

# Twelve River RIPPLES

## Members' Poems



### That Night

(11 February, 1963\*)

the boiler overheated in the draught  
a fierce rumbling of water caused us  
to wake, forced us to drain the tank  
then in spite of rattling panes we slept.  
At one a.m. the child inside me stirred  
at three a snow-white ambulance arrived.

The road was hard with gritty ice  
salt winds had blown the drifts inland  
the narrow lanes were steep, untreated –  
I walked the last few yards in slippers.

*Like a skinned rabbit* they laughed  
as they lifted him, *They die like flies*  
*this weather.* Next day a nurse  
took out warm water for the birds.

Even in London it was minus six. Someone  
they said had gassed herself that night.

*Margaret Seymour*

\*Sylvia Plath (27 October 1932 – 11 February 1963)

## Members' Poems cont.

### **The Allure of Water**

Powerful currents in water lured my mother  
she feared those sucking at the harbour wall,  
but never spoke of her real terror,  
wouldn't use its common name –  
even when it took her.

What a fraud one generation fastens on the next,  
never telling youth how their bodies will betray them.  
Mine attacked itself, so I've learnt not to trust it.

I could list our gradual physical failures,  
blissfully ignorant of entries that remain  
to complete the card to end the game.

We talk of how we might go, as if offered choice.  
Bravely, in her bath, your Grannie drowned herself,  
fully clothed, as befitting a modest woman's belief.

You have spoken of treading the beach calmly,  
Walking without pause into the waiting sea.

Women have an affinity with the cradle of life.

*Ivor Murrell*

## Members' Poems cont.

### Saturday Cathedral

We used to steal into that safe grand place,  
bigger than all of Liverpool,  
its salmon-pink stone of stolid faith.  
Always an elusive spice-rich smell  
though we were told they used no incense.  
Sniffing for traces we checked each square  
searching for proof,  
our footsteps echoing along the aisles  
of that indoors playground.  
It took both hands to close the giant's door.  
We ran down the flight of steps to St James's Road,  
walked home to our insignificant houses  
feeling as if we had stolen something.  
Nearby, reproachful sirens of tethered ships  
on the grey Mersey echoed  
below the slummy streets  
where faithful and unfaithful people lived.

I come from the north  
and am made of fish and chips;  
and while the Cathedral rises like an iceberg  
I make a census of fish in the sea-depths below.

*Pat Jourdan*

# For a Ripple of Laughter

## Stuff the Cat Sent

I've told you before I'm going deaf,  
confusing letters like S and F.  
It's sometimes sad and sometimes funny.  
It can be quite dangerous related to money.

My daughter rang the other day  
for a DIY chat, and just to say  
she was bored with her job and wanted to move,  
she hoped that I'd listen and not disapprove.

"Fine by me," I said. "Why should I mind?  
Look at the job ads – see what you can find."  
Now her boyfriend's decided he wants to move too.  
He's fed up with his old job and wants something new.

"At the moment his work is too far from home,  
The drive can be tricky; he travels alone."  
"Is that his main reason?" I asked quite surprised.  
"No, there's one much more serious," she calmly replied.

"His job's near the docks in Felixstowe,  
That's a freeport in Suffolk, you probably know."  
"What's wrong with that?" I asked with a smile.  
"He prefers Essex – it suits his lifestyle."

"But quite apart from that," she said  
"There's another thing messing with his head  
It's something he's trying very hard to prevent:  
He's frightened of catching the stuff the cat sent."

"What stuff did the cat send?" I naively inquired.  
"Was it something his workplace actually required?"  
My daughter laughed at me quite disbelieving.  
"No, cats aren't involved in his reason for leaving."

It was then that she realized my stupid confusion  
Was because of my deafness and not an illusion  
"It's nothing to do with stuff the cat sent  
He's trying not to catch the Suffolk accent."

*Simon Haines*