

# Twelve River RIPPLES

## Members' Poems



### **Armistice 1918**

Few came back hallooing and prideful,  
Save the odd general who'd gone for the ride,  
Dressed for a day with the local hunt,  
Safe in a chateau some way up the line,  
Distressed to be sure by the daily death tally  
Though finding some solace in a passable wine  
And some jolly ma'm'selles in a nearby estaminet.  
But most came home quiet to the wife and kids,  
Those that could to those that were waiting,  
Dreaming of a cushy nine-to-five job  
With a pint in the pub on a Friday night,  
And the Saturday match at the home team end,  
But still, in their dreams, hear the nightly bombardment,  
See fear in the eyes of a dying friend.

*Col Farrell*

## Members' Poems cont.

### Sweeping Changes

It certainly does – I note with surprise  
how a dark-cornered thought from my head simply flies.  
To take a broom and sweep the floor,  
I ask why didn't I do this before?  
Just a couple of days with my mind in a haze,  
I need only look down, take a broom, sweep the frown  
clear of all that debris and my mind's become free.  
The soothing swish of brush on tile –  
Let's gather the dust in a nice, neat pile  
Together we work, my lean friend and I  
Returning order to order, I hear a small sigh  
My rent-free lodgers crawl into their crack  
The broom's on a mission – there's no turning back  
Sweeping changes, it's not just moving dirt  
It's more about moving the layers of hurt  
It's more about cleaning the place where I live  
between the ears, in the mouth and the shoulders which heave  
They say weeping changes one's own inner room  
but sweeping sounds softer, so I'll choose the broom

*Lynne Nesbit*

## Members' Poems cont.

### Ode an die Assel

Natürlich hatten wir die Asseln getötet.  
Wer mochte schon solches  
Wuselgetier im Haus?  
Und kriechen sie nicht dorthin,  
wo's feucht ist  
und dunkel  
und schmutzig?  
Wer weiß, was in den Ritzen sich verbirgt  
und in den vielen Ecken,  
die Besen, Lappen und Chemie  
nicht erreichen.  
Besser nicht daran gedacht  
und Asseln getötet.

Warum die armen Assel?  
Denkt doch: Sie is ein Held.  
Wie lang sie schon lebt  
unter Steinen  
und dort träumt von den Tagen,  
als sie und ihresgleichen  
die Welt beherrschten?

Seither sind andre gekommen  
und wieder gegangen,  
haben Dinosauriertaten  
das Erdreich erschüttert,  
riesige Tiger die Sabelzähne gewetzt  
und der Mensch  
die chemische Keule geschwungen,  
Es sind Feuersbrunste  
über die Erde gefegt,  
und im Eisbauch der Gletscher  
das Leben erstarrt.

Und immer hat die Assel  
unter ihrem Stein gesessen  
und sich von allerlei Abfall ernährt.  
Dort wartet sie,  
bis das Rad sich wieder gedreht hat  
und sie in den Abfallfluten  
unter Steinen und Brettern  
wieder die Herrschaft gewinnt.

### Ode to the Woodlouse

Of course we killed the woodlice.  
Who would want  
such creepy crawlies in the house?  
Don't they lurk in those places  
where it's damp  
and dark  
and grubby?  
Who knows what's hidden in those cracks  
and corners which  
the brooms, dusters and bleaches  
cannot reach?  
Better not to think about it,  
just kill the woodlice.

Why the poor woodlouse?  
consider this: is she not a hero?  
How long has she been living  
beneath stones  
dreaming of the time  
when she and her kind  
had dominion over the world?

Meanwhile others have come  
and gone,  
the feet of dinosaurs  
shook the earth,  
giant tigers sharpened their sabre teeth  
and human beings  
wielded their chemical cudgels.  
Then great fires  
swept over the earth,  
and in the icy belly of the glaciers  
life froze up.

Meanwhile the woodlouse  
has continued to sit under her stone  
feeding on all manner of waste.  
She is waiting there,  
until the wheel turns full circle  
and in the heaps of detritus  
under stones and floorboards  
she once again gains supremacy.

*Anne Boileau*

# For a Ripple of Laughter

## The Stowaway

My cat climbed in through the back door flap,  
wandering in to have a nap  
and this is how I remember it,  
he'd grown a moustache above his lip.  
But no, a tail appeared and then two feet,  
hanging there between his teeth.  
Through the kitchen, into the lounge  
he introduced his living catch  
and played with it and toyed with it  
and set it down upon the mat.

I rushed in to rescue it  
with a plastic box and a piece of card  
to trap it, turn it, throw it out,  
this wasn't going to be too hard.

So I'm dressed for a funeral down the crem,  
where I very quickly need to nip  
but in my haste to catch the thing  
the little sod gave me the slip.  
I had to go, I'm running late,  
must leave the rodent to its fate.

So off I drive down to the crem,  
followed by a three-hour wake  
and eulogies to remember him  
with pints of beer and lots of cake.

Eventually, when I got home,  
upstairs I ventured to disrobe.  
But as I slipped my clothing down  
a mouse appeared, it made me frown.  
From my trousers to be precise,  
not a usual place for mice.  
He'd been in there all that time,  
you wouldn't wish that on any mate.  
An asphyxiating trouser demise,  
the poor thing suffered a death worse than fate.

I buried him and named him Ray.  
Two funerals in one day.

*Jon Mecham*