

Knaphill Voices



Welcome to our 2nd Knaphill Poetry Week.

Last year's event was a major success and we were able to give all our authors exposure not just on our website but in the Woking Review and on local radio as well. We have also included some of the best poems from 2009 here again for anyone who may have missed them the first time around.

We believe poetry is all about creating a reaction and if we can do that, then we'll know that all our efforts have been worthwhile.

Our 'Poet in Residence' Mal Foster is widely published, particularly on the internet and his 1980 poem 'The Wedding' continuously draws record hits when and wherever it is posted. In 2008, the poem was also published in an Australian Anthology 'Poetry Unlocked' as part of their secondary schools literary curriculum.

This year you will see that we have displayed the main body of work in a PDF format. This will enable you to download the poems and pass on to your friends who may not have direct internet access. This is very much a work in progress and we will add any new poems as the week progresses. Once finalised we will publish all the best poems in an e-book anthology which we hope will be available to a much wider audience. (More details will follow).

We hope you enjoy the work of our local poets Elizabeth Arrow, Gary Fellows, Mal Foster, Helena Harper, Paul Martin & A.P. Whittick. We would also like to thank our guest poets Alison Brumfitt, Philip Woodrow, Amanda Eason, John Binns, Dee Rimbaud, Barbara Ellis and Deirdre Armes Smith, all of whom are accomplished and widely published authors.

www.theknaphillian.com

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POEM OF LIFE by Elizabeth Arrow

A young man called out to the midnight moon,
which shone through the night,
'What is Life?'

The young man called out once more
Nobody had answers to his question,
The young man waited for half an hour
But there was no response.

As the sun rose,
The young man went up a big hill
And he tried again,
'What is life?'
He called out
The by-passers who walked past him
Looked at him strangely.

The young man was about to say something
When suddenly an old man
Came up to him and he said,
'So you want to know what life is then?'
The young man nodded:
The old man said
'Come to this very spot tomorrow
and I will tell you everything'

So the young man went home,
With a big smile on his face
He was so pleased that someone was
Going to tell him
'What life is all about?'

As he went to bed that night,
He still had a smile on his face,
The man was so pleased
With himself

The next morning the sun rose
The old man was sitting on the ground,
Meditating, he could feel the young man coming towards him
Young man thought that the old man was strange,
A bit of a hippy
The strange man had spoken,

'So you want to know what life is.'

The young boy nodded

'Life is something that you should care about'

'Why?'

'Why young sir... life is a simple thing'

'How do you know?'

'I can tell you... you can learn from the mistakes or run from them'

'How do you know all this'

'I've been watching you since you were born
and your partner has changed everything'

'So I know what life is about already after what I have seen already'

'Yes you do'

The old man disappeared without trace

The young man was confused.

The old man knew about his past,

So the young man decided to go home

And explain it to his partner

INFINITY AND DUST by Gary Fellows

What a wonderful world
But how many of us really know
Or understand the magnitude
Of time and of change
To arrive where we are
Of concepts so strange

The blink of an eye
Compares to many a year
Analogous of the time
That we have been around
We small blind entities
The odds against abound

So tiny this planet
Within a small star
Of a galaxy we float
Of billions there are
In such a massive space
Even time is too far

Inconceivable to those
Without a free mind
Who cannot see our place
Of we, the human race
Where we fit in with time
Where we sit within space

Is there anyone out there?
Are we here all alone?
This we may not know
Possibilities so vast
But could we ever meet up
Ever travel that fast

ALONE AGAIN by Gary Fellows

Like lots of tomorrows
We beat at this world
Pent up, wrenched up
With time we're all spent up

Blind in thought
Lost in drapes
Drooping down within our minds
Reality escapes

Life's a gas
Breathe the gas
A butterfly's life
Such ethereal paradise

Wasted and tasted
Wasting up time
Like Lots of tomorrows
Silent thoughts in empty sorrows



Gary is also lead singer with The Hitch-Hikers

ANTHROPOMORPHIC DISCURSIVE IRONY

by Gary Fellows

I feel such a swine
As I ponder these words
This richly stained pigment
Sometimes dogmatic
Pawing over these letters
Embarking on creativity
Some poem Bearly written
Fragmented Ursine verses
Erudite prose beyond bearable
Clawing this literary maze
Searching for a catalyst
A Felicitous conclusion
For an idea original
Not following sheep-like
With bad ramifications
Scurrying around my mind
In an erratic way
Until finally ratified
Until I pride myself
In the details of my verse
And Lionise my finished work

MAN IN A WHITE SUIT by Mal Foster

Suddenly I came here
confused and unprepared
thrown into this oblivion
in a clean white suit.

Suddenly I came here
keen to observe
and with a chance to reflect
as I stand at the back
of this hushed hallowed hall.

Reluctantly I came here
in my new crazy stance
to listen to the soundtrack
that plays out my life

but no-one will see me
as they unbow their heads
from their nervous respect
and no-one will fear me
as I hear what they say

but perhaps they will sense me
as my eulogy is spoken
with my frailties remembered
when the last song is played.

REUNION by Mal Foster

In all, we did our bit to get it started - life that is!
Prepared thru school and all the formative years,
punctual, studious and seeking continuous improvement,
until thrown into society and still, so wet behind the ears, naive.

The workplace, daunting, an irritation, unrewarding.
The teenage years, stretched by stress and often inappropriate.
Finding ourselves, as love and other relationships
began to dictate who we really were or even who we wanted to be.

Instinctively we mellowed and stepped intrinsically into adulthood,
still naive, but with a purpose, eager to repair the damage
of all the years that went before. Noble and exemplary
and at last finding time to analyse and think the big things thru.

Several marriages later, we all reflect and compare notes,
laugh and chortle at our inabilities in holding things down,
look back with reserved admiration to the masters of our destiny,
those revered teachers of our past who gave us 'education'

Now in later life, we consider ourselves mature at last
the natural barriers broken down into something less sinister,
we are wise, or at least we think we are. We are ready now
as we anticipate our futures once again in our search for true fulfilment

The mirror holds all the cards, photographs expose the change.
But what else is there still to do as we discuss the lines
and the circumstances behind our ideal fate? – And at 50 plus
we have no real faith in our age these days, just thought and memories.

The spectre of death stares at us all from behind its wall of inevitability
and too many funerals have already taken some of us.
And time - we can only wait and hope that time is on our side
as we once again hide behind the safety of our childishness.

WAITING FOR A BUS, KNAPHILL by Mal Foster

For one minute only – the traffic stops

The voices in the street belong to children crossing
from their innocence of youth into adolescent questioning

The danger of 'experimenting' openly discussed
with toilet door humour
crude and misinformed - a lost inanity among carers

When the bus finally comes
I am enamoured by the female driver

who has relieved me of this observation

POPPY PAINS By Mal Foster

The black and sombre parade struggles up the hill
as a rare golden sunlight sets fire to the leafy autumnal
of this emotional Remembrance Sunday.

Old ladies in tired mink-coats adjust their poppies
as they pass, mothballed in their endearments;
Ever faithful widows brethren to a sad and lonely way of life.

'At the going down of the sun' etc...

Who will remember these people
marching up the hill towards their heaven?

Who will remember them
as Legions of fallen comrades whisper on the wind
like the lost immortal souls of tiny burdens?

PLATFORM 8 – VICTORIA by Mal Foster

First steps of a journey -
I am one alone among the many
lost amid assorted faces
pounded by instructions
detailed by the tannoy
- Platform 8 - rain pouring in
across the platform
wet steps - lost
in the panic of time
in the panic of missing their train.
I am a face - one face
along a corridor of windows
looking out into the night
the rain-soaked night
the silent city
where no-one knows my final destination.

THE WRITER by Helena Harper

The blank page calls,
the heart responds,
imagination spreads wide its wings
and launches into infinity...
Fingers dance,
words flow,
the page fills,
the soul takes flight
and the spirit sings.



Helena Harper www.helenaharper.co.uk

REMEMBRANCE DAY by Helena Harper

Today we remember,
today we show respect,
honouring those who've fallen,
the brave, courageous dead.
My heart bleeds for their sacrifice,
for the families who've cried,
for the pain and hurt
when their precious loved ones died.

How many more victims must there be
before the heartache and fighting can stop?
Before families lose the fear
of being wrenched apart
and children can enjoy every day
because human lives are no longer lost?

The wars continue,
the fighting lives on,
but my hope is for a future
where such things will have ceased
and all of mankind can finally live
in unity and peace.

THANK YOU by Helena Harper

Thank you for the breath that moves my body
and for the limbs that carry my spirit.

Thank you for the heart that beats in my chest
and for the mind that creates it.

Thank you for the fingers curling my hand
and for the toes dancing on my feet.

Thank you for the conscious energy surging through every cell,
connecting me to the ever-present ocean of eternity.

Thank you for the touch of my skin
and the comforting caress of warm water.

Thank you for the stillness of early morning
and the invigorating slap of cold air.

Thank you for the new spring life filling my eyes
and the symphony of bird song filling my ears.

Thank you for this land we belong to,
for the plants that talk to us
and for our sisters, the trees.

Thank you for warm smiles of family
and helping hands of strangers, friends in disguise.

Thank you for the laughter vibrating through my body
and for the words expressing from my mouth.

Thank you for the excitement of inquiry
and the fascination of discovery.

Thank you for bright patterns of T-shirt and trousers
and soft cuddles of dressing gown sleeves.

Thank you for the sweet melon melting my tongue
and the rich wine warming my throat.

Thank you for the dying sun
and for the colours that pulse
in unison with my soul.

Thank you for imagination's unfettered flights
soaring through infinite wonder and joy
and for inspiration, the whispered language of a loving soul.

Thank you for this magical, wonderful,
joyfully abundant, never-ending now.

The Workroom by Helena Harper

The shelves strain patiently under
the load of paper
that rules the teacher's life.
Without judgement they observe
the daily to and fro:
teachers gulping coffee,
grabbing a bite of biscuit,
moaning in desperation over the work
to be corrected.
'Can't they read?'
'They just don't listen, do they?'
'It was written on the board,
and they've still got it wrong!'
'She hasn't done the right question!'
'I give up.....'
Again and again the same notes ring in the air
like the refrain of an old,
well-worn song.

Out they dash to photocopy
a sheet for next lesson,
only to return in exasperation -
the photocopier not working again!
How wonderful it all is...
What to do now?
Let's see....
Plan A's gone out of the window,
let's revert to plan B...
As the deliberations continue,
a 'Have you heard?' pierces the air.
The next lesson's forgotten
as all eyes turn to stare,
the ears prick up
as the newest gossip (or cock-up)
banishes temporarily the latest care.
The voices lower in case
'someone important' should overhear,
can't be too careful...
After all, the walls may be bugged -
better be quiet, my dear!

The private joys and pains,
laughter and tears,
and gifts of help and comfort
are daily aired and shared

in this family
of workroom colleagues.
Unrelated they may be,
but an invisible strand,
like the air each breathes,
ties them together
and makes them as one -
no longer separate beings
but different aspects of
an indefinable whole -
a close, invisible
community of the soul.

THE HOUDINI by Paul Martin

Nails gnawed to their roots
And battle scars are their gravestones
Like paint cans on a canvass of skin
With colours bleeding and breathing new life
Into a broken-down piece of meat

The stifling voices and noises pelt against
My body. A condensation of rage wets my face
Antagonising the screams that tear and rip through
The leather of my skin. My veins constrict
And tether me to the seat

Silently screaming to outshout those
Who care to listen and deafened by the awareness
Of sightlessness I've seen in people. I lay mummified
Inside a fleshy tomb of thoughts and ideas that
Pain me to hide there

Flesh and bones with the tissue creasing
Over the edges. Comfortably constricting
Like in some homemade straightjacket
Plunged into the depths of a water torture cell
An inescapable hell for entertainment

On the surface it's a calm sea but below this
The ocean floor, is crawling with the nets of old trawlers
They grab me. Bind my arms and eyes and ears
Puppeteering. The inertia is broken
The oxygen squeezed from my lungs
And wheezed out till my chest clenches like a fist
The final bubble scampers away from my throat
Like a balloon ascending into the sky. I look on
Until the sun blinds my view. The bubble surfaces
It exhales for me

CYBERSPACE INVADERS by A.P. Whittick

Strolled to Gino's *Internet* café
Seeking out the echoes of the streets
Folk inside deprived of things to say
Eyeing screens from ergo metric seats
Twittered tales to new mates in the world
Kinda stuff to make the toenails curl
Blasé eyes are gazing at the screen
Someone bringing cappuccinos
Carrot cake and cream

Card ID and privacy to boot
Surf the internet now there's a hoot
Facebook pals clicked-on-line today
Blithely giving secret stuff away
Strangers posing dangers on the line
Conmen oozing confidence sublime
Blasé eyes are gazing at the screen
Someone bringing cappuccinos
Brownie cakes and cream

Privacy concerns are most profound
Internet deceivers gaining ground
Tricksters laying silken webs for frauds
Trapping life's most gullible with words
Spider's eyes from satellites near Mars
Watching our *downloading* from afar
Stalkers behind sugar coated screens
Hoaxer - coaxer - *Cosa Nostra*
Reasons to be mean

PRIVATE SPACE by A.P. Whittick

Seated in the Hospice
Grounds I make my notes
The sycamore, the daffodils
And people in white coats
There are wooden benches
With their name plates too
And when I think of them
Your smile comes through

The seasons change the
Angels who are working
Here they come and go
The sycamore will shed its
Autumn leaves the daffodils
They too will lose their glow
But you who came to languor
With that precious smile
Your lasting grace on us
Bestowed for more than
Simply just a while

SNOW by A.P. Whittick

It looks quite beautiful the snow
And kindled by the crystal moon
I see its raiment glow
On shed roof fencing pale
Or cherry bough it falls
And on mornings when the red
Cheeked school kids come
I hear them shriek excited calls

Fresh footprints on the ground
Contain a record of where
Mankind pets and foxes go
While in the recreation fields
Bedecked with carrot nose a
Well worn hat and scruffy scarf
A giant man of snow

Yet each minute snowflake
Has its unique tale to tell like
Origins from outer space those
Close encounters of the frosty
Kind or wild Siberian hell