



# Twelve Rivers

## Newsletter of the Suffolk Poetry Society

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Crabbe Prize winners: Barbara Strangward, Angela Locke, John Vaughan, Jill Dawson, R. G. Binns, Fran Reader, Caroline Giffillan (1st), Anne Boileau, Gillian Bence-Jones (3rd), Beth Soule, Robert Seatter (Adjudicator)

### For poetry makes nothing happen...

Well, is that true, Mr Auden? I was recently at the R.S. Thomas Literary Festival in Eglwysfach church where Rowan Williams preached, taking this line as his text. Ingeniously, he turned it round to assert that the 'nothing' that poetry makes happen is a space for God.

However that may be, it seems to me (as co-incidentally to Elizabeth Bracken: see below The Politics is in the Poetry) that poetry does make a great deal happen – perhaps on a less metaphysical level. The works of Shakespeare probably have had more influence on the creation of our national identity than any other factor. The same could be said of Burns in Scotland and Pushkin in Russia. Andrew Marr's recent all-day BBC poetry programme We British was a brilliant demonstration of the interweaving of poetry and history. But more tangibly and personally I think that the power of poetry on people's individual lives has been proved, especially in the last few years.

Many of us have probably been writing poetry all our lives and showing it to the occasional friend or relative, but never expecting an audience, let alone publication.

The internet has changed this. The isolation, secrecy, even gentle ridicule, that was the lot of most of us writers of poetry was broken with the realisation there were others like us, perhaps down our own street.

The flowering of the poetry cafes in and around Suffolk demonstrates this. The success of the Suffolk Poetry Society festival and the charitable status that the SPS has achieved this year are solid proof that poetry matters for many people. What it has made happen is registered in their lives – a sharing of ideas, an excitement with language, and above all: new friendships.

Our President, James Knox Whittet, had the inspired idea of a poetry workshop, which I joined, in the remote Hebridean island where Orwell wrote 1984 (see p. 16). This stimulated a number of poems, some of which are published in this issue. Its more lasting legacy, perhaps, is the opening up of our minds and imaginations through the friendships we formed during the period. Poetry made this happen.

*Editor*

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## Word from the Chair - Autumn 2015

This year has been what I am sure will remain a significant year in the history of our society. Established over sixty years ago as a membership society with a shared love of poetry this year we became a registered charity. It is a

strange transfiguration being at the same time fundamentally altered yet in many ways remaining exactly as before. The essential change is that we are now a legally regulated and identified entity with a responsibility that extends beyond our membership and needing to show demonstrable public benefit. We remain unchanged in that our purpose is still fundamentally about the enjoyment and promotion of education in Poetry. We are a group still small enough to know each other personally and develop many friendships.

Also unchanged is that the society, its activities and direction remain dependent on you, the members, both by the representatives you elect but most importantly by you. Nothing precludes you, whether on the committee as a trustee or not, from contributing in ways both large and small to our commitment to poetry. The ideas can come from you and if you need the support of the committee we are here to help where we can.

Our new status also sees a greater emphasis on co-operation with other art forms. This is something I firmly believe in and a direction I hope to see develop. In these times when the arts are strapped for funding we can make a little go a lot farther if we stand together. If there is a gallery opening and the walls are covered with paintings, why not some poetry also? If there is a poetry reading, then why not have some music and some art on the walls? The audience for the arts do not restrict themselves to one form only and there is much we can do to share and help publicise each other's events and publicise our activities to a new audience. To this end we have this year provided reading voices to the Suffolk Villages Festival production of Dryden's *Arthur*, we have become part of the Ip-Art Festival, we had a joint workshop at the Alde valley farm with artist Tessa Newcomb, and we have further co operations planned for 2016 with choral musical and arts events.

In support of all this we have begun to make big progress in making use of digital social media. We now have Facebook and Twitter accounts as well as a spruced up and very attractive website put together by Colin Whyles, whom we are very fortunate to have to deal with this increasingly important feature of communication and publicity.

Do please make use of it and visit it regularly because it is there that the latest and most complete news of our activities is to be found.

Publicity is also something that members can contribute to. If you have a chance to distribute posters or retweet us or publicise us in any way then please do. My thanks to Caroline Gill, who has taken the lead in this during the past year. We are always in need of more publicity. I regularly meet poetry lovers who have not come across us. We need you to bring them in.

The past eighteen months have been a rewarding and hectic time as your Chairman, but for personal reasons and other commitments, I intend not standing again next year, although I have every intention of continuing to play a very active part in the Society's events. The person who takes this role is at your discretion to be elected by you, they need to have plenty of time because there is no limit to the time this role requires when done to its fullest extent. But above all they need to have a love of and commitment to poetry and its furtherance.

I wish you all a wonderful Autumn of poetry and look forward to seeing many of you at the Aldeburgh Poetry Festival, giving your support to the Poetry Trust who have done much, as we have ourselves, to make Suffolk an area of outstanding national and international poetry.

*Ian Griffiths*

### Our Web Presence

You can find us at the following places on the Internet:

Our own website:

<http://suffolkpoetrysociety.org.uk>

Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/SuffolkPoetrySociety>

Twitter:

<https://twitter.com/SuffolkPoetrySo>

YouTube:

<https://youtube.com/c/SuffolkpoetrysocietyOrgUK2015>

Donations:

<https://www.totalgiving.co.uk/donate/Suffolk-Poetry-Society>

These places are the best places to keep up with what is and has happened in poetry in Suffolk.

## **A**n Interview with Ian Griffiths

*CHS* I think I first met you in Woodbridge six or seven years ago when I attended my first meeting of SPS and we were both involved in the ambitious Schubertiads and the Sutton Hoo project organised by Fred Ellis. There was an immediate sense of your Welshness both in your speech and also perhaps, may I say, in your flamboyance. Could you fill out your Swansea childhood and education?

*IG* Yes, I remember meeting you also at that Schubertiad. They were something I look back on with fondness as an attempt to encourage a high standard of performance interspersed with very fine piano playing by Holger Aston, which often heightened the experience of the poetry. I remember being almost moved to tears by the piece that accompanied my 'Conversations with Birds'.

To answer your question. Yes, I was born in Swansea, which is where all my grandparents came from, and lived for a short time there and then grew up on the Gower peninsular, at one with the dramatic coastline and nature of that area. It was in that particular area of Wales a strange time for Welshness and on the cusp of taking a new direction. The generation before mine, i.e. that of Dylan Thomas, was becoming more and more anglicised and the use of the Welsh language was in decline. This is reflected in Dylan's work where, although he inherited the love of the sound of Welsh words and the musicality of the Welsh language, his pronunciation and delivery tended towards that of the BBC. He attended elocution lessons as a child – something which would have been quite foreign to a true Welsh speaker. The speaking of Welsh in school was frowned upon.

By my time things were starting to change, although as a family our aspirations were towards things English which seemed where the future lay. My father, like Dylan's, was a grammar school master and I was fed on a diet of Shakespeare and the classics, visiting Stratford-on-Avon several times a year to catch as many plays as possible. At school I wrote poetry and had one poem published, but it was not considered a masculine thing to do and for the most part I kept it concealed.

I went to a small village primary school of which I remember little but the nature rambles and an eccentric headmaster who occasionally visited the classes and played a violin. At the age of 10 I was sent away to boarding schools in Cardiff and

Brecon, where my main enthusiasms were the theatrical productions and expeditions into the Brecon Beacons and surrounding countryside. At home I was mostly to be found on the beaches or on the cliff tops birdwatching. I am always drawn to the sea and one of my family lines were seamen, capehorners, who sailed from Swansea to Chile to bring back copper ore.

*CHS* I guess you cannot have even been kissed as a baby by Dylan Thomas, who died in 1953, but no-one who has spoken to you for even a few minutes can escape the influence of the Swansea poet. Was it through school that you came to him or was simply that he was present in the air you breathed?

*IG* Dylan Thomas was a great influence on me although he died the year before I was born. We used to listen to a great deal of radio, the Home Service, as it was called then, and I guess it must have been there that I first heard that melodious voice reading one of his short stories. My parents also bought me the LP record of Dylan reading 'Quite Early One Morning' and other stories and the record of the New York production of 'Under Milk Wood'. I was blown away by that voice and the places and characters he mentions I found I knew. We also had the good fortune to live a short distance along the cliff tops from Dylan Thomas's fellow-poet, Vernon Watkins and his wife Gwen. Gwen became my English literature tutor and I sat in the shed at the bottom of their garden like Saint Jerome but studying Marlowe, Donne and Browning.

*CHS* And your first poems – when did you start writing and were they already influenced by Dylan?

*IG* I don't think my earliest poems, which I began writing at school, were influenced by him. I love Dylan's tight use of language, his playfulness with words, the laying-bare of his inner life and self from behind the mask of the bohemian poet. If I have followed in any of these footsteps in my poetry I am proud to have done so.

*CHS* One of the impressive recitation you gave at the Schubertiad was a lengthy poem in Russian. I once learnt a little of the language and love the sound of it – perhaps a bit like Welsh? How did you come to learn Russian and do you have favourite poets in that language?

*IG* My interest in Russian was begun by my mother. An intrepid traveller, though of thoroughly Welsh stock, she has always been interested in increasing the education which she lacked as a child. So in her forties she decided to

learn Russian. As part of her course she went to live with a Russian family for six months exchanging £1.00 for 1 Rouble. This was in the Soviet days. She came back full of her adventures.

Following my divorce and before I met Carol I had a Russian girlfriend and lived with her in Finland and the UK for nearly two years. When the company I had been working for collapsed I put an advert in the European paper offering my services in restaurant interior design and project management in Russia or Eastern Europe. A week later I was waiting at Norwich station looking out for a man in a leather coat as he had described himself. Such a person was not obvious. But after a while it dawned on me that a motor bike had roared up on which the rider was entirely clad in leather. It was my man. After a short interview in the station café, which did not test my knowledge of Russian, he told me he would send me out to Moscow in two weeks time. And so it was I was winging my way to Moscow to look after an office renovation.

My adventures in Russia are material for another story, which I hope one day to write, but getting back to poetry, it turned out to be a wonderful place to be. My mother had given me a book of Russian Poetry with English translations and much of my initial study of Russian came from there. If ever there was a chance to sleep my book of Russian grammar was infallible. The alphabet was not so difficult to get to terms with. One adventure was to visit the home of Boris Pasternak and be shown round his home and books and art works by two devoted old ladies. There on his shelves was a copy of 'Under Milk Wood'. I wonder what he made of an eccentric Welsh watering hole called Llaregub. Another of my adventures was to meet the 111-year old Russian poet called Sascha Krasny. Sascha had been a friend to the poet Esenin and a bodyguard to Lenin during his long life. When we met he was writing a book of poems dedicated to his wife who had died thirty years previously. I read him 'Fern Hill' and he read me 'Farewell my friend, farewell' by Esenin. His voice was strong and sonorous as a Russian bell. And so, little by little, and through self-teaching I gained some knowledge of Russian and Russian poetry, which like Thomas's poetry, needs to be heard read aloud. It belongs to the people and you could discuss it with your taxi driver.

*CHS The main trend of poetry in the 20th century was towards a pared-down and conversational style. Dylan (and some of those influenced by him like George Barker) contradicted this trend towards a rhetorical and*

*richly imagistic poetry. Were you consciously influenced by any other 20th century poets?*

*IG I came late to contemporary poets, preferring the classical canon. I love the magic in poetry which you find in the work of Yeats, poems in which the poet takes you on an imaginative journey but the journey is yours, a poem in which there is just enough space to roam and revisit.*

*CHS And more contemporary poets?*

*IG Of contemporary poets I love the work of our own Pauline Stainer. I admire very much Sue Richardson, a Welsh poet who combines nature and myth in her poetry. Lavinia Greenlaw is another favourite and my current reading is 'Of the Blue', by Helen Dunmore. For humour and love poems, Brian Patten. These are my personal favourites but I don't think I have taken much from them but pleasure.*

*CHS Given your roots in south Wales how did you come to move across to Suffolk – and to one of the parts of the county almost as far away eastwards as it could be from Swansea?*

*IG To discover oneself it is my experience that one sometimes has to separate oneself from one's origins and for me that meant a progression across the country, first to teach in Wellingborough, then to set up a fabric design and print business in Suffolk where my ex-wife had family, and eventually to Moscow. But now it gives me enormous pleasure to return to Wales and we are very fortunate to have a house down there which we visit regularly with grandchildren and family and where I can also be part of a very different poetry scene.*

*CHS Do you find you still go back to your roots or are you getting new inspiration from for example the landscape and seascape of Suffolk?*

*IG Suffolk is an inspiring and beautiful place to live which is why I moved here. It is brimming with inspiration and the enjoyment and participation in poetry for a region I believe is probably the best in the country. There are plenty more poems to come from living here but poems take time to mature before they hit the page so I think the majority of my work will continue to draw on my past.*

*CHS You have been Chairman of SPS over a two or three years of unprecedented progress in, for example, establishing it as a Charity. This is a great achievement. But through that period there have also been some ambitious events. Where do you think the Society*

*should be heading in the future?*

**IG** It has been a big step forward for Suffolk Poetry. The society is now on a very firm financial footing, which should give the basis to many good things, the continuing nurturing of poetry in our region and co-operation with the other arts.

For the future I would like to see a focus on performance and presentation by those who wish to give their work the best presentation. This is not always something that comes naturally to the best

of poets but it can always be improved upon. The society offers help towards that end.

**CHS** *And personally: what are your plans in terms of your own writing?*

**IG** First of all I need to spend more time writing. Slowly the poems emerge among others for varied outlets, which will form the basis of a collection. When the day comes that I look at them and feel they have arrived I shall be seeking to get them published, but just now I am drawn to sunshine.

## **F**our Months On.....

Suffolk Poetry Society gained charitable status 19th June 2015, following our AGM on March 8th 2015. So what has happened since then?

Firstly, as we now have charitable status, the Limbourne Trust have been able to hand over the generous promised sponsorship relating to our last Festival of Suffolk Poetry. The Society has now registered also with HMRC as a charity so that it can claim Gift Aid on subscriptions and any donations. Members have kindly been sending back Gift Aid forms and we encourage anyone who has not done so to do this, as it means SPS can claim an additional 25% on any of these monies.

As a charity, we have to be sure to provide public benefit as well as benefit to members and we have to report on this in the Trustees' Report at the end of the year. Recently we have run an event with Waterstone's bookshop for the Ip-Art Festival (open to the public), Tea at the Priory (members only), *The Road Less Trod* workshop and evening event with member readings (open to the public), readings by members on National Poetry Day in Aldeburgh (very open to the public in the fresh sea air!). We have attracted new members from the public since our AGM through our range of activities, including the Festival of Suffolk Poetry (also open to the public). So hopefully, we have a virtuous circle where members take part in events showcasing the strength of Suffolk poetry and this entices new members to join us!

In our first year as a charity, we legally have to hold our next AGM within 12 months, so please put this date in your diary: Sunday 6th March

2016 at St. John's Church Hall, Woodbridge (the same venue as last year). After 2016, we will be able to have a slightly later date if we so choose. Under our Constitution, all Trustees have to stand down at each annual AGM but can put themselves forward for re-election and other members can put themselves forward as Trustees for consideration at the AGM. We have to follow a tight process for electing Trustees.

- At our next Trustee committee meeting on 7th December, we will discuss the shape of our annual report for the AGM and review Trustees. We will agree the format of nomination forms. (Completed and signed nomination forms have to be sent out to members with AGM documents).
- Please note that we will mail out nomination forms to members the week of 4th January to be returned fully completed with proposer and seconder to the Secretary by 5th February 2016, should a member wish to be considered for a Trustee position.
- At the Trustee committee meeting the week of 9th February, we will finalise preparations for the AGM.
- The week of 15th February, we will send out formal notice of the AGM with other documents, including the completed and signed nomination forms for those wishing to stand or be re-elected as Trustees.
- Following the AGM, SPS will send in an Annual Return to the Charity Commission updating trustee details.

*Sue Wallace-Shaddad, Secretary*

## Conjoined Poems

If you have seen the **Ukulele Orchestra of Great Britain**, you might have seen one of their 'simultaneous segues', by which means they demonstrate how many pieces of music are based on the same harmonic structure and can be played quite harmoniously at the same time. I was watching one of these performances recently and I began to wonder what the poetic equivalent might be. It also took my mind to something I had come across that is known as Mozart's *Dice Waltz*. Whether Mozart wrote it is debatable, but a number of composers in the 18th century did write such pieces. They were known as *Musikalisches Würfelspiel*, or *Musical Dice Game*.

How these worked, taking the Mozart version as the example, is that the Waltz (actually a Minuet) has two opening bars of which there are many alternatives also provided. Each pair of successive bars also have alternatives. The musician is expected to begin the performance by throwing a pair of dice the appropriate number of times in

order to decide the choice of bars. It seemed to me that this offered a possibility in poetry.

Most traditional forms of poetry lead the poet to produce a single, linear line of thought for a poem. But why does it have to be like that? Our day-to-day conversations rarely led in a single direction or there would be little point in holding them. Surely a thought can lead in many directions. When writing a poem do you not find that you discard many ideas that might be quite valid from another point of view? The poet is simply throwing their dice and making their choice for the reader. It seems to me that we can have a poetic dice game, but also make more serious use of it.

My first attempt at demonstrating this was, however, a very non-serious affair. A limerick has a very clear structure, with each of its five lines having a specific task. I wrote five (fairly poor) limericks side by side. The reader chooses one of the five opening lines and reads down choosing whichever successive line they wish. For your amusement, here it is.

### Aleatoric Limerick

There was a young lady of Bury	There was an old chaplain of Bury	There once was a doctor of Bury	There was a vile villain of Bury	There once lived a fellow in Bury
Who decided to live only on cherries	Who more often than not was too merry	Who always replied, "I'd ask Terry"	Who fasted except for their sherry	Who broke down in tears on a wherry
When they were asked why	They were quite shy	They wished they could fly	They were sure they would die	They gave a great sigh
They looked up to the sky	At least they would try	And slapped his left thigh	Though their house was nearby	Like a pig in a sty
And prayed for occasional ferries.	If asked "Are you well?", they'd say "Very".	And played a trumpet voluntary.	Would usually be quite contrary.	Wrestled in mud, if necessary.

That was a trivial demonstration of the principle, but I believe it can be used for deeper, more serious poetry. I then considered its use to give three perspectives on the view of an oak tree in winter that I could see from my window. There was a pigeon sitting in it.

The form introduces some interesting intellectual challenges. I decided to write unrhymed poems as

rhymes would force difficult restraints because of the shortage of rhymes in English. I wouldn't say it was impossible to use rhyme, though. Enjambment would also pose problems that I decided to avoid. Again, I don't think that enjambment is impossible, just challenging.

Here are the poems. They are in a table simply to keep the lines together.

## Oak

Oak	Pigeon	Water
I will frame this winter landscape	My boudoir cavorting was disclosed	At last the relentless climbing slows
In fractal latticework	With curtains falling one by one	Its escalation through the year
Until the Spring, when	I am a shadow against the grey	Which draws me into the sky
I will draw a curtain	I can leave/ f this rooted pedestal	From root, through trunk to leaf
Leaf by leaf	Take my freedom	To cloud the windswept arc
Reveal my full majesty:	In winged flight:	That roofs us all:
I am Oak.	I am Pigeon.	I am Water.

Here, there are  $3^7 = 2,187$  permutations. Try three sonnets: I have, and the three variations on 14 lines produces  $3^{14} = 4,782,969$  sonnets!

I call the form **Conjoined Poetry**, as I see the parallel poems working together.

They obviously work well on the page. Performing conjoined poems present an interesting challenge. They could be read simultaneously. Listeners would be free to let their attention flit from one reader to another, thus each listener would hear a different poem.

In fact this is probably the way they should be performed. I liken it to an ensemble of musicians. You can listen to their music as a complete piece. You can listen to just the melody line, and /or the words if it is a song. I presume those two listenings are how most people hear it. If you are more musically interested you might also focus on the bass line, and so on. Thus conjoined poems are (should be) an ensemble of poems that work together and support each other, forming a greater whole.

The American poet John Ashbery wrote a pair of parallel poems called *Litany*<sup>1)</sup>. These are intended to be performed simultaneously but as far as I understand they are not intended to permutate. John Ashbery refers to them as polyphonic poems.

The French poet Raymond Queneau also wrote something similar called *Cent Mille Millions de Poèmes*<sup>2)</sup>. It is ten sonnets that can also have their lines swapped with each other. As far as I know, the ten sonnets are not ten perspectives on

anything. They are more a mechanistic device to prove a principle – like my limericks!

I hope you find that my three poems are much more powerful in their effect when considered as a whole rather than as three linked poems read in a linear fashion. Read one of the many permutations and you should be able to hear the three perspectives converging. It should be possible to write on any topic that has several points of view in this way.

Three poems are not required, but a minimum of two is obviously needed. As with my initial testing with limericks, more than three can (and maybe should) be attempted.

Perhaps the villanelle could be pressed into use, maybe with its two repeated lines maintained through all of the conjoined poems and only the changing lines having alternatives. The sestina would also be quite a challenge.

For another challenge, perhaps the last word of each line of each poem would become the first word of each line of the following poem.

But although considering these intellectual challenges is fun, I do think that the possibilities that conjoined poems offer to enrich poetry is vast and could become a genre in its own right. I would want it to become more than just tricks or *Poetisch Würfelspiel* and hope that you will give it due consideration. I look forward to seeing and hearing the results.

*Colin Whyles*

<sup>1)</sup> I have Rodney Pybus to thank for this reference.

<sup>2)</sup> Thanks to Derek Adams for this.

## Such Stuff As Poems Are Made On...

On Saturday 10th October a group of poets met in Coggeshall for a poetry workshop called *The Fabric of Poetry*. Run by Gregory Warren Wilson, poet, musician and Crabbe adjudicator in 2014, at the home of renowned Suffolk poet Anne Boileau, and featuring artist-in-residence for the day, Sara Impey, it promised to be special. It was.

After introductions and tea in the garden, Greg wasted no time in drawing attention to the very fabric of the world around us, with which we have an intense, if easily overlooked, relationship. We got straight down to work, listing fabrics we had come into contact with since waking that morning – body-warm cotton, freshly laundered towels, a gingham tablecloth, the nylon car seat – and we quickly became aware that our bodies are bombarded with material at every moment, material representative of, and central to, our lives.

We had each brought some fabric, or an object, which held some significance for us, whether for its beauty, its texture or memories it evoked, and he asked us briefly to explain what we had brought. I had felt very conscious since dressing for the day that so much holds a suggestion or story – the scarf I was given on my first poetry course, my grandmother's handknitted Aran inherited two years ago, suede boots like Dick Whittington's – I felt suddenly in costume, having woven an outfit designed to make its own silent contribution to my day. We encountered artist's canvas, a Tibetan prayer mat, apple-print silk boxer shorts, a tiny baby's hat, to name a few, and the descriptions burst vivid on the tongue of each teller. Greg seemed delighted at the poetic concision of each voice and he didn't have to tingle his tiny cymbals once!

He explored the connotations of fabric – the historical significance of Shantung silk or military serge, the class difference between Egyptian cotton and drip-dry nylon, perfectly demonstrated in Greg's own poem *Disaffection in Bangalor*. We wondered about worsted, burlap and dimity, whose qualities we might not know but whose names were so arresting.

Over lunch we were treated to an exhibition of Sara Impey's textile work: she calls them 'quilts'; we called them 'art'. Her technical brilliance married to her poetic sensibility rendered some fascinating pieces, threads of language becoming part of the very nature of the fabric itself, whether a colourful and elegant silk, an antique mattress

with its own mottled history, or a meditation on laundry labels. Greg spoke for us all when he found himself astonished at the beauty and meaning in her work, and the exhibition added a wonderfully tangible complement to the day.

Two hours for lunch, Sara's exhibition and the small matter of writing two poems, flew at a slightly alarming rate. A four line poem *The Art of Touch* required us to use three fabrics from our morning and one that had grabbed our attention from the list. The second task was more daunting; we were each given a postcard of a National Gallery portrait and asked to 'voice' the fabric in the poem. As Huxley suggests in his *Doors of Perception* "there can be no portraiture...without representations of folded textiles" – perhaps we are (or would like to be) what we wear. This yielded some compelling poetry shared that afternoon; Greg's comments were challenging, constructive and encouraging, and I am certain we all went away feeling we had made a bold start on some really interesting poems.

What better way to spend the day than to be made aware afresh of the creative potential latent in the physical, everyday, extraordinary world in which we live? Material is material, and material.

*Alexandra Davis*

## QUIZ

### Unusual rhymes

Name the poem and the author:

<i>physiognomy</i>	<i>Deuteronomy</i>
<i>telephone</i>	<i>juicy bone</i>
<i>drunk</i>	<i>thunk</i>
<i>stamped on</i>	<i>Wolverhampton</i>
<i>sinew</i>	<i>in you</i>
<i>python</i>	<i>bison</i>
<i>bray</i>	<i>Tay</i>
<i>unseen</i>	<i>Hippocrene</i>
<i>knew in them</i>	<i>ruin them    astrew in them</i>
<i>liable</i>	<i>Bible</i>

All the rhymes are from well-known, anthologised poems.

Answers to [editor@suffolkpoetrysociety.org.uk](mailto:editor@suffolkpoetrysociety.org.uk)

Prize: a copy of 'Voices and Images of Islay' generously donated by the author, our President, James Knox Whittet.

## Crabbe Memorial Poetry Prize

For 2015 we had a record number of entries for the Crabbe Memorial Poetry Prize. Robert Seatter carried out the adjudication with great skill and his comments were both encouraging and perceptive. The Anthology was given a bit of a lift this year by changing the picture of Crabbe (the number from which we could choose is not extensive!) and by printing on gloss paper. The result was a more professional feeling pamphlet but there is still more work to be done to make the quality of the publication match the contents. Perhaps there is someone amongst our members willing to offer graphic design skills for this purpose.



*Caroline Gilfillan receiving the Rose Bowl from James Knox Whittet*

The Wentworth provided a very acceptable lunch and were, as usual, hugely accommodating. We needed that adaptability this year when the taxi booked to collect Robert Seatter and our first Prize winner, Caroline Gilfillan, failed to materialise and Colin Whyles had to step into the breach and collect them from Saxmundham Station.

Nonetheless we had a very entertaining afternoon of poetry, read mostly by the poets themselves. It was wonderful that Caroline Gilfillan could return to Suffolk briefly for the event and read her work so effectively. Unfortunately Alex Toms, who won Second Prize and had another poem commended,

encountered last minute problems and could not come after all. As she is a very lively performer (as those who came to the Local Stanza Bonanza



*Robert Seatter*

earlier in the year discovered) it was a shame that she could not bring her own poems to vivid life. Our Third Prize winner, Gillian Bence-Jones (who also had another poem commended) gave a moving performance of her poems and the commended poets added their special individuality to the afternoon. Rebecca Watts was also unable to attend to read her commended poem.

We would like to express our gratitude to Harriet Thistlethwaite who has organised the Crabbe Competition for several years. She is stepping down from this role at the end of the year and we will miss her ability to find and persuade excellent adjudicators and her careful administration of the entries, organisation of the Prize Giving Lunch and co-ordination of the anthology with Colin. Thank you, Harriet.

If there is anyone who would like to stand for election to the trustees in this role, or who would be prepared to support by undertaking one or more of the elements of the role, the committee would love to hear from you.

*Beth Soule*

Copies are still available of Suffolk Poetry Society's 60th Anniversary volume *The Singing Stone*, containing poems selected by Pauline Stainer mainly from the Crabbe Prize winners. Contact Sue Wallace Shaddad on 01473 210264 or [secretary@suffolkpoetrysociety.org.uk](mailto:secretary@suffolkpoetrysociety.org.uk). Price £5.00. 'It is simply a wonderful evocation of this county by those who have come to know it personally and who have found their own words for it.'

*Ronald Blythe*

## 2nd Festival of Suffolk Poetry Review

In Michael Laskey's words as he opened his reading in the evening "It has been a great day, a great day of celebration".



Michael Laskey

In only its second year, the Festival of Suffolk Poetry already seems to be developing a form and *modus operandi* of its own. Once again we were blessed with perfect weather, allowing James Knox Whittet to hold his morning workshop on the Villanelle outdoors.

Michael Laskey held his open workshop inside the John Peel Centre to a disappointingly small attendance, a missed opportunity for those who didn't take advantage, although I believe that his students were suitably inspired.

Angela Locke resided in St Peter's Hall with her workshop *Elemental Fire*.

Once again the workshops ran out of time, so they will start earlier next year.

The afternoon saw Suffolk's Poetry Cafés gather in fine voice to share their poetry in the John Peel Centre. No doubt no-one noticed the subtle background improvements – the John Peel Centre had gone to great trouble to have the door de-squeaked, the china cups were swapped for paper to stop the chinking, and a much better PA system: not one designed for rock bands!

And there were breaks every 50 minutes as requested after the first festival.

The afternoon brought our potpourri of Poetry Cafés. Felixstowe began, presenting seven poets. They began with A. Davis and ended with A. Davis, that was Alexandra and Alfie, mother and son – not omitting Ron Davis somewhere in between, Alfie's grandfather. You will be hearing



Anne Boileau



Angela Locke

more of them later.

Felixstowe were followed by UCS, represented by David Gill (staff) and Jessica Karen Krishan (student). Jessica impressed us last year, and she didn't fail again. One to watch!

UCS shared their 25 minutes with Blyth Poets, who only fielded one poet, Caroline Gay Way. We know Caroline can be relied on for stirring stuff and she did it again.

Sudbury was introduced by Jill Dawson, their six

poems were especially written for the festival based on items and exhibits in Gainsborough's House museum. Sudbury Café Poets meet in Gainsborough House, hence the choice. This was an illustrated presentation, with images of the exhibits projected onto the screen above the stage. It was a most striking effect.

Arlington's (Ipswich) followed, offering three poets, Phil Baker, Tim Gardiner and Nicola Warwick.

Lowestoft's group, New Words:Fresh Voices saw Elizabeth Bracken, Tim and Dot Lenton, Sue Mobbs and Kaaren Whitney on the stage next.

Browsers (Woodbridge) offered a different presentation with Ian Griffiths, Frank Wood and Marguerite Wood finding Radio 4 style links between their poems. It was an idea I thought worked (but, yes, it overran!).

The café poets session was closed by Poetry Aloud (Bury St Edmunds), whose poems were themed on places significant to each poet. Jenny Chantler introduced the eight poets.

The afternoon concluded with Open Mic, attracting 15 poets to the stage. A mammoth session ensued!

The evening opened with our own Anne Boileau. It was good to hear an in-depth reading from Anne, a rare treat. Anne is a true Suffolk poet, having grown up on her father's farm near Boxford, although she now lives just over the border in Essex.

Next came another stalwart of the Suffolk poetry scene, Mike Bannister. You get a different view of a

poet when you hear a substantial body of their work presented. I still cannot get over Mike's description of his childhood as 'feral'; not a word I would ever have applied to him!

We then had a new item in the proceedings. Doug Coombes interviewed three recent George Crabbe Memorial Competition winners. It has often struck me that some fine poems win the competition. We get to hear them at the awards ceremony but never get to know the poets. This was an opportunity to correct that. David Healey, Pam Job and James Knox Whittet joined Doug on stage. It was an interesting item, much appreciated.

Finally we had our two main readers of the day beginning with Angela Locke, who began writing poetry while at Ipswich High School and has been a member of SPS ever since. She now lives and works in Cumbria, being very active writing not only poetry but also novels and travel books. She

also heads up a charity that helps people in Nepal. Needless to say, her poetry reflected all of this in its richness and variety. If you missed her, you can catch up on our YouTube channel (details below).

Michael Laskey closed the day for us with his wry insights into everyday life. Michael, as many of you will know, started the Aldeburgh Poetry Festival and for many years ran a poetry magazine *Smith's Knoll*. He is still actively running workshops every month. I admire his use of simple language and his ability to tell a story through poetry. He has also allowed us to put him on YouTube, so if you listen to nothing else, I recommend *The Clothes Peg*. It doesn't sound very promising subject matter, but I assure you it is!

Our YouTube channel is:

<https://youtube.com/c/SuffolkpoetrysocietyOrgUk2015>

*Colin Whyles, Festival Director*

## T<sup>e</sup>a at The Priory



The sunny weather, beautiful surroundings and the warm hospitality of Victoria and Henry Engleheart, which greeted members of the Suffolk Poetry Society at The Priory, Stoke by Nayland on the first Sunday in September was in marked contrast to the life of the man whose "peculiar histories" were the subject of the entertaining and enthusiastic talk given by SPS member Ray Rumsby.

Practically the patron saint of Suffolk Poetry Society, George Crabbe was born in Aldeburgh in 1754 when fishing and smuggling were its business. His father was the local Customs Officer which set the family apart from its neighbours; and he was a drunkard and a bully. Not a propitious start in life for George Crabbe, but he was sent to school early and was captivated by the tales of his town and people, which were to form the bedrock of his poetry. He went on to study medicine but

never qualified as a doctor, although he retained an interest in herbalism.

In 1779 he went to London to seek his fortune as a poet, until, down to his last shilling, he decided to seek the patronage of Edmund Burke. The Whig MP was at the centre of a group of leading intellectuals of the day. Burke was so impressed by Crabbe's poetry, he gave him money to satisfy his immediate creditors and supported him in his career as a poet. It was through Edmund Burke that Crabbe embarked on another of his "peculiar histories" . Having the necessary knowledge of Latin and the Scriptures, he was ordained as a curate and later chaplain to the Duke of Rutland at Belvoir Castle, before returning to Suffolk for some years in a series of livings.

His poetry, written in iambic couplets is out of favour today. It looks dense on the page, but at the time Crabbe wrote, people expected to settle down to a solid evening's reading, with no other distractions and entertainments. If today's readers look beyond the structure they will find a stark truth shining through, illuminating the lives of the poor, the lives of women and the vagaries of small town life. When challenged during questions about Crabbe's lack of humour, compared with Alexander Pope, Ray Rumsby was able to point to passages of irony and lines which skipped, not plodded.

Ray has many ideas about how Crabbe's reputation as not only a Suffolk, but a national poet, can be established.

*Diane Jackman*

### 3rd Festival of Suffolk Poetry Preview

I am already looking forward to another day of celebration on the 28th May 2016. Once again the day will start with three workshops. James Knox Whittet will continue his study of poetic form with the sestina. Cameron Hawke Smith is offering a workshop on *Intonation* to persuade people to reconsider ways of reading poetry aloud. Dean Parkin will also provide a workshop. The topic is yet to be determined.

The afternoon will once again feature the diverse and surprising world of the Poetry Cafés and close with the equally diverse Open Mic.

I encourage the cafés to dream up new ways of presenting their work, but if you need any special facilities, such as the projector, these need to be booked well in advance.

We have an act to open the evening that I am particularly looking forward to. Rather than one poet, there will be three: three generations of the Davis's from Felixstowe. Alexandra, her son Alfie, and his grandfather Ron. Their writing is very different from each other and they are very entertaining. Perhaps they are poetry's first circus family act. Maybe we will see Alex deftly balancing on her iambics while Ron dons a red nose to deliver slap-stick limericks while Alfie swings across the stage like a Daring Young Man On A Flying Trochee.

#### **Answers to Quiz (Spring 2015): Counting the Birds**

- A: 59 Swans (from Yeats' Wild Swans at Coole)
- B: 4 Larks (from Lear's limerick: There was an old man with a beard)
- C: 13 Blackbirds (Stevens' Thirteen ways of looking at a Blackbird)
- D: 3 French Hens (Twelve Days of Christmas)
- E: Kingfisher (from Hopkins' sonnet As kingfishers catch fire..)
- F: Owl (from Grey's Elegy)
- G: Eagle (Keats ) On seeing the Elgin Marbles )
- H: Nightingale (Keats' Ode)
- I: (Basil) Bunting
- J: Duck (Eliot's Lines to a Duck in a Park)

The Prize has not been awarded

We can but hope.

I expect Mervyn Linford and his partner Clare Harvey will bring us down to earth. Mervyn has a long history in poetry, has published many books, and one of his poems was even used to open BBC Radio 4's *Countryfile* for a considerable time. He is also a publisher. Mervyn's poems tend towards the pastoral, although are not exclusively so. Mervyn will be supported by Clare, who is also a fine poet.

Here we get a little vague. I am planning another interview headed by Doug Coombes, but the subject matter is under discussion and I cannot release any more than that at the moment. If what is planned comes off it will be very special.

The day will close with readings from Myra Schneider and Dean Parkin. Myra is a tutor for the Poetry School and a consultant for *Second Light Network of Women Poets*. She has published a dozen books of poetry and comes highly recommended.

Dean will not be presenting his *Poem for Suffolk* which in itself has been a splendid celebration of Suffolk poetry, but will concentrate on his own poetry, although he will have his piano accompanist, Maurice Horhut, with him. In fact, Maurice will be with us all day to provide music between the poetry.

We look forward to seeing you all on the 28th May at the John Peel Centre, Stowmarket.

*Colin Whyles, Festival Director*

#### **Poetry Aloud gets new Chairman**



Rob Lock being presented with a subscription to the *Poetry Book Society* by Sally Warrell and Colin Whyles.

Rob has been chairing Poetry Aloud in Bury St Edmunds since it formed in 2008. The group showed its appreciation with this gift.

Photograph © 2015 Derek Adams. Used with permission.

## The Politics is in the Poetry – Magna Carta’s 800th Anniversary in rural Suffolk.

Four members of Suffolk Poetry Society were honoured to be invited to contribute to a lively weekend of events in Huntingfield near Halesworth this June. As the home of William de Huntingfield, one of the twenty five barons who signed the original Magna Carta in June 1215, the village took part in the national celebrations.

On Sunday June 14th local residents and visitors packed the parish church of St Mary’s to celebrate

this important anniversary through poetry, music and song. Nicola Hughes, Barbara Strangward, Mike Bannister and Elizabeth Bracken read poems on the themes of democracy, justice and human rights. The poets ranged from Shakespeare, Shelley and Satyamurti to their own work, the settings from Poland to Palestine, Hong Kong to Huntingfield itself.

W. H. Auden told us *poetry makes nothing happen*. It can however stir the conscience and mark a special occasion like nothing else I know.

*Elizabeth Bracken*



*Barbara Strangward, Elizabeth Bracken, Nicola Hughes, Mike Bannister*

## Café Poets At Pinky's 18th September

Nineteen live poets gather in the back room at Pinky’s. Three new faces, from Buckinghamshire, Wenhaston and Yorkshire, plus two or three avid listeners. The tea and coffee cups tinkle, cookies really do crumble, and by seven five, we are in full swing. This night, the famous poetic name-checks abound, either by quotation or inspiration: First comes Thomas Trahearne, then Kate Foley, John Keats, Robert Browning, Edward Thomas, Longfellow, Kenneth Graham, Beowulf. Even the ghost of John Betjeman hovers. It is good to honour the great names in these “Know-Nothing Times”. We, begin, however, in deep solemnity, at monstrous death by drowning of Aylan Kurdi, the tiny refugee.

All Poets play with words, use them to set fire to your imagination. Often there is a yearning to be close to Mother Nature; a forester’s interlude, the

feel of squelching through river mud, or an idyllic Cotswold landscape. Together we share the feel of the rolling seasons, the constellations and the Equinox. Such things touch your heart with a most exquisite ache. There are other ways; how young love and its power are traded, how we see Time, its possibilities and consolations, how, in old age, the human spirit somehow prevails, finds ways of coping while ‘society’ reels on by. Two hours is not enough.

Café Poets meet again at Pinky’s in the Market Place, Halesworth, on November 20th starting at 7pm. Tickets £3.50 at the door. If you have a poem you would like to share, ring Mike on 01986 872981 or Email [mab2015@icloud.com](mailto:mab2015@icloud.com). If you would just like to listen in, a friendly welcome awaits you.

*Michael Bannister*

[mab2015@icloud.com](mailto:mab2015@icloud.com)

*This report appeared in the Halesworth Community News (5000 households) for October 2015*

## A Road Less Trod

The first challenge was to find the way to White House Farm, Great Glemham, hidden away in winding Suffolk lanes. This is the home of the annual Alde Valley Spring Festival which also runs an autumn event *!Cornucopia!* The festival takes place in farmyard buildings and an old barn and encompasses art exhibitions, farm suppers, lectures and other activities. Jason Gathorne-Hardy, the director of the Festival has a growing interest in developing poetry activities there and it seemed an ideal chance to forge a new relationship for Suffolk Poetry Society to benefit members and the public.



SPS engaged the writers and poets Melinda Appleby and Lois Williams (both East Anglian based) to run an afternoon workshop and take part in readings in the evening. We were blessed with fine autumn weather which made our walk round the nature trail at the farm, as part of the workshop, very enjoyable. We were stimulated by different writing exercises and it is planned that



many of the resulting poems will be given to the Festival, possibly for a small publication.



In the evening, workshop participants plus some newcomers met in the farmhouse dining rooms, reading poetry by candle light and a roaring woodburning stove. Tessa Newcomb, the artist, had taken part in the workshop and then in the evening, talked about her paintings lining the walls which were inspired by the same countryside we had just walked. Poetry and art clearly came together. We were sustained by a marvellous beetroot soup with yoghurt and rough hewn bread produced by Jason, with the added bonus of some cider (courtesy of Aspell's) which Jason also provided. We started our readings with John Clare and finished with George Crabbe with a lovely selection of members' poems in-between as well as excellent readings by Melinda and Lois. Jason has said he is interested in doing a follow up event with us next autumn; this might focus on George Crabbe who lived nearby.

*Sue Wallace-Shaddad*

### As Dictated by a Grasshopper.

What sort of creature is it that peers  
at me through artificial, extended eye?  
Can it not see my hopes and fears?  
Can it not hear a grasshopper cry?

Can it not see my frantic search  
for a mate I can bind to my side?  
Or how love can be lost by booted lurch? (*crunch!!*)  
Then it never heard how a grasshopper cried.

What kind of creature thinks that all  
alone it has the gift of poetry?  
I scratch my leg and from its rattle  
lovers hasten to calm my cry.

The wrench of heart when love is lost  
is what life brings: that is its cost.

*Colin Whyles*

## **L**e Vie d'Orate e gli Orti - The Golden Byways, and the Courtyard Gardens

*I gazed at the sky serene  
The golden byways, and the courtyard-gardens ...*

These words are from *To Sylvia*<sup>1)</sup> by the nineteenth century Italian poet, Giacomo Leopardi.

This poem is important to me because my Italian poetry friends chose the line *Le Vie d'Orate e gli Orti* as the title of an annual poetry event held in my village in Umbria.

I live part of the year in a small village called Castello delle Forme (Castle of the Lasts), so named because for centuries the inhabitant's main source of income was based around shoemaking. Not so nowadays. Like many Italian villages affected by the German retreat along the Tiber valley, the population declined after WW2 and shoemaking was discontinued. However, the village is coming back to life. A few properties have been renovated by expats and Italians are also showing an interest in rescuing their heritage.

One sign of Castello delle Forme's contemporary Renaissance has been the success of our annual poetry event, held the first weekend in June, *Le Vie d'Orate e gli Orti*. Eight years ago we were a group of around thirty individuals, of various nationalities, who read our own or our favourite poems as we moved between piazzas and gardens

## **B**ungay Poetry Circle

Bungay Poetry Circle (BPC) was established in June 1994 by Ivy Collins (retired, but still supportive), it is a small group averaging eight members, but happy to welcome more. The tone of the group is friendly and informal – tea break a good time for catching up on news – while the focus on poetry is disciplined and dedicated, usually.

We meet fortnightly on Tuesdays at 7.30pm in Bungay Community Library; each member pays £1.00, which goes to support the library.

Our aim is to encourage and support each other in

**Blyth Poets** are 3 years old now and meet in Southwold library at 7.30 on the first Wednesday of the month.

Oonagh Segrave-Daly comes and we did a Blythe Radio spot last week on her *Poetry Please*, featuring myself and a new member.

Our profile: poets, poetry lovers and people who like listening to poetry.



around the village. Where possible Giovanni (our favourite local linguist and insurance broker) undertook translations. This humble beginning has grown into three consecutive evenings of music, poetry, home-cooked food and local wines to entertain an audience of several hundred across the three days.

Why might a reader of *Twelve Rivers* want to know about this? Well, as a poetry lover and Suffolk resident for the rest of the year, I would love to share this event with anyone who is interested in taking part in 2016. If you would like to know more please email me at [freader@me.com](mailto:freader@me.com).

*Fran Reader*

<sup>1)</sup> <https://theinkbrain.wordpress.com/2012/01/04/to-silvia-giacomo-leopardi-how-can-the-dead-remember/>

our efforts to write poems; each member brings a poem of their own to share and have benefit of constructive critique from the group. Current members bring a range of skills and life experience to the conversation (three are retired teachers, one specialising in English Literature). Over time members of this group have developed their writing, notching up prizes and commendations in regional and national competitions.

Members are encouraged to join and gain benefit from the activities and work of the Suffolk Poetry Society and contribute to workshops and venues for reading their own work and that of published poets.

**For information contact Barbara; 01986 894009.**

2 poets from the early years are bringing out a collection soon and there will be a new full version of *Deluge Over Dunwich* and *Dunwich Voices* (imagined from the 14th century) coming soon. It was performed in Dunwich Church for their new roof celebration - performed by Dunwich residents and an RSC actor!

*Caroline Way*

## Writing Retreat At Barnhill, Isle of Jura

From Kennacraig by ferry to Port Askaig, Islay; from Port Askaig by ferry across to Feolin, Jura; from Feolin by car to the far north of the island and the end of the road. The final leg was a four mile 'bone-shaking track' by capable vehicle and for two, a brisk, more even-tempered walk.

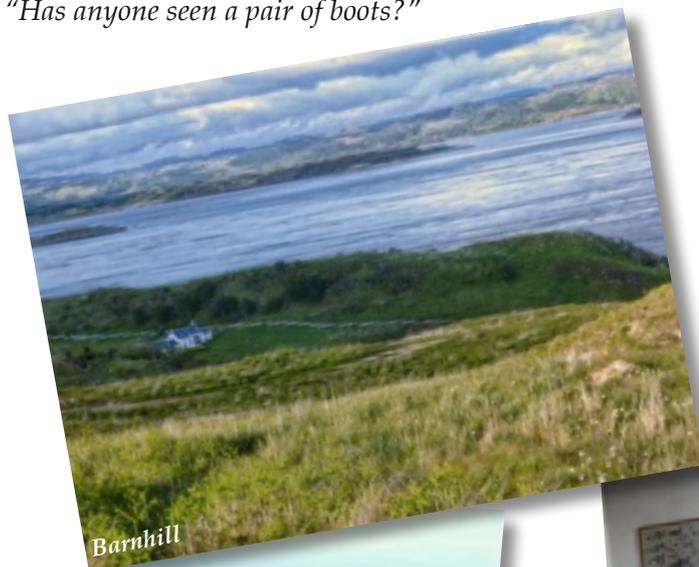
*As we turn the last corner, its white coat glints in the dusk-streaked sun. The pitted track shifts our eye-line. We want to stop, take in and yet go on.*

And so we arrive at Barnhill, described variously as 'a knock-hardened house', 'a widowed house', 'a house of ragged memories decaying year by year', 'a house damp

### Wrong Boots

Odd seeing them here,  
in the doorway to their room.  
The waxy shine gone  
but guess it is yesterday's bog  
gives them this dull, malnourished look.  
I pull them on and find they've dried out well,  
feel just right.

*"I could have sworn I put them here",  
a puzzled voice cries.  
"Has anyone seen a pair of boots?"*



Barnhill



The Piper



The Bread Baker



The Storyteller

*with loneliness'. Indeed remote – not another building in sight except for a few tiny specks across the water. 'The hushed house growls into action' as we are shown its idiosyncrasies by caretaker, Kate, then left alone to get to know it and one another.*

Back in June, six of us embarked on this adventure, joined mid-week by James Knox Whittet, our leader. Writing is a serious business, and yes, we set aside time for it in an unstructured sort of way. But what I will remember and cherish is the laughter, the camaraderie, the pulling together, the shared experiences and the closeness which very quickly developed between us. This inspired our writing once we returned to our separate lives. So close we'd become, that we even began wearing one another's shoes – unconsciously, of course.

### Missing Crocs

His Crocs have gone astray  
Sure he'd put them by the sofa,  
but he scours the kitchen,  
stoops to peer at people's feet,  
straightens up in disbelief.

Glancing down, she sees  
a different colour,  
a different style,  
a larger size.

Hand over mouth, she gasps,  
*"I think these must be yours."*

Soon and without discussion, we assigned ourselves roles, some more obvious than others. Cameron became our bread and porridge maker. He and Sue were always first up in the morning, so they carted in the fuel from the outbuilding and got things going, helped during the day by Mark.

By day, we were mostly out and about, exploring our surroundings, sometimes a little careless of what lurked underfoot or beside us: sphagnum bog, deer ticks. Just north of Barnhill and separating Jura from the now uninhabited island of Scarba, is the Gulf of Corryvreckan. From a 'safe high place', we looked down on the infamous whirlpools' '*elegant swirling of waters*'. Several times, we walked to what became known as Seal Bay because of the colony of seals which inhabits the shores of the tiny nearby islet. On our second and third visits, Cameron took his pipes, scrambled up rocks with them and from on high piped numerous Scottish airs. The seals' enchantment was clear as the number of bobbing heads grew in the waters beneath their entertainer.

A bonus for Sue and me was a guided tour by James around the Dunlossit Estate, a place close to his heart. After we met him from the ferry, James directed us to the starting point of a walk which took us to a lily-covered loch then through beautiful

## **F**elixstowe Café Poets – May 2014 To May 2015

Felixstowe Café Poets had a good 1st year. Since being founded in May 2014 we have done a variety of things. We had a Project to write Sea Poems and displayed selected Sea poems at Art on the Prom in Sept 2014 and at Stowmarket Poetry Festival in May 2015. The theme Flo set for us was The Sea and the resulting poems were quite varied. Florence Cox did a reading for us in October 2014, she offered so I took her up on her offer. We had cake at Christmas. Flo decided to resign as co-organiser in December saying she was too busy to help with any forward planning or organising. I made her Co-organiser early on as she was so enthusiastic and excited about a poetry café in Felixstowe that I thought she would want to be part of it from the start. She was off to see family in N.Z. anyway so would have been difficult for her to help from that distance! FCP had an object evening in February, occasionally have themed evenings and we celebrated our 1st anniversary in May 2015 with a book to mark the occasion. Cameron and Colin and other SPS folk attended and our Anthology of poems and photographs was launched by Cameron and has been a great success.

A 'Selection Committee' was formed to make sure suitable poems were included in our Anthology, and Jim did a very good job putting the book together with his photographs. The printers did the rest. All we had to do then was to sell the Anthology. It has sold very well at several different venues.

Since Flo's resignation I have formed a 'working

mossed woodland to Allen Loch and a boat shed where a small dinghy was moored. Before continuing our tour towards the castle, James rowed us a short distance around the loch. Our day out finished with a delicious venison stew back on Jura in Craighouse Hotel.

In the evenings we'd adjourn to Barnhill's ample sitting-room, joining our George (Orwell wrote most of 1984 in the house) on the mantelpiece and our drying out boots by the roaring stove. Almost the Summer Solstice, we held off switching on the generator, enjoying not-so-wee drams in the fading light while chatting and reading, some of us finishing the 'set text', others making more discoveries about Eric Blair's stay here. I recall our first evening during which we debated the authenticity of a framed Dufy brought down from the bathroom upstairs. Another evening we entertained one another with a rap recital, readings, songs and Kay's brilliant story-telling. Jane and Mark could always be relied upon for witty quips, strangely more numerous as the evenings progressed.

Susan Mobb's poem, *After Leaving the Island*, (printed on p.18) speaks, I think, of our collective experience.

*Janni Ellmoos*

party' to meet occasionally to plan ahead when we can. [Maybe it was a blessing in disguise losing one co-organiser in December and getting 2 more helpers in May!] I continue my role as founder/organiser of the group, liaise with various folk who want our poets to read at their events and receive offers from various other poets who would like to come to read at our group. Having taken part in Felixstowe Book Festival we are again invited to be involved at Felixstowe Book Festival next June [2016]. Some of us have been invited to read at another poetry café and there is a possibility as I write this that a new shop opening in Felixstowe may ask us to do a reading when they officially launch their new shop opening! Alex had a conversation with someone who wanted to write a review of our book for a local journal [shame I had already sold all but one of my supply by then!] and offered his services to take our poets on a guided walk around Felixstowe pointing out various history to us which should encourage our poetic juices to flow and inspire us to write poetry about some of these places! We haven't fitted that in as yet but if he is still willing we may do!

Number of attendees vary between 22 and 14. Not everyone can attend every meeting but of course the variety of poetry we get from different poets is enjoyable. We meet 3rd Thursday of each month in His Lordship's Library, Orwell Hotel Felixstowe. Entry fee £2.50 towards room hire charge. Refreshments available from Harry's Bar before the meeting and/or at the break.

*Penelope Cutler*

## **S**lected Poems

*The editor thanks Pauline Stainer and James Knox Whittet for kindly selecting the following poems.*

### **Orwell's Barnhill, Isle of Jura**

It is a widowed house, has learnt to endure  
extremes of solitude, a house of ragged  
memories decaying year by year,  
of summer parties and brief autumn shoots,  
and far beyond the vapid chieftancy  
of ersatz tartans, the ghosts of a lost people  
in ruined crofts and peatbog. Somehow always  
reminiscent of force, as in the heldback  
kill of hanging eagle, and vertical sinews  
of once-molten rocks, split timbers  
of roof beams, rumours of sea-drownings.  
And only briefly, once, there was a lonely,  
three-year-old boy, who played with his toy soldiers  
amongst the castles of books, while upstairs daddy  
smoked himself to death and strafed the future  
with the deadly rat-a-tat of his typewriter keys.

*Cameron Hawke Smith*

### **Ice**

All held tight in cripple-clench of ice  
could barely breathe;  
all leafy countenance stunned  
all limbs, fingers, toes numbed  
roots grafted to core  
core welded to land,  
freeze-stippled with hoar,  
hush-grounded in prayer.

Could barely breathe  
through rigored rib  
through blood frozen in vein;  
necks angle-poised on spines  
posed who to blame.

Glass white impasse -  
breath bated near death  
teeth set grinding mode  
all held crystalline pose.

Could barely breathe  
or drop a seed.

*Jane Henderson*

### **After Leaving the Island**

it was three weeks  
after leaving the island,  
before I washed the car.  
Until then, I left insect splatters;  
birds' mess, mud lumps  
stuck with sedge and grass, intact:  
precious as skin kissed by a lost love.

Scraping, sluicing off the dirt  
I thought of sentimentality  
and love,  
how love is harder work, less comfortable,  
more messy, but truthful.

Along with the silvered sea;  
seals sliding and diving;  
cuckoos calling in the woods;  
bluebells glowing;  
there was the bone shaking  
track, on and on over rock,  
to a house damp with loneliness.

There was fire ash in the eyes;  
coal dust from buckets in the byre;  
mud, mist, midges, deer ticks;  
barns rank with swallow droppings;  
the gulping stink of generator diesel.

Now all this is washed away  
and when what is left  
drifts back and comes close  
it seems to me,  
very much  
like love.

*Susan Mobbs*



## Cultures

Slabs of grey pavement pock-marked  
 With rosettes of hard chewing gum,  
 Grey litter bins and cigarette stubbers,  
 Still dark vehicles in a distant car park,  
 Grey bus shelters with sundried  
 Peeling seats yellowing into drab,  
 With just a flash of bright white  
 As a wind blown plastic bag  
 Dances past before entangling itself  
 On dusty grey rods of railings.

The Yanomami, native indians  
 Who have lived, loved and laughed  
 Long centuries deep in the rainforest  
 Of the mighty Amazon's watershed,  
 Have no word for green.

*Richard Stewart*

## Too Fast Too Swung

By the stream, rich goblets of gold.  
 I held a buttercup under your chin.  
 Then I lifted you up into the swing  
 that hangs from the snake-barked maple.

I pushed, you pumped, we had lift off,  
 leaving the ground behind until  
 the swing flew up too high, you cried  
 Enough, get down! Enough, get down!

I caught the ropes, plucked you off,  
 held you tight against my chest.  
 Thumping heart, open mouth,  
 silent until your lungs let rip

in a primal howl  
 then gasping sobbed  
 Too much, too high,  
 too fast, too swung!

My hugging brought you back to earth  
 from that brief flight to the universe

and you were my daughter and I her mother  
 and I was my mother and you were me  
 and I was your granny and you were you  
 and her and me and they and we.

And by the stream, rich goblets of gold.

*Anne Boileau*

## Regeneration

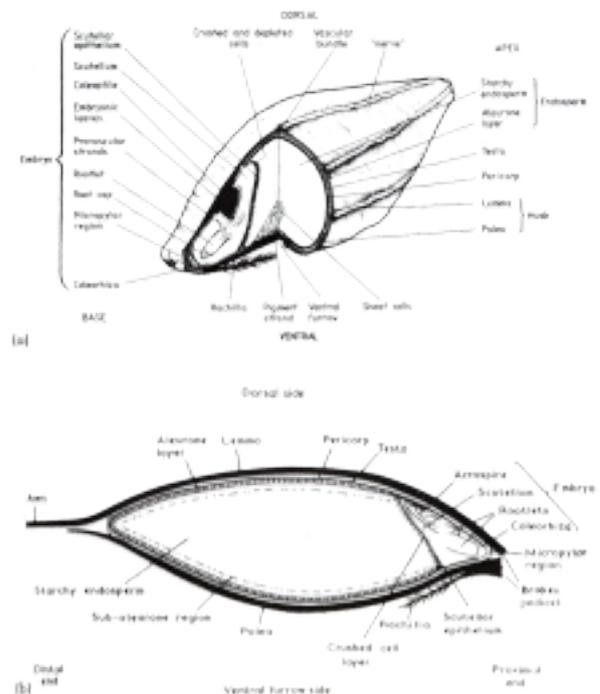
A single barleycorn sits on my hand  
 its Ventral Furrow matches palm's crease  
 turning it reveals a tiny bump  
 under the taut husk's dorsal tip.  
 This blip, unnoticed by most,  
 is a miracle under protective cloaks  
 a sealed promise of an endless cycle,  
 the time-locked dormant Embryo.

Explore, peel back the two-part husk –  
 the Palea, which wraps the seed,  
 overlaps its other half, the Lemma –  
 covering the Pericarp's embrace.  
 The Pericarp tightly locks the Testa,  
 firmly around the Aleurone Layer,  
 the final barrier to the treasure,  
 a storehouse of unconditioned fuel,  
 insoluble starchy Endosperm.  
 Feed for the power-house Embryo,  
 secreted beneath the golden husk,  
 and partially masked by Lodicules,  
 joined to its compact energy source,  
 at the Scutellar Epithelium barrier.

Each planted seed will hydrate slowly,  
 until the Embryo meets target moisture,  
 when Scutellum enzymes then will breach  
 the Epithelium's permeable frontier,  
 burst the Endosperm's guard-cell walls,  
 convert the starch hoard to simple sugars –  
 the modifying energy for metamorphosis.

Germination has broken dormancy.  
 The parent plant's regenerative gift  
 drives the Coleoptile towards the Sun.

*Ivor Murrell*



## Important Notice To Contributors

The deadline for all items other than poems for the next issue is **30th April 2016**. The preferred format is a Word attachment to an email to [editor@suffolkpoetrysociety.org.uk](mailto:editor@suffolkpoetrysociety.org.uk) but you may send them by post to me at my address: 6 The Crescent, Steeple Bumpstead, Haverhill, Suffolk, CB9 7DX.

*It is very important that your name and email/address are written on the item you are sending.*

### ARTICLES

I welcome all articles to do with poetry in the county and would especially encourage news from the cafés and other groups.

### POEMS

The deadline for poems will be 31st March 2016. This will enable me to circulate them to our referees and receive their recommendations. **If you are sending poems please put your name, address and preferably e-mail address on each page.**

### IMAGES

Images, drawings or photographs are welcome. Please send them in as high a resolution possible to [webmaster@suffolkpoetrysociety.org.uk](mailto:webmaster@suffolkpoetrysociety.org.uk).

*Cameron Hawke Smith, Editor*



## Upcoming Events for 2016

*Events without a firm date are still in the planning and more details will be given later.*

6th March: AGM

28th May: 3rd Festival of Suffolk Poetry

30th June: George Crabbe Memorial Poetry Competition closes

September: Tea at The Priory

September: Desert Island Poems

October: Alde Valley Spring Festival *!Cornucopia!* festival event

13th October: National Poetry Day

13 October: Singing Stone readings with music, Ipswich Arts Association lunchtime events

November: SPS event at the Aldeburgh Poetry Festival

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