

Twelve River RIPPLES

Members' Poems



Village Remembrance

The old man sits alone on a bench and stares
at the red petals of a single poppy,
a fallen victim of a sudden Autumn downpour
decorously splayed on a few inches of mud
as far from Flanders as might be the moon
now reflected in the village pond. A mallard duck
fluffed up against the November chill
stands motionless and waiting. From a tree,
a blackbird's melodious last post mercifully
drowns out the thump and shriek of shells
for the old man who remembers and mourns
these fallen petals, red as blood.

Col Farrell

Members' Poems cont.

Remembrance Day

The sound of a single gun
Sends this silence to our past
Committing it to history
A Royal Horse Artillery blast

Two minutes that were borrowed
From Cape Town, we have learned
One minute meant for mourning
One thanks for those returned

A silence that could be heard
Clear across this nation
By soldiers sailors and civilians
Of every denomination

From Whitehall's Hollow Square
Across England's gentle hills
To the magnificence of the Munros
Above Scotland's roiling rills

In Treorchy and on Tryfan
That most magnificent of mountains
And across the sea to Ireland
By Belfast's bubbling fountains

And the Last Post's final note
Is an optimistic 'E'
Will wars ever end?
We will have to wait and see

The poppies have been laid
On Lutyen's flagstoned field
Dignitaries departed
To a haven kept concealed

At a quarter of a million memorials
In village and hamlet and town
Lamenters quietly depart
Leaving a blood red gown

Where the Cenotaph consoles
Massed bands begin to perform
Spectators start to applaud
The march-past keeps them warm!

Will the 'Recce' take the lead
With 'Only the Enemy in Front'
Or the RAF's 'Tail End Charlies'
Who often bore the brunt?

The berets, as the wearers
Are of many colours and hues
Each for a different Division
All come to pay their dues

The aged and the infirm
Proudly parade along
Some now needing a little help
Where once they all were strong

As young men they said goodbye
A nervous smile given at the gate
'Don't wait up for me, for a while,
I fear I might be late.'

Eyes that still hold a sparkle
Or is it an escaping tear?
Thinking of some old friends?
Those that could not be here

Miles of meaningful medals
Worn on the left, they are their own
Rows resplendent on the right
For others they have known

It was not just the warriors
That had to go to war
Many fought the fight
Right outside their door

So as well as fighting units
Glorious names from a distant past
There are many remembered heroes
However their roles were cast

Conflicts come and Conflicts go
Not all with names we recall
But somewhere someone paid a price
As they fell in that fatal fall

And as we clap we think of and thank
The fighters in this last Great War
An unseen foe and patients to tend
Some gave their all, some gave more

So banners and friends are refurled
It is time to call it a day
London Cabbies forego their fees
Veterans do not have to pay

Farewells are reluctantly proffered
All feeling a well-found fear
Is this the last time that we will meet
Or will you be here next year?

This is a day for the fallen
And for those that remain behind
A day for the hope of a future
When wars do not define mankind

Hugh Lake

Members' Poems cont.

Starting to go

Like an ebb tide after a full moon
life starts to slip from its highpoint
and flotsam begins to show.

Expectation has proved to be false,
age doesn't deliver feelings of fruition,
a rewarding sense of completion.

Mottled, loose skin our graduation gown.
We have shed past tautness, those tensions
of tightly focused aims with expectations.

When was self-importance lost —
that ambitious driving force of ego?
Gone, effortlessly replaced by habit.

Strands, just disconnected strands
where weave and weft were wanted
and a pattern was expected.

Unremembered words slip away
with no urge to call them back

detail is the moment.

Ivor Murrell

For a Ripple of Laughter

Cast Brass Masks

was the title of last week's lecture on West African Art, only that's not how *he* said it, belonging as he does to the southern English tribe whose native accent passes for class in after-dinner speeches, Rotary Club dances, outings with Auntie to visit Bath.

That nasty bastard Alexander walks away, pretends he doesn't hear when I speak to him. It's the long 'a' that's the shibboleth, makes you an outcast. Not a disaster, just a bit daft. Jews say *Shalom*, Arabs *Salaam* - time we all gave peace a chance.

So – this lecture then: the *Cast Brass Masks* were brilliant stuff, technically accomplished, aesthetically superb. Turns out we'd all been mispronouncing *Ife, Yoruba, Benin, Asante* .. I wrote my essay, came top of the class, Alexander scraped through with a pass.

Margaret Seymour