikuist and founder of the magazine *Outch*, Nobuo Hirasawa. He was surprised that I didn't write 5-7-5 haiku and took a free verse approach. Mr Hirasawa, a translator at the 1964 Tokyo Olympics, explained that it is hard to equate Japanese haiku to western poems and that their use of *morae* doesn't translate well into English. British poet Martin Lucas suggested that genuine haiku can only be written in Japanese with a deep understanding of the culture; perhaps we are just writing haiku-inspired poems.

It is more important to adhere to the spirit of the haiku than necessarily the form; having said this, I cannot say that it's wrong to write haiku in the 5-7-5 form. I have written many but find that it leads to the inclusion of unnecessary words and syllables which can ruin the poetic effect. Modern haiku written without the necessary syllable counts should still adhere to the spirit of Japanese haiku.

Haiku often have a 'cutting' word (*kireji*) with which to juxtapose two images or ideas. This cutting word forms the separation point between the two images and the first or second lines may end with it. An excellent example of a non 5-7-5 haiku by British poet Alan Summers published in *Acorn* ³⁾ uses 'clouds' as the *kireji*.

*pacing clouds
the new station cat
changes sunspots*

Haiku should also have a seasonal reference (*kigo*) and take inspiration from some aspect of nature. The following haiku by British poet Claire Everett from *The Heron's Nest* ⁴⁾ has a very strong seasonal feel, conveying a rather melancholic mood.

*winter sun
the soft flicker of waxwings
in the firethorn*

Modern haiku can also be written in one line, whilst still retaining the *kireji* and *kigo*. This early example from the American poet Marlene Mountain published in *Frogpond* ⁵⁾ contains both elements – essential requirements in traditional haiku.

pig and I spring rain

Taking the concept of minimalist one-liners even further are single word poems which rely heavily on the unsaid thing – a key part of any good haiku. The following haiku by Cor van den Heuvel published in the *window washer's pail* (Chant Press, 1963) is regarded as one of the best examples:

tundra

To be truly effective, the haiku must be printed in the centre of a blank page to portray the emptiness of the Arctic landscape. Having previously disregarded one-word haiku, I recently published online the following vertically arranged one-liner with Alexandra Davis in *Memoirs of a Geisha* ⁶⁾

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cont'd p.12

cont'd from p.15

As illustrated, modern haiku writing on the international scene has diverged significantly from the 5-7-5 model since the 1960s. It can be difficult to get a traditional 5-7-5 haiku published in many of the top journals and magazines; I would encourage experimentation with the form before submission. The haiku scene is small but truly international with the advent of

social media making it easier to communicate and share poetry with other practitioners. Print and online publications devoted to modern haiku are plentiful and many editors offer crucial feedback with rejections. *The Heron's Nest* editor and president of the HSA, Fay Aoyagi, has taken time to critique poems of mine that she did not accept, some of which went on to publication in other respectable journals. I leave you with one of

my favourite one-line haiku of Aoyagi's, first published in *Modern Haiku*⁷⁾:

ants in a single file tokyo once home

Website suggestions:

britishhaikusociety.org.uk
acornhaiku.com
theheronsnest.com
hsa-haiku.org/frogpond
modernhaiku.org

²⁾ 'Missing a kick' from BOOK OF HAIKUS by Jack Kerouac. Copyright © The Estate of Stella Kerouac, John Sampas, Literary Representative, 2003, used by permission of The Wylie Agency (UK) Limited.

³⁾ *Acorn* Iss. 35 (2015)

⁴⁾ *The Heron's Nest* Vol.14 Iss.1 (2012)

⁵⁾ *Frogpond* Iss.2.3 (1979)

⁶⁾ eueufemia.wordpress.com/2018/03/01/tim-gardiner-e-alexandra-davis/

⁷⁾ *Modern Haiku* Vol.28, Iss.1 (1997)

Kenning

Feedback from a workshop with Dr Chris Jones attended by Sue Wallace-Shaddad

I recently attended a workshop on kennings (often known as word knots) given by Dr Chris Jones, lecturer at the School of English, St Andrews University, as part of StAnza Poetry Festival 2018. Chris's research focuses on what modern poets like Seamus Heaney have done with Old English. Chris collaborates with the poet Jacob Polley, who used to teach at St Andrews and is now based at Newcastle University. They have been doing translations of Old English riddles with students, who then produce a modern response.

A kenning is a poetic compound. A well-known example is *hwaæl-weg* = whale road = sea. A more complex example is *dust-sceawung* = dust staring = nostalgia. The form is strictly a poetic form so was not used in normal language; some kennings are only seen once. Do we still use kennings? Gerard Manley Hopkins knew the form and coined new ones; 'windhover' (from his poem 'The Windhover') could be seen as a

kenning-like expression for 'falcon'. 'Skyscraper' could be a modern example. The key to understanding a kenning is to understand that the second half is a metaphor and the first half gives the clue to unlock this metaphor.

We were asked to match some images to kennings – this was not as easy as it sounds! The sun was a heaven-candle (*heofen-candel*), a sword was a battle-light (*hilde-leoma*), the mind was a thought-hoard (*mod-hord*). We were then asked to draft some kennings, each writing our compound on a page and passing this round (like a game of consequences). As pages came round the group we added our interpretations. An attractive one was *snow-piercer* (snowdrop, borrowing from the French *perce-neige*). Chris suggested a good warm-up: write about a snowdrop, think of a kenning and see if that stimulates new words.

He said we could also treat a kenning as a suppressed or compressed metaphor – we could open up and develop the metaphor in a poem. An arrow was a battle-adder, like a hissing snake, (*hildanadra*); this could be unpacked – serpentine motion, poisoned tip, battle floor covered in arrows etc.

In Old English, certain poems had unspoken kennings beneath them; the poets (shapers of words known as scop) liked riddles. Jacob and Chris have tried out different compounds using a process they call 'coring'. For example, a poet might be seen as a nightingale that frequents a tree, just as a poet frequents a hall. You can play around with these words to create different compounds e.g. a wood poet = nightingale, a nightingale hall = tree. Jacob has been doing tweetable riddles on twitter – twiddles! (twiddle@ExeterTwiddle).

Chris advised that one or two well-chosen compounds could be a nugget in a poem or just a useful way to kick-start thinking. Finally, Chris would be interested to hear of anyone who publishes a poem that uses Old English-style kennings, at csj2@st-andrews.ac.uk

Sue Wallace-Shaddad

Reading Suggestion from Dr Chris Jones:

The 'Introduction' in Craig Williamson's *A Feast of Creatures: Anglo-Saxon Riddle Songs* (2011, University of Philadelphia Press).

From the Editor: In the last issue we introduced Suffolk Poetry Society's first patrons Caroline Wiseman and Luke Wright. In this issue we are delighted to be able to find out more about them as Caroline talks with Ian Griffiths and Luke with Sue Wallace-Shaddad.

In Conversation with Luke Wright

Sue Wallace-Shaddad with Luke Wright

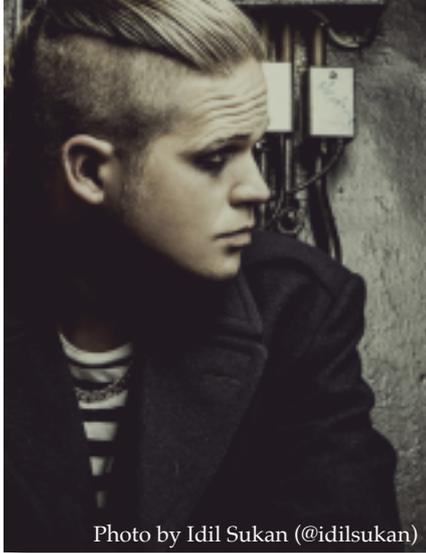


Photo by Idil Sukan (@idilsukan)

SWS

When did you first become interested in poetry?

LW

We did it at school. I remember we did the war poets – ‘Dulce et Decorum Est’ in particular – and liking that. There was a pro-war one called ‘Who’s for the Game’ (by Jessie Pope who used to write for *The Daily Mail*) – I remember hating that one.

SWS

Do you do a lot of research for your poems?

LW

I do ten drafts of every poem but it varies, obviously. The play that I have just finished, *Frankie Vah*, is set in 1987 and I had to do some research for that; it mainly involved me watching stuff on YouTube. I read extensively. I’m a bit too impatient to do reading research and don’t think I could ever have an academic life. When I finally get ready to do something, I want to do it right there rather than spend months. Also, this show was about things I knew about, cared about: Tony Benn, deputy leadership

election, Red Wedge and Indie bands of the 80s – things I knew about anyway and wanted to write about. I don’t read lots of research. I read consistently and I would say I am more than averagely engaged in politics, the soap opera of Westminster and those sorts of things. I google frequently throughout my poems – I check stuff all the time. That’s the way I live; I’m always asking questions and googling the answer – I’m curious.

SWS

Can you talk me through your writing process?

LW

Often ideas just have to sit there and germinate really. I will have an idea for a poem and generally use the recording app on the iPhone. Or I will make a note of it – usually on my phone – I have a document called ‘threads’ on there, threads of ideas – they might be titles. More and more they are ideas though – funnier poems can come from a title or a good line. There is an initial flurry of riffs and you just throw ideas at the page. When I feel like there is maybe half a poem’s worth, I start ordering them into a poem. More serious poems tend to be written in a more linear way. The longer ballads are linear; they take a long time. I just plug away a little at a time with them like ‘The Toll’, a ballad in my last book. I opened on that when I performed at the Festival of Suffolk Poetry – it is about six minutes long but took three months to write – a very long time to spend on one poem picking away at it. The most recent poem I wrote doesn’t rhyme; it’s free verse. It is just such an easier, quicker experience and therefore more visceral. When writing rhyming, metred verse, it is much harder; it takes much longer, so it can be a laborious process. I just sort of feel sometimes if I am not employing some kind of form, I am not...

SWS

You use formal structures in your poetry; how important is this for you? Is it essential for spoken word poetry?

LW

No, I think most spoken word poetry doesn’t use formal structures; it will use rhyme and rhythm but tends to be free verse. That is the vogue. I’m unusual amongst my peers in using ballad form and heroic couplets. Sure, John Cooper Clarke and Martin Newell use rhyme, but they are not really my contemporaries. Both of them are very influenced by the Victorian poets. Martin Newell is a massive Housman and Betjeman fan. Clarke doesn’t mind Betjeman but it’s not his sort of thing. He was influenced by Romantic poets – Sir Henry Newbolt, a bit of Tennyson – so when he came to write poems he used the verse structures he was taught at school but he made them about working-class Salford. A lot of his early poems are about Salford and Manchester, designed to get a laugh out of the locals.

I wouldn’t say I am writing more in free verse. I have written very little since the last book came out as I have been working on this play. I have written a handful of poems. I am really enjoying using quite rigid metre but not rhyme. I really like using tetrameter as my main line length, and then varying the line length around it by putting a bit of hexameter or pentameter around it. Keeping the formal line lengths, the poems still beat along as they have the strong iambs behind them, but the lack of consistent rhyme just means they sound more natural. I am experimenting with that and that seems to be where I am going at the moment. If I wasn’t allowed to use metre or rhyme ever again, I would probably choose to keep metre, not rhyme. I’d certainly be a lot happier. Rhyme is infuriating but also it is so pleasing and satisfying to the ear.

I also use form generally for ideas generation and to push myself into places I wouldn't otherwise go, to move myself away from clichés – I do have a proclivity to be sentimental. I don't think it is necessarily a bad thing. The best poems twist your heart a little bit and make you feel something. I want my poetry to have emotional whack – be ultimately humorous – I can't get on with a droll ironic voice. My humour is big, slavering and wet.

SWS

Do you say you are a spoken word poet?

LW

I don't like the phrase 'spoken word'. 'A spoken word artist' sounds really pretentious. I laughed when I first heard that – I don't now. I am used to it now and get it – it makes sense but it seemed such a mouthful. I used to like 'stand-up poet' as stand-up comedians stand up at a mic – it seemed a straightforward, literal way of describing it. I didn't like 'performance poet' as it made me think of drama school but, obviously, I have been called a performance poet quite a lot. I like the word 'poet' but to give it some sort of qualifier suggests you work in a specific arena. I have published stuff on the page and I think it stands up. My two plays are both in verse – they are just long poems or stories in verse. My books are just books of poems. I haven't written any prose books.

SWS

I know you have quoted John Betjeman as a major influence – can you tell us why?

LW

John Betjeman does what Evelyn Waugh does but in a different way. He writes breezily and lightly about quite dark and heavy things. People think of him as a poet of railways, churches, teashops, but underneath it all he's writing about lust, love, sin and guilt. He's also a great formalist. I am quite enamoured

with the early twentieth century, upper-class existence – I'm a sucker for it. I like those novels and that world, even though, politically, it sits really at odds with me. It's good to immerse yourself in things you don't agree with.

Betjeman can write poems that just get you in the gut – in 'Norfolk', walking with his father:

.....Time brings back
The rapturous ignorance of long ago
The peace, before the dreadful daylight starts,
Of unkept promises and broken hearts.

It's so simple, the language itself is clichéd and prosaic but he sort of earns it – it comes at you from nowhere. The first time I read it, I found it so deeply affecting. I'm really interested in this idea of neat, ordered, suburban lines, yet beneath them is this murk of feeling. That really appeals to me – or it did – but now I feel I am going somewhere else with my poems.

SWS

Do you have other favourite poets and can you say what drew you to their poetry?

LW

I really like Martin Newell and John Cooper Clarke. Martin does a similar thing to Betjeman; he seems to have infinite vocabulary for talking about Essex. I don't know how he does it. He has great turns of phrase. He uses the language of his youth or the colloquialisms of his youth – is quite earthy. His lines are not ornate and genteel but quite tangible, his descriptive writing is fantastic but he has neat, ordered lines with punchy tetrameter. I have toured with John Cooper Clarke and I know him so well – we are both trying to find great lines and turns of phrase. I see him as an influence, mentor and, at other times, as a contemporary.

Also Ross Sutherland, Tim Clare, John Osborne. I like Caroline Bird, Catherine Smith. I was really

influenced by Tim Turnbull. I got into writing proper form after talking to Tim Turnbull and Clare Pollard – she mentored me and still does.

SWS

What about Suffolk as a county for poetry-writing, reading and spoken word?

LW

I feel more East Anglian – I come from Essex, lived in Norwich a long time and went to university there, and now live on the border of Suffolk/Norfolk. I tend to think of Suffolk, Norfolk, Essex as one area especially as I travel across it. Suffolk has its own landscape, quiet beauty, is not big and rumbustious like the Northern hills. It's not genteel, it's real and proper. Just read Martin's poetry if you want to get a sense of what this part of the world is like – he captures the spirit of it. There is a rich tradition of writing across the area – I don't look at Suffolk separately. It is a good place to be, a good place to be a writer.

SWS

Do you have any burning ambitions poetry-wise that you would like to share?

LW

I make two to three-year plans. I am writing new poems now, then a play. I am trying to collect poems for the next collection themed on the hinterland between my two lives in different places. My ambition is to carry on and make good art – that's all I want really. If you hang your happiness on the whims of strangers, it's difficult. I want to make good art – if people like it, great – if they don't like it, too bad.



In Conversation with Caroline Wiseman

Ian Griffiths with Caroline Wiseman



Photo by Idil Sukan

IG

Suffolk Poetry Society is delighted to have Caroline Wiseman as one of their distinguished patrons. It has been four years now since I first met Caroline and her partner Francis who graciously allowed us to use their iconic Lookout tower in Aldeburgh for our National Poetry Day event. Suffolk is a county rich in creative people, artists of all kinds, and though this is a beautiful county to live in, many of us are isolated in our work or single interest groups.

Aldeburgh has long been a focus for the arts in Suffolk, especially with its famous music festival and association with Benjamin Britten. It is also, needless to say, the home of many artists, writers and, of course, poets. It has long been a cause of mine that artists of all disciplines can benefit from coming together. Creativity knows no bounds and music, painting, sculpture and poetry can all gain inspiration from each other's craft.

One of my early meetings with Caroline was as a founding committee member of the new Poetry in Aldeburgh festival. Since joining her Arts Club Aldeburgh Beach and having her continued support for our poetry events, I

have discovered that she is a natural catalyst for creativity in our region and someone who finds creativity and joy in bringing artists together – light the spark and watch it happen.

Carol and I set off to interview Caroline with a big list of questions. I should have known better – with the same bubbly enthusiasm she brings to everything she touches, she required no questioning. So, I stand back and let her speak for herself:

CW

I was born in the little Oxfordshire village of Brightwell-cum-Sotwell, and went to a cosy Convent School in nearby Abingdon. Then my parents moved and I had to attend the polar opposite of education - Slough High School – so a well-rounded upbringing! But we had a wonderful art teacher and I always loved art, particularly the history of art. I have a facility for drawing, especially likenesses, and used to draw all the time, and so applied to and got a place at St Martin's School of Art. But then, just in time, I realised that I didn't actually want to be an artist – for I don't feel I have the necessary solitary temperament. I ended up going to Bedford College which is part of London University to read sociology! I didn't appreciate the subject (although I do now) and certainly didn't want to become a social worker, the career choice of all my fellow students, so I spent most of my three years there drawing everyone including the lecturers, instead of listening to them. On graduating, what to do next? I qualified as a barrister! The most uncreative profession possible! So again, instead of writing legal opinions, I drew all my friends, fellow students, lecturers, all the while wondering what could be the perfect creative occupation for me.

Desperate to express my creativity, I found it when I went to work for the charity Mencap. There I got the

taste for making things happen through dreaming up and organising fundraising events. Next, I learnt about PR through working for a West End PR advertising agency: a fabulously useful skill which I put to good use when I eventually discovered my creative niche in life. I thought hard about what I loved most and it was, of course, art, so I decided to set up a business encouraging people to buy inexpensive modern and contemporary art. Our particular niche (we all need one) was affordable art by modern masters and I used my PR skills to get national press coverage for this: at the time a very new and rather shocking concept. This little business, instead of being hopeless as it had been for the first year, suddenly took off! This was 1989 when interest in modern art was at its peak and we sold British artists like David Hockney, Victor Pasmore and Graham Sutherland, as well as the School of Paris artists Chagall, Miro, Picasso and Matisse. People loved the idea of buying good value (often as low as £400) original etchings or lithographs, signed or unsigned by major artists. The good thing about selling these established artists is that they each have a catalogue *raisonné* listing all their works, so I could check the authenticity of each work. And I always bought from the best sources.

We used our home, a Georgian town house in Kennington, in South East London, as our gallery. I needed to be based at home because we had lost a baby daughter through cot death and now, after several years of IVF, I had baby triplet sons to look after. We were so busy during the first 20 years, sending out nine mailings to exhibitions a year, and showing at the main London art fairs. We expanded to New York and held some first-rate shows there and in London, where many well-known people came and became clients, such as John Mortimer, Jeremy Paxman, Jeremy Irons, Sophie Dahl and A S Byatt. We held shows of

Picasso, Patrick Heron, Howard Hodgkin, of the entire Nicholson family, and paintings by our Kennington neighbour, the extraordinary artist Craigie Aitchison.

You asked me, Ian, who are my favourite poets and what part poetry has played in my life? Well, I love Tennyson's romanticism and poems such as 'The Lady of Shallot' and also John Masefield's 'Cargoes'. I need to see a poem written down; I often find it difficult to take in when it is spoken. It has taken me a while to get to appreciate poetry and I haven't yet tried to write it but Francis loves it and used to learn a poem every day, so he has educated me. The last exhibition in London before we moved to Aldeburgh was for the London Magazine: six poets responding to six works of art. Annie Freud wrote a poem in response to a drawing by her father Lucian of her grandmother. The poet Robert vas Dias chose a Pasmore, Maggie Butcher chose a Maggi Hambling, another poet an Eileen Cooper. George Szirtes chose a Howard Hodgkin. It was a brilliant evening of poets and artists, although the relationship between poets and artists is, of course, nothing new. The School of Paris artists made artists' books in response to poetry – often (and preferably) by dead poets. Picasso even considered giving up being an artist and becoming a poet!

Francis and I were very happy in London but thought of buying a cottage in the country. We chose Aldeburgh as we knew it from holidays and friends and because it has long been a centre for the arts because of Britten's music festival. I first saw our tiny tower, the Aldeburgh Beach Lookout when I was about to go swimming one morning. I fell in love with this tiny art temple then and am still in love with it because it is a catalyst for creative dreams – mine and everyone's. It is like a chameleon – one moment it is a cosy cottage, the next a beachside hut, the next an artist's studio. Looking at the

Archive section on our aldeburghbeachlookout.com website reminds me of all the extraordinary artist projects and residencies the lookout has hosted over the eight years we have been here. And it is evolving and experimenting all the time. Now, for the first time in my life, I am witnessing great art being made on my doorstep, rather than knowing it second hand as I always have done in my art-dealing career.

The Lookout tower was built to provide pilot services for passing shipping. However, when the railways came, it lost its purpose and became a shelter to keep fishermen warm. The South African explorer Laurens van der Post wrote his books in the solitude of the middle floor for over 30 years, and a couple of artists have painted inside it over the years.

Now the Lookout has fully regained its purpose and has a brand new lease of life as a creative catalyst for challenging ideas, and ALIVE in the UNIVERSE is our next big project. Last year we studied Duchamp, and this year Einstein on Aldeburgh Beach is our theme, as we examine Einstein's creative way of thinking which, as he admitted, gave him his solutions to his scientific problems. Creativity is the magical ingredient of the universe, he said, and he explored the nature of art, religion and spirituality which, for Einstein, enmesh as one whole with science. Through ALIVE in the UNIVERSE we gain the practical tools (a formula called 'creative intelligence') to empower our unique creativity through our art, through our livelihood and through our lifestyle.

We start with art and are taking Aldeburgh (and Suffolk!) to the Venice Biennale 2019 with ALIVE in the UNIVERSE. We are staging this dramatic visual project in the cavernous, raw space of our beautiful palazzo, which is rather like a larger version of the Lookout and which opens out onto a canal, rather as the Lookout opens out to

the sea. ALIVE in the UNIVERSE invites everyone around the world to make a haiku either visual or poetic (or both), each an expression of what it feels like to be alive in the universe. These should describe a fleeting emotional moment and each last up to one minute only. The art-films can be shot on a mobile phone (hold it horizontally) and simply edited if necessary; no need for fancy equipment. Every single art-film and poetic haiku will be shown in the Aldeburgh Beach lookout from June this year during the Aldeburgh Festival, and the August Carnival, a selection shown at the Bermondsey Project Space in London, and the best taken to Venice.

I have always been fascinated by Gertrude Stein and the salons she held, so I set up the Arts Club Aldeburgh Beach. Its purpose is to bring artists together, because artists need each other, for creativity can be a lonely process. And this is how creativity happens – in creative clusters. Many good things come out of these comings together and that is what I can offer the Suffolk Poetry Society. So rather than get involved with the admin or politics of the Society I am pleased to invite all the poets to collaborate in our arts projects.

All SPS poets are invited to join the Arts Club Aldeburgh Beach, which for poets is £20 (usual membership is £40) and be regular participants in our gatherings and events:

aldeburghbeachlookout.com/arts-club

Entry to ALIVE in the UNIVERSE is open to all members. Please email (or dropbox) me your haikus, whether visual (as art-film) or poetic. There is an admin charge of £20 per entry. Perhaps SPS members would like to get together for a group presentation of their submissions:

aldeburghbeachlookout.com/alive-in-the-universe

In the meantime I am delighted now to be part of SPS and look forward to meeting you all.

Selected Poems

The Editor thanks Anne Boileau and James Knox Whittet for acting as referees for the selected poems

Not What it Seems

at Ramsholt

Small birds in lift-off.
Their voices chitter and clink
like falling stones.

Swans unpack their necks
and wings.
You think you hear the keen

of pinions. How the wind
in the reeds
can fool the ear.

Blue mud in the estuary
has swallowed the sky,
sewn with sequins

as the trefoil tracks
of waders stitch across
its lavender skeins.

Edges dissolve, revolve,
displace the silver seam
of distance. Surely

an hour ago this little tree
was ripe with tiny
marzipan buds?

Can it be green?
The ferris-wheel world
with all its lights

accelerates to summer.
Our slow blood bolts in our veins
as we scramble to join the ride.

Kate Foley

One Legacy:

National Trust Life Membership

Godmother Eleanor once bought me
the woods at Norfolk's Felbrigg Hall
stripped to brightness in December light.
She bought us the white Winter Garden
at Anglesea in birch and snowdrop,
and music from the grand piano
in Brodick Castle, Isle of Arran.

Then she gave me all those moments
taken at the height of summer
glimpsing views out of great windows
across green acres of perfection,
as if we owned the place.

Elizabeth Bracken

An Act of Love

Each year my country aunt would send a box
of primroses and violets to light
dull city life. Each tiny bunch awash
with moistened tissue, the perfume as bright

as the spring. My sister helped our mother
to fetch eggcups, small jam jars, and water.
My task to pluck one bunch then another
til just her note remained. I almost caught
a glimpse of aunt picking the fine posies,
her firm plump hands round the fragile stems, whilst
mother muttered life wasn't all roses
and some clothing for us girls, more worthwhile.

How differently we see an act of love,
a foolishness of flowers, a spring-time dove.

Kay Hathway

You Love Me, I Love You

(a cleave poem)

You love me
she said
as the sea loves the shore
high tide engulfs
low tide leaves me exposed
equinoctial extremes
threaten and desert
the waves caress, she said
disturb
torment
I would have you love me, she said
as the rocks love the pool
encircling, protecting
creating a space
at the edge of the world, she said
as the moon loves the sea
she said, I love you

You love me
as the moon loves the sea
he said
your power
creates the equinoctial surge
high and low
you drive me on
with your darkness
your distances
I am drawn to you, rejected by you
I would have you love me, he said
in a still reach
of calm water
where light kisses the horizon
shimmering from sky to shore
as the sea loves the moon,
I love you he said

Elizabeth Soule

Intimacy

A young man a young woman
by the pond, fishing
he sits on a low seat
the kind fishermen carry amongst many
trappings and chattels for a long session...here
just a seat, a line, a picnic basket
she lies between his thighs
back propped against his body
gazing at the pond world spread before her
slowly he draws his fingers' streams through
black reeds of her hair then sensing my presence
turns his face to me and smiles I smile
for a moment like a leaf on water
I have passed into the current of their love.

Barbara Strangward

Herrings

At odds, we share a herring supper
after some furore about wine,
the only background music
our steel cutlery scoring
the porcelain platters.
In the centre of the table
a separate bowl our hands
dart to, occasionally brushing,
as we pick over and discard
needle-fine bones, and finally
the backbone in its entirety.
Lemon wedges, squeezed
awry, crown the bone pile.
I sever the little tail from my fish,
aware it was a rudder
that negotiated deep waters.

Jane Henderson

Raison d'être

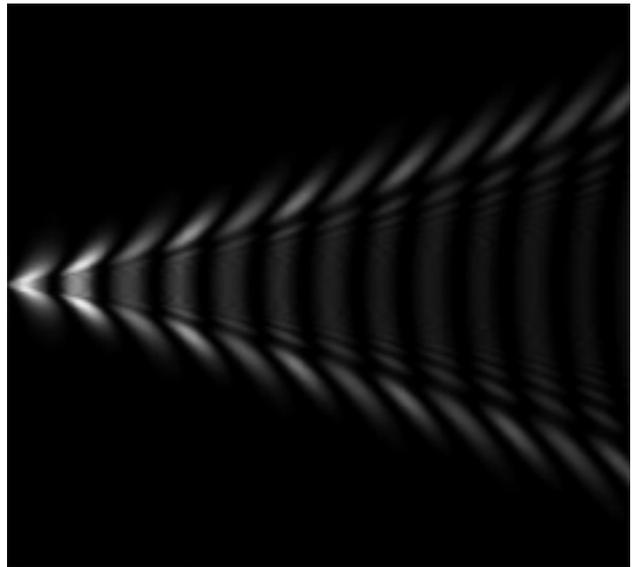
I do not look back
there is too much to see
some of which I do not wish to own
preferring the security of a present
impermanence.

There have been deceptions
having learnt when very young
the power of a well constructed lie
that in time can convince its author of validity.

Cruelty is casually learnt
honed sharply from experience
The mother who would not speak for days
The father whose interests were outside his family

There is security in indifference
which never needs reflective thought.
Let nothing stir the silence of your wake
on the shallow, mirrored surface of your passing.

Ivor Murrell



Picture provided by Ivor Murrell

Not Birdsong

The blackbird is screaming.
Separating the yellow parts of his beak
to such an extent, the yellow parts
with a bloodshot streak,
they opening so wide
and so close to my face,
and his eye is wild
with my reflection in it.
I don't know how to behave.
Only that I must disregard the yellow
and occupy this chasm of howl
as if it were my own cage.

Jane Henderson

Three Syllables

She wondered how her father made that sound:
reedy, like a collared dove, by cupping
his hands over his mouth - three syllables.
He'd learned it as a boy, repeating it
over the years to her, to his brother,
just diagnosed with terminal cancer.
His brother liked birds, but didn't like jokes,
and certainly he wasn't laughing now.
Probably this was the last time the two
would meet. On this visit, her father topped
up bird feeders, brewed tea, feeble himself.
He loved the view from his brother's window:
a plethora of birds – red woodpecker,
pheasant - tall enough to peck at the edge
of the cage in which he'd thrown grain for tit,
chaffinch, sparrow. It was cold and she knew
it wasn't good for her father to stay
here. When it was time for her to drive him
home, she hung back while they said their farewell.
Generally, they used the phrase: *I'll see
you after the war*, but this was inept.
She coughed as parting words were said, but swore
they amounted to just three syllables.

Jane Henderson

Shepherd's Hut

How little time he gets to spend inside. With sheep
to tend, dry stone walls and gates to mend,
keep shut, defend.

Here alone for a season's grazing the high moor grass,
rich enough just now
but little will remain when he herds that richness back
as meat at growing's end.

And here, his small and solitary shelter,
four-wheeled, strong and tough,
a bed, some shelves and a cupboard where he'll keep
spare clothes, tools - his stuff -
barely enough space
to store and, being made of wood,
nowhere for a fire; not inside.
Plain, cart-come-hut
whose boards abut, not planed, not lapped,
allowing cracks for wind and rain
was drawn here by a single horse
to where it will stay, as must be,
alone for the season's grazing on the high moor.

Thresh on the floor, three steps to the turf
beyond the door, with dogs who, sheltering now below,
he'll send to fetch and pen the stock,
stalk, run and nip the hock,
then down - and still - to wait the sound
of the whistle, blown, its tone and length
expressing instructions that he'll send,
carried on and against the wind.

These dogs who share the boiled-out grains,
and the remains of sometime hare,
though gaunt and spare, are full of zest to pursue,
fetch, drive, guard, subdue the ewes and then,
emptied and hot, sleep and warm the hut
on cloudless high moor nights.
There alone they take the shepherd's part
against the uncaring flock.

Paul McLintic

A Future Now and Then

Then, before it changed,
the ancient tree-line curved
around the flank of the spare,
bare, silent hill above.

Now there are no humans
but trees keep their long recollections
as knots in the rough
furrows of their bark,
with a tiny pin-point of history
packed into every seed
sent spinning
on the wind
that is their only memory of wings.

Now that leaves
are the dominant language,
forgotten words lie
like broken bricks,
love and despair
transmuted
into the rosebay-willow herb.

Kate Foley

Sign Language

How they include you,
these poets, whose silent,
hieroglyphic language
bends their whole body
to 'bee' and 'leaf'.

Belief,
and I do believe,
watching their fluttering hands,
cradling arms,
speaking faces,
that the whole of language
from font to funeral,
with its pregnant joy
and deeper grief,
its forays into laughter
and daft jokes,
its two-legged
obstinate, human,
bloody-minded,
determination
to be HEARD,
speaks
from the core of poetry
to our well-defended hearts.

Kate Foley

SPS Events

Edge of the Depths & The Voyage Out

Review of Anne-Marie Fyfe's Poetry Workshop 'Edge of the Depths' and linked evening performance 'The Voyage Out', February 22nd.



Information about this Workshop promised us opportunities to explore 'the unknown, the elemental, the unfathomable... not just poems about seaside days & safe harbours, but the real oceanic deal', and this is just what we got.

Anne-Marie's style is positive, inclusive and well-organised and we were quickly launched into writing at what felt like a 'sink or swim' pace. Activities included led exercises and group exercises focusing on specific tasks and themes, alongside skilful encouragement to let our

imaginings flicker around images, ideas, feelings and wider associations. There were sources of inspiration from published poets and art, including David Hopper's painting 'Rooms by the Sea'. We considered storms, coastal erosion, night journeys by boat, island visits, 'the letter I've always wanted to write to the ocean', while also touching on broader themes of isolation, fear, love, treachery and how these might relate to our personal experience. After reading Adrienne Rich's 'Diving into the Wreck' we had a longer slot to write a poem addressing our lives at a deeper level by descending to the depths to 'find our own wreck' – we did our absolute best to rise to the challenge! The workshop ended with Anne-Marie encouraging us to put together a draft of something we'd written, to read that evening.

By the end we were a mix of physically exhausted and poetically energised: full of ideas and drafts to work on at home. I would say that a longer day could have brought more chance to catch breath between exercises, read our work to the group and benefit from some feedback from the tutor and each other.

Felixstowe Ferry Sailing Club is a perfect venue for a sea-themed poetry

workshop given its amazing views of the River Deben, and Anne-Marie's passion, knowledge and poetic sensitivity genuinely encouraged creativity to flow. As an added bonus I discovered poets I'll definitely read more of, including Lucia Perillo and Czeslaw Milosz.

The evening's event, **The Voyage Out**, began with some wonderful ocean-related poems from workshop participants and other SPS members. Anne-Marie's presentation then developed the theme with moving and lyrical poems of her own, most memorable to me being 'An Enchantment of Maps' including reflections on the contents of a glove compartment! There were extracts from writers such as Virginia Woolf, Emily Dickinson and Elizabeth Bishop, a backdrop of visual images including the coast at Cushendall which was clearly Anne-Marie's own childhood inspiration, and beautifully accompanied by Cahal Dallat on accordion and harmonica. The evening really did feel like a celebration of the ocean as journey and destination, and proof of Anne-Marie's claim that 'maybe, just maybe, the true places can be mapped, even the very deep ones.'

Jen Overett

Other Events

Ekphrasis – Poems from Art

Poetry Workshop in Bury St Edmunds with Derek Adams



Photograph © Derek Adams

Saturday February 24th was a sunny afternoon and therefore, as I padded upstairs in Oakes Barn, Bury St Edmunds, I was wondering whether I would regret spending it indoors as a participant in the Poetry Aloud workshop on Ekphrasis run by Derek Adams – I didn't!

It was an educational and inspiring afternoon where Derek opened our minds to the fourteen – yes fourteen – ways to write an ekphrastic poem. This could be through: description, ventriloquism, interrogation, giving an account or coming at it tangentially as Auden did in his 'Musee des Beaux Arts'. Other examples of ekphrastic poetry we looked at included: Derek Mahon's 'Girls on the Bridge', Carol Ann Duffy's 'Standing Female Nude' and Robert Wallace's 'Giacometti's Dog'.

For exercises Derek used photographs of statues relating to the death of St Edmund who was martyred by being shot with arrows and then decapitated. Legend has it that Edmund's head was lost but a wolf found it, so that body and head could be reunited in burial. For our first exercise we looked at two modern statues of the saint and wrote a poem

either in the voice of the historic Edmund or from his point of view as one of the statues. Our second exercise revolved around a photo of Ben Loughrill's wooden statue of the wolf accompanied by a metal crown (symbolising the head). In this exercise we were asked to write a few lines firstly as the wolf or crown, secondly as the artist and finally as ourselves – the poet observer. From this we were encouraged to see a subject emerge that could be developed into either a three-section poem or one with a focus on a single voice.

We ended the workshop by sharing our poems. It always amazes me to see the variety of creative ways individual poets work with given prompts. I, for one, left feeling energised and open to a far broader view of ekphrasis.

Fran Reader

Ipswich Remembers: 17 March, Ipswich Corn Exchange



Hope by Stephen Cassidy (a sketch from the performance at Ipswich Remembers because 'hope, in the end, is where the balance has to be.')

Venturing out on a cold and snowy evening, I was rewarded with a poignant fusion of dance, poetry and singing commemorating local soldiers from the Great War. The two-year *Ipswich Remembers* project was funded by the Arts Council and

featured Suffolk Poetry Society's President Florence Cox, Secretary Sue Wallace-Shaddad and Alexandra Davis.

The first half was a combination of dance, poetry, and singing from the wonderful Ipswich Choral Society which included Sue. Florence read her poem 'Preparing for War.' It's one of my favourite modern war poems recounting how her grandmother would leave the back door unlocked in case her son, missing, presumed dead, returned. Alexandra beautifully read 'Break of Day in the Trenches' by Isaac Rosenberg and 'The Parcel' from Poetry Wivenhoe's Pam Job. Alexandra's poem 'Hill 60' was produced in the programme, recalling a recent school trip to the battlefields:

*And all along the bridge between the lines
the pupils sit, swinging their legs in
sunshine*

*over No Man's Land, a shorter breadth
than many of their gardens.*

The narrator, Joel Macey, concluded the poetry for the evening with John McCrae's 'In Flanders Fields.' As the Last Post sounded, the names of Ipswich's war dead were displayed on the big screen; a reminder of the cost of war.

In the second half 'Eternal Light: A Requiem' by Howard Goodall was performed in its entirety. In this moving performance, the choir excelled, filling the theatre with emotion. The soprano Gwen Martin and tenor Tom Ramble were particularly impressive. Stephen Cassidy's vivid illustrations accompanied the music and performers from Dance East. The evening concluded with a well-deserved ovation.

Dr Tim Gardiner

Poetry and Music

Poetry Workshop in Coggeshall with Gregory Warren Wilson, February 11th



Mid-February is often characterised as *the* low point in the year. So what could be better calculated to lift the spirits of poets on February 11th than a day with colleagues, appreciating great poems and working on our own writing? Throw in a tasty lunch and restful, attractive surroundings, with a

garden on the point of Spring; could we ask for more?

The theme of the workshop was *Poetry and Music*, and it was ably led by poet and musician Gregory Warren Wilson, whom some of you will have heard when he judged the Crabbe Awards for Suffolk Poetry Society in 2014.

Gregory's approach was both inspirational and practical. We looked closely at poems by Elizabeth Bishop, W. B. Yeats, Robert Frost, W. H. Auden, Robert Hayden, James Merrill, William Blake, Philip Larkin and William Shakespeare, not to mention the Anon. of nursery rhyme, alongside the music of Portuguese Fado and Richard Strauss's *Last Songs*.

Discussing the links between the two art forms, we agreed that both involve carefully attentive listening. The structural parallels between the two of course include rhythm, metre, phrases, repetition, time and silence. At a deeper level both can profoundly connect with and influence our feelings. In both forms the best work also leaves the listener space to use their imagination.

We turned to our own writing, newly aware that it is how the various techniques at our disposal

are used, which is crucial. Line and stanza breaks, repetition, caesuras and judicious evaluation and cutting of words can make or break a poem. The importance of reading our work aloud to ourselves as we are making it can never be emphasised too much.

While words are usually literal compared to the abstraction of musical notes, both poetry and music sometimes work at the level of abstract sound. One illustration of this was taken from W. B. Yeats's poem 'Long-legged Fly':

*Like a long-legged fly upon the
stream
Her mind moves upon silence.*

Straightforward meaning in a poem is not always to be found at the first or maybe even the nth reading, but those readings can still give profound pleasure to the reader.

Fortified with tea and plum loaf, the dozen or so students headed home through the sleet. I for one, and hopefully all those attending, felt refreshed and renewed in our writing for the coming Spring.

Thanks are due to Anne Boileau for organising the day and making us welcome.

Elizabeth Bracken

Fromus Poetry Competition

Feedback from Kaaren Whitney



The idea for a Poetry Competition was initiated by the Suffolk Flora Preservation Trust (SFPT) back in January of 2017 as a result of publishing four of my poems on the seasons in their yearly Adult Educational book which is given to members and sold to the public. With the book for 2018 the thought was to have poems on aquatic life at SFPT's two wild reserves – 'Simpson's Fromus Valley' near

Kelsale and the 'Orchid Glade' near Hasketon.

Lord Cranbrook, Chair of SFPT, and I came up with a flyer inviting poets to submit poems of 40 lines or less in any form by November 1st 2017. These were circulated among poets, publicised by Suffolk Poetry Society, the SFPT website and on Facebook. Lord Cranbrook handed out flyers in schools when he gave talks about the reserves.

Open Days were promoted where the public could visit the reserves and poets gain inspiration from the gorged river, many ponds, rolling hills, mound and causeway. Florence Cox, SPS Chair, agreed to be an adjudicator along with myself and, after much discussion, we came up with short lists and finally confirmed our choices for first prize in the adult and junior categories.

On 20th January 2018 after the AGM and a shared luncheon in Kelsale Village Hall, the prizes were awarded along with readings. SPS members Caroline Gill, Ann Follows and Sue Benbow will have their poems in the 2018 book along with First Prize Tim Gardiner, who received £50 for his haibun (haiku + poetic prose) titled 'Debris'.

Sue Wallace-Shaddad and Susan Mobbs read their poems, as well as the teacher from the Saxmundham Free School who read for the Junior winner, Katherine Carpenter. It was a real pleasure to hear the winning and commended poems written by those who had entered the young people's section of the competition. You can read more about the reserves at suffolkflora.org

It was a lovely afternoon of creativity.

Kaaren Whitney

Debris

a haibun (haiku + poetic prose)

*stagnant pond...
silt and speedwell
saturated by time*

The medieval dam is long overgrown, an ancient crab apple taking advantage of centuries of neglect. From the tunnel of trees, it's easy to imagine the vastness of the fishpond, stocked with bream and eel. The mist-soaked meadow keeps its secret this morning, the cuckooflower cloaked. Cattle drift through dense tussocks, trampling the shadows.

*old spillway...
mist cascades through
hawthorn leaves*

The Fromus winds through a deep-cut gorge. Despite last night's thunderstorm, the river is comfortably contained within the clay banks. Unstable gravels are submerged beneath the ochre torrent, washed clean of detritus. Caddisfly larvae, weighed down by complex stone cases, maintain their position in the channel. Upstream, a fallen willow shelters the miller's thumb* from the worst effects of the flood.

*log jam...
the river will always
find a way*

Tim Gardiner

*another name for bullhead *Cottus gobio*, a tiny fish

Reviews

The three latest pamphlets (2018) from The Garlic Press reviewed below can all be purchased for from the website michaellaskey.co.uk using PayPal for £7 each - or at the **reduced price of £5 each (p&p included) for SPS members** who send a cheque made payable to: Michael Laskey, Goldings, Golding's Lane, Leiston, Suffolk IP16 4EB.

Let's Keep in Touch by Connie Bensley

(The Garlic Press, 2018)

Accessible (meaning '...that can readily be reached, entered, used or understood') is a tricky adjective to use when describing poetry. Even now there can perhaps be a lurking anxiety among us that a poem has to be difficult to be good. The poems in this pamphlet may not be difficult, but they are multi-layered and certainly sparked recognition in this reader.

Connie Bensley's poem 'Serial Killer' captures the *schadenfreude* the entertainment industry offers us in place of looking too closely at our own lives – *That always cheers us up*.

Breaking a tooth on a flapjack in the café in 'Losing a Crown in the National Portrait Gallery' carries the weight of our mortality as surely as those skulls in the corner of Renaissance portraits, the subjects of which *...had to make do*

The Sound of the Rain by Elizabeth Cook

(The Garlic Press, 2017)

I'm always eager to read newly-published poetry by poets who share my landscape and was not disappointed with my copy of *The Sound of the Rain* by Elizabeth Cook, Writer in Residence at St Edmundsbury Cathedral 2012/13 and part-time resident of Suffolk.

Elizabeth Cook has previously described her writing process as "watching, listening and waiting" and this is evident in the pamphlet's measured attention to detail and intricate, visual observations - as in 'At Dark-break', a 6-stanza observation on a moth, which

hung so perfectly still, like its own hat

with white paint, and opium.

Death is treated with a light touch, ranging from the black humour of 'Love-lies-bleeding' and 'Your Send-off' to 'You Can't Argue with the Dead' –

...you can't finish these arguments, which must be folded up and put away like the empty clothes.

There can be few of us who would not be moved to think of our own version of the succinct eight lines of this last poem.

There are poems here about living relationships too. 'Painting the Fence' becomes a metaphor for the deterioration of a relationship. 'On the Way to Plumpton' highlights a small everyday moment of envy – *When will they let go of each other?* while 'Revenant' captures the burden of memory in mundane things – *That number plate so eerily familiar*. 'New Neighbour' begins with optimism about the potential of a new relationship, doomed inevitably to failure –

hung on a peg in a quiet corner of an active house.

There are several memorable, stop-and-look moments throughout the poems, such as 'Tent' where a man reflects back on his life as *a kind of tent*:

Those who saw him rise said it was if a giant jellyfish had floated up and hung there: such colours, such waving softnesses combing and combed by the air.

A main theme is of significant moments in the lives of famous people from the past (John Keats, Thomas Hardy, Mary Anning...), where I found a little research can sometimes reward by giving background insights – for example, in 'The Tears of Marilyn Monroe

... then there is the muffled sound of his back door closing.

as is that in 'Secateurs'. There is loneliness portrayed in these pages too.

Though the poet's home territory is suburban London, nature beyond the garden hedge makes an occasional appearance, as in 'The Duty of Trees' and 'Heron' –

...I want to stop someone and share this marvel.

I came away with a strong sense of Connie Bensley's view of the world. It may be a small world in some respects. She may laugh at the people she writes about, including herself for example, in 'How to Work Things Out' and the deliciously understated 'Tina', but her laughter is gentle and her humour is inseparable from her humanity.

Elizabeth Bracken

and Edith Sitwell' a web-search reveals a photo of these two 'curios' meeting in the 1950s, from which the poem clearly draws. There is also a smattering of myth and nursery rhyme, and a celebration of lived experience across the whole animal kingdom – for example, 'Wolf' and 'Pesci Diversi'. I particularly enjoyed the seamless movement between imagining the events and lives of others, alongside expressions of intense personal experience - as in 'Approximate', where reflections on Marie Curie lead us to a very private place:

and now, at your bedside, obedient to what ineluctably draws nearer, next to you. As near as can be

George Szirtes writes of Elizabeth Cook's earlier book *Bowl* that "the short lyrical poems... float and sting" and it would be hard to find

a better description of her smoothly-crafted, shorter poems which to me are the highlight of her writing. 'The Sound of the Rain' has a generous supply of these, including 'Rain', 'Gust', 'Lift' and, above all, 'New' – I'd defy anyone not to find its image of souls rising to heaven uplifting, whether or not you are of a religious persuasion.

There are numerous intimate reflections on the impact of childhood experiences, the world

Driver by Naomi Jaffa

(The Garlic Press, 2017)

Many of us in Suffolk will remember Naomi Jaffa as the striking personality who spear-headed the Aldeburgh Poetry Festival for over 20 years. Always struggling on meagre beach-combings from grant-giving bodies, she managed to gather leading poets to this rather remote seaside town from many parts of the world. She brought out her own first book of poems, *The Last Hour of Sleep*, in 2004 and now has followed with this second slim volume, also published by The Garlic Press.

The title poem exemplifies her themes, her direct, eye-to-eye manner, and also her 'now you see it, now you don't' sleight-of-hand with language. It tells of

*Separation
learned early as something to
live with, latent,
like herpes or shingles*

when her mother, a singer, and her father Max (the popular violinist, often appearing on the radio) left her at the age of just nine months to go on a concert tour in America for eight weeks. Now her mother is old and helpless like a baby herself and her daughter suggests how hard it must have been to choose between her baby and her singing:

of the spirit and life after death. Several poems directly address the subject of dying and have a humane focus on the finer details of others' lives that I found both moving and uplifting – as in 'Quilt':

*in a pleasant confusion he
wonders
whether that which he once called
God
was the cat preparing to bed down
in the soft place of himself*

*But I never opened
my mouth,
my mother says. Coast to coast
she hadn't sung a single note:

she'd gone to be his driver. I
never opened my mouth.*

The repetition of the words 'I never opened my mouth' first reported as spoken by the mother and then put so many years later in the silent mouth of the poet as an expression of her suppressed outrage that as a young baby she was left in this way is masterly. But at the same time in naming the whole collection *Driver* she recognises that it was her mother's driving force that had made her what she was. She declares herself in her Acknowledgements "beyond grateful... - for a lifetime's work." to her mother.

The relaxed, unobtrusive rhythms of the poems brings to mind (as do many of the themes) Sharon Olds, whom Naomi brought to Aldeburgh. But the personality she reveals is more complex than that of Sharon Olds. She is self-consciously hard on herself. She stuck it out with a lover who abused her hideously for her part-Jewishness ('Driver'). The first poem of the collection ('Deal') has her deciding whether she will be happy or sad in her new house. She will decide by throwing a crumpled ball of paper into a wastepaper basket.

This is a pamphlet where re-reading and attending to the finer detail never disappoint, because each poem is honestly written but also visual, crafted and lyrical. Elizabeth Cook's approach to her poetry comes across as an expression of faith – in the broadest sense and never a proselytising one.

Jen Overett

*A miss
and all here will be hopeless.
Why then do I feel
the quick quiver of
disappointment
when I throw the perfect shot, oh
monster of my self-pitying heart.*

It is a completely artificial, random, test. She supposedly makes an appeal to some force outside herself. As always, she is setting herself challenges. She needs that, but she also needs what is outside her control.

*No one knows who will go
first, or how:
the man jumping from the 40th
floor -
shot by mistake from the window
on the 20th
by a wife missing her husband.*

('Taking Up Our Posts')

The success of these poems comes not out of the 'perfect shot' of her life (as the Diaghilev of the Aldeburgh Festival) but out of what she chooses to call, with stoic irony, the *monster of my self-pitying heart*.

A powerful, skilful and, for me, deeply moving collection.

Cameron Hawke Smith

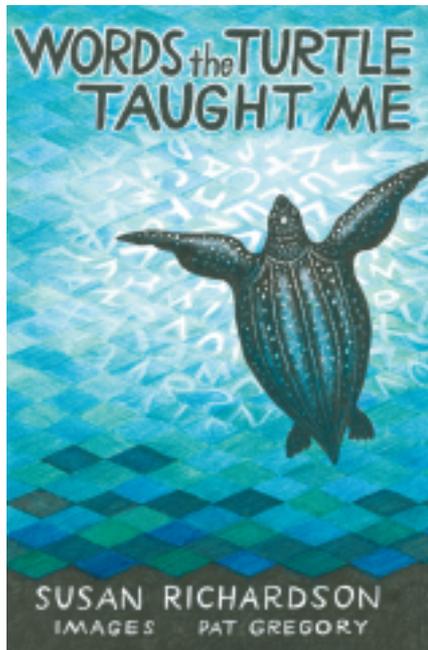
If you wish to have your pamphlet or book reviewed in *Twelve Rivers* please send a copy plus covering letter to:

The Editor, 64 Broom Street,
Great Cornard, Sudbury, Suffolk,
CO10 0JT.

Words the Turtle Taught Me

by Susan Richardson, with images by Pat Gregory

(2017, Cinnamon Press, £8.99)



*The Ghost of Fishing Yet to Come
nets every ocean current and tide.
Entire gyres are trapped.
Waves writhe and thrash
as the sea sinks
to the bottom of itself.*

(‘Waste’, *Dermochelys coriacea*, 1. Net, Stanza 3)

Susan Richardson’s work sparkles and startles by turns. At a time when fellow wordsmiths were focusing, often in confessional mode, on the self, Susan was laying the plight of the planet’s creatures before her readers, students and audiences in her inventive and

ever-evolving style.

Words the Turtle Taught Me emerged from a writing residency with the Marine Conservation Society, during which Susan composed poems for the thirty threatened species chosen to represent the charity’s thirtieth anniversary. These include *Chlamydoselachus anguineus*, the Frilled Shark, who, despite a name that suggests ‘curtains’, has *three hundred tiny tridents* for teeth.

Susan balances her belief that poetry ‘can be a powerful tool in helping to raise awareness ... of endangered species’ alongside the Keatsian view that poetry should have no ‘palpable design’ on its followers. This new book builds on Susan’s previous eco-poetry collections, catapulting the reader towards fresh registers of language in her Attenborough-esque drive to promote care for the struggling organisms in our oceans.

There is a compelling essay at the back of the book entitled ‘Thirty Ways of Looking at the Sea’; it reads like a writer’s diary but is infinitely more than a series of jottings. Susan’s prose reveals her hands-on approach to the practice of her preaching. Litter-picking expeditions in coastal Pembrokeshire are recorded in a litany of lists, comprising finds such as twenty-two ‘bottle tops’ and a ‘strappy sandal decorated with plastic shells’. ‘I’m here’, writes Susan, ‘because ocean debris is my new obsession.’

Susan’s poems present a cornucopia of free-verse styles, plus a sonnet, ‘Necklace’

Hippocampus hippocampus, about an item in her mother’s jewellery box that fascinated her as a child. She would choose a shell containing a small seahorse, only to find that wearing it induced an *uneasy* but potent wish, emphasised in the book by the use of italics, *Please let me always feel free as a fish*.

Susan speaks of ‘the additional storyline’ that Pat Gregory’s visual prints provide, being ‘broadly a journey from presence to absence’. Pattern plays a key role in this ekphrastic volume, with designs reflecting waves and ripples on the seabed. Beauty for Susan can ‘equate with an act of defiance against the ugliness of human-induced extinction’.

Paradoxically for a volume about risk and demise, wit and zest ooze from the turtle’s vocabulary and syntax; the poems were written with performance in mind ‘with the conviction that one of the best ways of defending marine—or indeed, any—species, is by reconnecting our imagination to them.’

Susan concludes with the ‘winking lighthouse of Strumble Head’. Her poems expose the predicament of *Dermochelys coriacea*, the Leatherback turtle, and the other twenty-nine species of marine wildlife that swim into the spotlight of the reader’s conscience. Are we prepared to bust the *Ghost of Fishing Yet to Come* before it causes obsolescence beyond the pages of this remarkable and challenging collection?

Caroline Gill

Sad news from the Woodbridge Poetry Reading Group...

...to report that John Fletcher died towards the end of 2017 aged 97.

John Fletcher had been a GP practising in Woodbridge and was married to Sheila, also a doctor, who survives him. When we knew them she was in a wheel-chair and he drove a specially adapted car to bring her along. They were both long-standing members. They lived

in Seckford Almshouses and hosted meetings there sometimes, as the Woodbridge Group meets in members’ homes – a tradition begun in the early days of the Society for winter meetings. In their youth John and Sheila were keen sailors and in the title of John’s only collection of poems, *Log of a Small-time Poet*, this shows.

Marguerite Wood

*Editor’s note – I found this available online at: waterstones.com

Future Events – 2018

5th Festival of Suffolk Poetry

Once again our annual festival will soon be upon us on **Saturday 26th May**. Our previous festivals have delighted and surprised in many ways, and we expect no less this year.

The format is much the same, starting with three workshops in the morning. **Rebecca Watts** will be helping people speed up the creative process. **Susan Utting** will be putting joyfulness into everyone's poems, and **Derek Adams** will be showing how to tackle commissioned poems. Naturally, you can commission yourself to write poems, so you do not have to wait for that contract to fall through the door.

Once the workshops are over, the **Poetry Cafés** will take the stage in the afternoon to demonstrate once again the variety of work that is Suffolk poetry. We will be making room for young poets from ONE, Suffolk's sixth form college. They have astonished in previous years, and we expect they will this year.

The students will also be running their own workshops during the afternoon in the adjacent St Peter's Hall.

An extra item in the afternoon will come from **Stephen Cassidy**. Stephen is a visual artist, but he will be discussing and showing artwork inspired by his father **John Cassidy's** poetry. He will also be inviting Suffolk poets to provide poems in response to John's work in succeeding months, leading to an exhibition (see *Words from the Chair*).

As always, the afternoon ends with the ever popular **Open Mic**.

This year the evening has a slightly different shape as we have three headline poets, **Rebecca Watts**, **Blake Morrison** and **Susan Utting**. They will be joined by two of our own, **Pam Job** and **John Vaughan**.

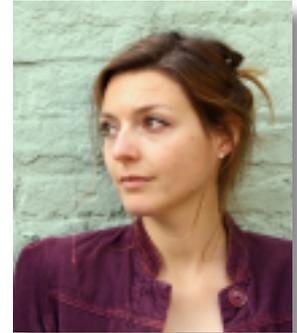
This should be a rich mix of styles that will leave our heads reeling.

Do support the festival. It has become a central feature of the SPS programme that gives you a chance to develop, listen and shine.

Please note that the evening programme order is different to that shown in the brochures.

We do reserve the right to change the programme as required by changing circumstance.

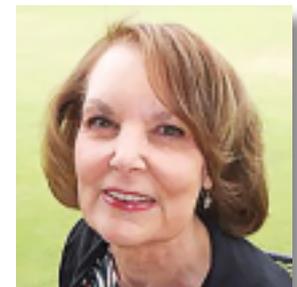
Tickets are available online at tickets.suffolkpoetrysociety.org.uk or by telephoning 01787 374516.



Rebecca Watts



Blake Morrison



Susan Utting

Other SPS Events

Friday 15th June - Deadline for Crabbe Poetry competition

Sunday 9th September
Tea at the Priory with George Szirtes
Stoke by Nayland:
Members only.

Sunday 16th September 15:00
SPS Members' readings at Walpole Old Chapel
War and Home theme, with Shingle Street folk
IP19 9AZ

As the programme develops, more events and more detail will be available. E-mail webmaster@suffolkpoetrysociety.org.uk to be added to our e-newsletters. Alternatively visit our website: suffolkpoetrysociety.org.uk

Sunday 4th October
National Poetry Day
theme: *Change*
South Look Out
Aldeburgh beach

Sunday 4th October
Poetry reading 5.30 pm 22 St Nicholas St. Ipswich IP 1 1TJ

Sunday 7th October
Crabbe Poetry Competition awards presentation

Other Collaborative SPS Events

Thursday July 5th River Dwellers
Monday July 30th
Bungay – Water & Worship
Wednesday August 22nd
From This Tree
Beth Soule workshops with Waveney and Blyth Arts
bookings@waveneyandblytharts.com

Saturday 29th September
Tamar Yoseloff workshop and reading alongside Alde Valley Spring Festival's Autumn *!Cornucopia!*

Membership: £15 individual, £20 joint – membership@suffolkpoetrysociety.org.uk 01379 642372