

Twelve River RIPPLES

Members' Poems



The Archive

he's in high company
the archivist smiles proudly
over the Great Seal of Richard II
we marvel at the tiny king
galloping across his waxen realm
steel toes pointing bravely
towards his posterity

all night I feel it
press down on my dreams
strangers' ghosts pass through me
pilgrims tramp over Swithun's grave
episcopal corpses in limestone shrouds
clutch at their corruption safe and dry
beneath the great nave

at least your life's sorted now
all wrapped up in non-reactive paper
carefully labelled tied with tape
your albums and incunabula
laid out neatly in manila boxes
temperature controlled
safe behind locked linenfold

tonight beneath the squat tower
shirt sleeves will be rolled
changes peel into the floodlit close
vibrating conkers off the trees
and in the morning breeze
bright sallies of schoolboys pour out
along shining pavements

Sheila Lockhart

(On visiting Winchester College archive to donate my father's papers)

Members' Poems cont.

Dust to Dust

That's my mother you're dusting
on our dining room wall,
when she was three years old,
sitting proudly in ankle-length white socks,
a picture book by her side;
it's a monochrome photo colourised
in gentle pastel shades.

As an adult, my mother was dedicated
to daily domestic dusting,
doing a different room each day,
whether dusty or not –
it became a way of life for her
alongside washing, ironing,
and cooking for Dad and us kids.

So thank you for dusting my mother –
she'd appreciate your work.
Dusting wasn't drudgery for her,
more a professional calling.
It's what she did to fill the day
while my father was at the office –
an office that was also dusted daily.

Live to dust.
Dust to live.
Dust to dust.

Simon Haines

Members' Poems cont.

Old Man

An old man doesn't get born
He gets made
Piece by piece
Slots in
Bit by bit
Gets his particular elegance
Of wise young man
Invested sense of duty
And then
With hammer and chisel
Imperfections are removed
Chip chip chip
Bit by bit
Till all that remains
Is the one grey hair
The essence
The insight
The strength
The formidable spirit in a wheelchair
Who simply in the morning
Gets rolled outside
And in the evening brought back in again
For his evening soup

Jacques Groen

For a Ripple of Laughter

Pigs and Cows

Do they know who they are?
Does a pig know he's a pig
in that moment when a swig of swill
gives him a thrill of satisfaction?

Does a pig feel safe on his trotters?
No need for two pairs of blue Hotters
or does he want to guffaw hee-haw
because he's not sure anymore?

Does a cow know she's a cow?
How? She could be a sow.
Standing in clover
when the day's almost over
and cud is mud,
does a cow ruminate
on what life's for,
or the bull next door?

Lynne Nesbit