

Twelve River RIPPLES

Members' Poems



Landguard Fort 2nd June 2022 Platinum Jubilee

Stone walls surround us
the old fort holds its patriotic history
with booming echoes of drum and canon

The crowd wave flags, red, white and blue
some, indifferent to royalty but celebrating
freedom after two pandemic years

As we sing for our Queen
We'll Meet Again and *Bluebirds*
we hear mum's voice vibrate on the air

Her sister and I hold hands
among the choir as tears flow
and love connects us in spirit

Forty shillings on the drum
wars won and lost, but always
the futility of lives ended too soon

At least mum
had her eighty-five years
human conflict continues

Displaced Ukrainian families smile at the party
'Jimmy will go to sleep in his own little room again'
what does this song mean for them?

On the parapet the bagpiper plays
a silhouette as the beacon is lit
orange flame burns against the night sky

People are here
together in community
there is hope for our future

Sarah Caddick

Members' Poems cont.

Elizabeth

Let's think for a while about Elizabeth
What she might mean to us
A constant...a constant...a constant
A presence...it seemed ever thus

As a child, she played as children do
Though born with a silver spoon
With ponies and prams for her dolls
Then the Fates came to call the tune

The Succession had not been her destiny
Take the Orb and the Sceptre in her hands
To be a Constitutional continual
For disparate and distant lands

First a War where she took up the cause
Dug and planted in victory's soil
Put aside her dresses for a boiler suit
Privileged palms became covered in oil

The sounds and the scents of Africa
Concealed what was never seen
Philip relaying the tragic news
To his Princess now his Queen

Time to draw breath ... then Coronation
One in a lifetime of Processions
Some pomp, some pageant, some poignant
Some relinquished what were thought as Possessions

Our world went from black and white
To bright colours of every hue
Given brief snapshots of her life
With a carefully constructed view

She walked with Gillies and guns
Rode 'Burmese' on Horse Guards' Parade
Entertained the Good and the Great
Politeness and courtesy displayed

She did not get everything right
Even the foremost make mistakes
But she listened, knew whom to heed
Learned from life's Ducks and Drakes

Whatever your views of the Monarchy
This one has served us all well
Seventy years of selfless service
As sound as the Elizabeth Tower Bell.

Hugh Lake

Members' Poems cont.

Painted Heavens



J.M.W. Turner, 'The Scarlet Sunset' (c.1830-40)

Scarlet splash on canvas,
streaked across a yellow sky,
suffused with light,
burning with fire,
bold, brash,
arrayed in gaudy attire,
youthful and exuberant,
proud as a peacock,
stealing the show.

In a matter of moments
life's transient glory fades,
a masterpiece is lost forever:
the urgent vigour of youth
dissipated,
diffused,
dissolved
into the muted subtleties of age,
a pensioner's wistful watercolour.

Turner's evanescent glow,
transfixed, immortalised
by an artist's steadfast gaze,
whirls around a vortex,
swirling in the mist
and a red-hot sun
sinks slowly beneath the horizon:
elusive butterfly
caught in the artist's net.

Julia Duke

For a Ripple of Laughter

My Mother Had a Baby

My mother had a baby: turns out it was me,
But I don't think she realised 'til I was 23:
'Til then I was her baby boy: all nappies, poo and spit,
Not 'til I was 23 did she get over it;
By then I'd been through school and failed, had a job, the lot,
But then the novelty had paled: she knew what she had got;
At 33 and moving on, marriage was behind me,
She wondered where I'd go to next and if she'd ever find me;
At 43 and watching, as stomach outgrew chin –
And even I was wondering if it would go back in –
Another decade passes by: she wonders where it went?
I wonder where my money is, it can't have all been spent;
At 63, and counting, the downhill slope looks steeper:
I can't have got here just to face the grimness of the Reaper;
But 10 more years I've bumbled through, managing just fine,
And what you learn from life, I've found, is how to whine – and dine.

Colin Whyles