

Surrey Unearthed



Mole Valley Poets Anthology 2018

www.molevalleypoets.co.uk

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Celebrating the Surrey Hills as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and inspired by the Surrey Unearthed Art project, the 2018 Mole Valley Poets Anthology invites you to wonder at the many facets of the Surrey landscape.

With poems and pictures we have explored this exceptional area - the natural materials of the landscape; rivers, trees, plants, flint, chalk - people, customs and stories through the ages - views and vistas across and from the hills - and the healing benefit of taking the time to appreciate it all.

Mole Valley Poets meet monthly to celebrate, discuss and share poetry in all its many forms and expressions. If you would like more information visit our website www.molevalleypoets.co.uk

We are also a Poetry Society Stanza group www.poetrysociety.org.uk

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the River Mole

At the end of it all, it was my love, Diana, who first brought me to this river, gold with daffodil and silence, where butterflies become light and the waters tend the beginnings of infinity - beneath a gliding, white and radiant gull:

minutes
by the water
become the span
of great light that is
wordless, like this river

I have discovered its strange astronomies, glimmering at night with stars and sky: I have seen snowdrops on islands in the stream, islands like dreams within a dream of the stream - the dreaming of being as the river flows: the river is born with the dawn and the morning ringing of light singing: it is the coming of spring on the wings of a swan: and I have come to the river of morning, the river of light, and of God, and have learned to listen to its waters: in this place I listen to the robin's song, clear as running water, deep as a world, clear as white light at dawn, or the song of summer breeze: a wind ripples the whitening surface of the water - I follow in the wake of a swan on the waters of the sun:

the old river
this cool spring morning
teaching me how to move
through
light

and I am here still, stunned by its ever-changing, unchanging beauty, and it flows within me like a current: a truly floating world, it carries me along in its motion: the spirit moves through everything, always, almost without end - and in my turn I have come to be like a spirit bird, grey before silence, still as a heron: three egrets pass overhead in tripartite light: knowledge of the river is the knowledge of our valley and of light and of becoming: I have learned to live in the moment

of this river, sustained and amazed as it unfolds into time
present, its wild willow sacrament and cascade into breath: it
is a course for kingfishers, a course for wings:

silence:
the flare
of a kingfisher:
the silence has changed...
the river has changed...

And all the world, the world, has changed...

A A Marcoff

After the storm

Chalkpit lane awash, ground gleams
bone-white, clear water trickles through
choked heaps of spent leaves, broken
twigs, rinses clean the earthworms,
each one stretched to full extent, both
ends tapered, luminous in palest lilac,
saddled in pink, skin drinking in air,
summoned by the paradiddle rain;

we side-step, almost dance, awkward
in walking boots, watch heels, toes,
find spaces in-between – wits pitted
against disturbing this untidy peaceful
protest in face of uncertain earthworks,
this terracotta army on stand-by.

Helen Overell

The Island Tree

You stop me cycling as I cross
the narrow bridge, your arms
held high, arresting me.

Strong and safe, your island
silhouette is rising
from a gleam of cloud and sky,

caught in the muddied spaciousness
of swollen river waters.
Alone, a sentinel,

unmoved by years of storm
and flood, or intervening calms:
the essence of a tree.

Stripped of leaf or flower or fruit,
a symbol and sculpture
of steadfastness,

you speak to me, rooting down
as deep as you are tall
under the eddies and swirls.

Thich Nhat Hanh writes
of the quiet island of self
and taking refuge therein.

Perhaps that is why
I sense in my bones
that you and I are kin.

Rosemary Wagner

Red Berries

Secret stirrings in the undergrowth
bring forth new life, new birth, Nature's boast

After refreshing rain, melted hail or snow
seeps deep to tender roots, as murky broth it flows
to underground streams which pool, then float
buoyant thoughts, now unearthed, once so very remote

May sun's enduring power so bright
give myriad reflections of joyous light
on precious ruby jewels adorning fingered spikes so green
many others will stop to notice; you will be seen!

Judith Packer

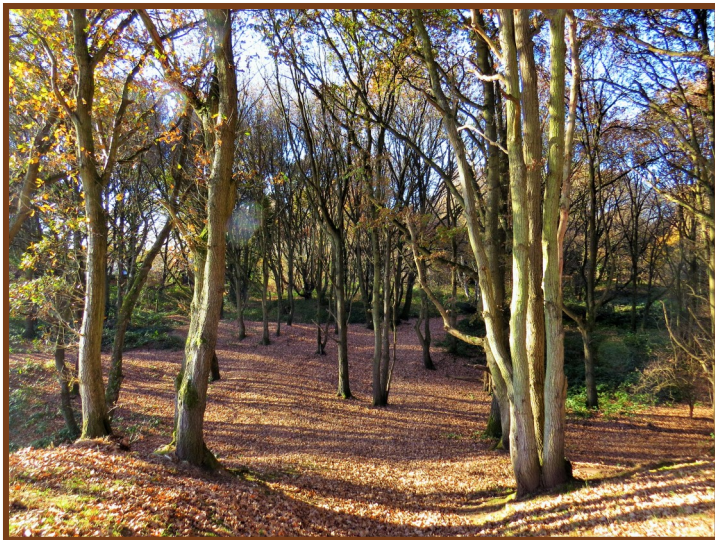


Tartar Hill

No more than a scrap of green,
the Common's ragged rim, pocked
with rabbit holes and borrow pits, hummocks
matted with tangles of bramble, gorse.
I come here when it's all too much, my heart
quieting as I step on to earth, wet grass,
feel the town's grey net lifting.
I wander through the oaks, air trembling
with half-known utterings, see the flash
of rabbit scuts, flicker of wings; a dunnoek
hurls pearls of song as I climb the slope
to a bench littered with beer cans, cigarettes
and above the trees and chimney pots, I glimpse
the North Downs rising like incense.

Elizabeth Barton

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The Walk

High and low we looked that afternoon
in The Roughs, invited ancient trees
to yield a word no-one had spoken,
stooped to peer down holes, under hedges
searching for stories yet to be told,
stopped to catch on the wind a pheasant's call,
a quivering of wings, the musk of damp earth
unfolding spring's first celandine.

Startled by steam and the thrust of an engine
crossing the valley, crossing the decades,
we gasped, cried out and wished it slow so
we could hold it there, halt time somehow,
pull back the years to see who trod these paths,
who tilled this soil - the chalk and trace of flint -
who rested here on banks of bee orchids and vetch
gazing half-eyed on green scarp slopes.

Back and forth we looked that afternoon
in The Roughs, invited those who'd passed
this way before to join us in our search,
pledged to bequeath our words to those who follow on.

Heather Shakespeare

Curves and Straight Lines

Kindly tread by/through the past/talking about ourselves
revealing herstories of present tenses and days to be
gathered as a bouquet we came
to weave this walk into memory
disremember briefly
the worlds troubles and sorrows
to elope into this/mysterious natural realm
we pause/we write
we meander onto tufts of grassy slopes
view magnificent distances
where winds whip gently
stroking our faces like a sea breeze
to counsel/sway us/beseech us:
pass on but leave us here
we step onto sandy paths of narrow
straight lines
here the blue sky expands
small feathers I see like blobs of snow
dotted amongst shrubs and leaves curled in soil
as ancient geological gradients stretch muscles
more used to level ground/as our lungs ferry oxygen
for exalted breaths
We meet a man-made lane of mosaic bricks fossilised in earth
remnants of industrial climes/water fed for forging and smelting
now an aged lane red kissed in the terrain
unearthed it seems but buried still
stone red slabs sunk into clay like little memorial stones
We turn onto some boggy trenches/and manoeuvre
sink deeper with such ooze and force
we oohh and ahh and take great care
teeter and step around
this muddy soup/to stop/to stare/to listen

The Doppler effect whistles its presence as cumulous gray smoke billows in its wake goodbyeee

Unearthed/uncovered/a steam train
its carriages stretch past us in creamy grandeur

Onward we stroll kicking gentler,
 swooshes of dried dead leaves
 like a raffia blanket upon undulating paths
 or long frocks that once were worn.
 Intermittently I notice tight leafed buds pointing outwards
 frigid and fragile from cold frosty morns/wrapped/swaddled
 within themselves/awaiting warmer days those brightening
 displays/we all love to see
 Greens/flapping colours/tilting heads/songs of summer
 lines and circles/shadow in light
 voluptuous days/nectar sweet aromas/our beloved
 sol and earth attract nearer
 rotating like a tango/not too close not too far
 but just right!
 Hark! How our foot-falls silently shudder
 sound waves underground
 where bees emerge/and moles thrust mounds
 full of airy vents/sifted earth/burial chambers
 mapped in lines and curves/as ancient as a Badgers set
 whilst our world revolves/our central nervous system
 synchronised
 as the
 universe
 balloons with
 magnificent super
 nova's all within
 a cosmic
 Rhythm

This is how we move/in curves and straight lines ...

and how these woods have grown
 to let us in and close behind us
 so, when we disappear
 we leave them all
 untroubled
 unearthed
 by
 Humankind

Jules Skylark

woodland

these woods are quiet:
pine trees loom in rows like surfaces
of silence - branches of the mind
that rise towards a white sun, & sky:
pine cones, needles, lie under my feet
like cinders, as I walk through brushwood
into light: here & there - snowdrops:
a little stream threads the forest core:
I can hear it grow, the sound of light,
as scattered birds sing now
of morning: I walk on,
& the finches flit
through those columns
of beech trees, cool & still
that lift up my eyes
to winter
skies:

three horses pass - a breeze:
it is a place, old with wood,
through which water flows
into worlds that make
a wild green meditation
on stream & goldfinch,
a light rain starting
to fall to
the ground

A A Marcoff



Surrey Spring

A bluebell haze -
The woods are waking up;
In boughs of beech and ash the squirrels play,
And country lanes are bright with primroses.

Beyond, the cowslip meadows spread their faint perfume,
The sun throws back its beams from yellow blooms,
And one by one the butterflies appear.

The river chuckles, swelled by April showers.
See how the walkers on the grassy downs smile
At their dogs' exultant joy at being free.

For a little time, I too, am free
To take my share of Nature's generosity.

Sylvia Herbert

Autumn

Mist shrouds the hills, masking trees,
shedding diamond drops on grasses.
Spent sodden leaves turn to mud.
Damp paths are accidents, waiting.
Mist dampens my face, curls my lashes,
I brush against the silent ghosts.

Skies, creamy silk, enfold the land.
Geese skein overhead, unseen
harsh honking, guiding them south.
Muted, the quiet drips of mist.
Silhouetted trees stripped, naked,
shrubs are negatives, dark on grey.

Spider's silk, tendrils of lace.
Jewels are rising from the mist,
glimpses of scarlet rosehips.
In the meadow, birds begin to sing.
Sun comes slowly, fragile, pale,
slides shadows on the silvered land.

Pauline Watson



Wild Garlic Wood

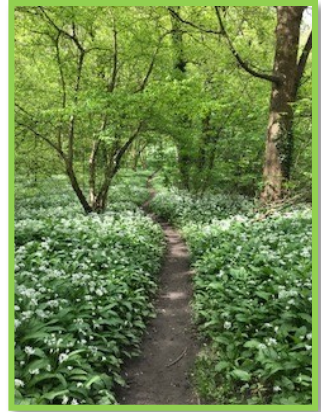
Like giraffe hide -
sunshine splashes through tall trees
on the glossy green below
swelling the sea of hidden bulging buds

Quiet has spun its web
around the wood,
broken only by clear sweet bird song
enchancing each dulled soul

The river glides along its edge
and on the far bank, a Constable scene
cows gently chew the cud
or sit, passing the nothingness of time

Tread the winding elfin path
through the wild garlic wood
crushing the overhanging leaves
anointing feet with fragrant juice

Until one warm day in May
behold, a quivering carpet of delight
a drift of white snow flowers,
a corner torn from heaven and dropped to earth.



Susan Thomas

A song of the Surrey Hills

Whistle and call
to and fro
dog walkers
amongst faded leaves
and gnarled roots
of ancient beech trees
crisscross and zigzag
to and fro

Push and pedal
up and down
through leaf mould
and dark sticking mud
on flinted chalk tracks
mountain bikers
slip and slide
up and down

Chat and natter
back and forth
amongst the fresh
and green leaf bud
of slender silver birch
repeat and refrain
back and forth
birds singing

Sue Beckwith

Ride

Mud squelched beneath the tyres and
a pheasant shot from the undergrowth
as the cyclist changed down.

Spring. Still wet from rain and thaw.
Beneath the surface, chalk,
dirty white, failed to give purchase.
A tough hill.

The brow crested, a pause.
In the valley below, cattle,
distant sheep, a railway line, man and dog.
The ride along the crest meandered
through Box, Birch and Redwood,
evidence of deer,
a loggers trail tempting the unwary,
then the swoop down,
a cautious crossing of the main road and beyond
to Blackheath Common,
up to the wheel hubs in Greensand.

A pub lunch. Peaslake.
Tree roots at head level on either side,
Up and down the Surrey Lanes,
Leith Hill, Coldharbour
and the final descent,
past proposed desecration,
to home, shower and tea.

Tony Earnshaw

Box Hill Olympic Cycle Race

Nine times
nine times they ascend
lycra-ed sinew
tacking like salmon tails
weaving upstream against the wind

Nine times
nine times they appear
army of fins
cutting the horizon
splashing in the sunlight

Nine times
nine times they advance
human pod
approaching our position
creeping wave of wheels

Nine times
nine times they pass
captured silvered fish
netted fleetingly by our sight
gone in a blink

Nine times
nine times they zig zag the zig zag
shoal of excellence
jostling elbows shaping
the fight within

Nine times
nine times they disappear
in a foam wake
of bikes and cars
supporting the chase

Nine times
nine times they return
spawning our shouts
willing the whirring wheels
to climb the hill

Nine times
nine times they resurface
gulping in air
till two break free
and push against the tide of pain

Nine times
nine times we cheer
the final ones flounder now
and nine times
the hill echoes back
'I 've won!'

Susan Thomas

Up on the Down

It would be a nice afternoon's outing, he said,
to go and turn the fire in. So we went up to the fire site
on the big sloping field with the long view
down the valley, over the Weald to the far distance
where the sea is just out of sight. The fire-platform sagged
with the weight of the bonfire. The white dome of ash,
its surface slicked smooth by rain, looked cold and dead.
Around the edges, a straggling tonsure of branch ends
which must be turned in and burnt.

A pitchfork each and we begin. As soon as the ash is stirred,
the embers begin to glow and little spurts of fire
flower from twig ends; I can feel the heat now.
I find myself lifting and pitching, finding the way to catch
a tangled twist of branches and fling it far onto the fire,
my whole body working with the fork.
Pennants of smoke stream from twig tips
and the turrets of flame fly up into the cold blue sky.
I love this pitchfork, the way it works!
They knew what they were doing, those old boys
shaping a tool to work with the body: you can't not use it well.

Standing waiting in the silence space made by the crackle and burn,
oblivious of the traffic on the road below,
I feel suddenly old, not aged, but
like the pitchfork, a relic from another time:
as if not now, but sometime we stood here
waiting for the fire to burn down, and the wind blew
and the day turned to twilight
and it was always so, and would be again.

Anne Humphreys

Leith Hill

Oil beneath the Greensand.
Let it lie.
Why despoil the heathland?
For God's sake, why?

Let it lie
Asleep beneath the beauty.
For God's sake why?
Why ruin lanes and hills?

Asleep beneath the beauty,
Oil best left untouched.
Why ruin lanes and hills
With HGVs and drills?

Oil best left untouched.
Why despoil the heathland
With HGVs and drills?
Oil beneath the Greensand.

Tony Earnshaw

Gogyoshi (five-line poems)

a butterfly
weaves
through the traffic jam
the perfect freedom
of lemon-coloured wings

the smell
of hot tarmac
in the sun
the road black
& horses roaming in the field

a heron
still in the river-mist
my breath
grey & visible,
like silence

that ordinary magic
of light & rain
watching
a philosophy
of swans

a thousand years
in a moment
a moment
in a thousand years
the stone in my hand

rain:
as the sun
slowly appears
this is how you sing
a rainbow

the river seems
quieter now
than it has of late
only the sound of the breeze
as it brushes the water with light

a rosewater dawn
the language
of the sky
gulls glide like a script
wings white & grey upon the wind

A A Marcoff

With thanks to the Lesser Celandine

Still you come, thousands of you,
springing up like little suns
mirroring your lover in the sky,

asserting yourselves, each polished petal
a yellow oval, ecstatic,
cupping the light's gleam,

or stretched out, a starfish, exposing
your stamen circle, dramatic,
gold scattered on viridian grass...

Not so lesser, not to me. Even when you shrink
into a purse at dusk, non-descript,
greenish, bereft

at your disloyal lover's absence,
you come back fighting in the morning
gloriously reflecting every ray...

No smile brighter
than your song of spring
gilding my footsteps down -

down -
into the concrete gloom
of the A24 underpass.

Rosemary Wagner

New to Haiku

Surrey Hills - wildlife thrills

organic poets
creative
Mole Valley

for my mother Primrose

primroses
flowering in the green wood
springing from heaven

Surrey snow
the blushing clouds
of cherry blossoms

feet on the ground
mind in the clouds
dreams in between

in the garden
mother's love
forget-me-nots

Sharon Williams

Holmbury St Mary

We climb to the top of the hill,
outpace the trees,

all around us, tussocks of grass,
each wiry green blade

strung with beads of gathered light –
seed pearls of stars;

distances blur in the damp morning air,
the Iron Age Hill Fort

looms – we stumble on spindle whorls
tooled with flint.

Helen Overell



Adonis Blue

Chalk
Whistled past my ear.
Talking again.
Chalk.
Great clouds of the stuff
Whenever Pippin slammed the board rubber down.

And now
A greater body of chalk
Lies beneath my feet
As I stand on the North Downs.

Rare orchids grow here,
Bee, Monkey, Man.
In meadows shaded by Juniper and Box
Cattle graze.

Distracted by the train below,
Chugging across the landscape,
I miss the Adonis Blue as it flutters past.
A disappointment which
I chalk up to experience.

Tony Earnshaw

Finding Flints

Sea and sand long gone.
Under pressure of sedimentary
Rock, ocean organisms
Reform and transform in chalk's
Empty pockets.
Years on discovered by early man

Dug out, tooled into axe or sharp blade.
Is this one half buried at my feet
Artefact or geofact
Manmade or natural
Only now it's not important
Not when its knapped edges
Delicately scatter light
Surrey Diamond glinting in the rain

Sue Beckwith

*The term Surrey Diamonds is used by Alison Gill on her sculpture **Wellfont** in Norbury Park. It is described on the plaque as made from Surrey Diamonds (local flint) and lime mortar.*

A dragonfly

preened below ancient pine
until a steady beat of tears
swelled round, fixed her
to the forest floor.

No one saw her silent struggle
as amber gathered her, stilled
the palpitations of veined wings
preserved her essence in its golden glow.

Denise Bundred

Ranmore

Beneath a skim of topsoil -
solid chalk, packed glimmer
of planktonic skeletons,
sea embedded coccoliths,

solid chalk, packed glimmer,
mark maker, hopscotch grid,
sea embedded coccoliths,
microscopic polyhedra,

mark maker, hopscotch grid,
pictures chalked on pavements,
microscopic polyhedra,
ephemeral, marvellous,

pictures chalked on pavements
of planktonic skeletons,
ephemeral, marvellous -
beneath a skim of topsoil.

Helen Overell

Up High

Mushroom bed of trampolines
satellite dishes catching rays
watch the slump of suburbs
scrubby gardens, slip away

Cross the river, leave the crowd
the cranes, the crossword
the clutter, the crush
freedom's singing bird is heard

Surrey's sunny slopes await
climbing up in between
woods of moss licked trunks
embrace the creep of green

Emerge and perch upon a bench
kick and catch toes on compact earth
being up high and feeling small
transforming soul, rebirth

Susan Thomas





Walk for Life

Unearth the path so we might walk
to breathe, to share our healing talk

What could be more natural than to dig the soil
clean dirt on hands, not with machines and oil

Work with the ground, let each rise reveal
gentle flowing falls with natural feel

Moments challenge what we could give
unearth the path so we might live.

Judith Packer

Inspired by The National Gardens Scheme and visit to Knowle Grange, Shere

Reigate Fog

Dawn was a mystery veiled in grey, trees
floating up out of the murk like seaweed.
The day did not begin; it became
slowly. When I drew the curtains
there was less darkness, or perhaps
a little more light, a meagre ration
which left everything faded and soft at the edges;
the houses across the road rendered in shades
of beige and brown against an unreadable sky.

No one came and nothing happened,
only the stagnant air brought news:
the damp scent of mud and decay
dead leaves, mashed newsprint and the green tang
of moss growing from black mould. In the garden
leaves dropped languidly, twigs dripped,
a blackbird shrieked a meaningless alarm.

Nothing moved on the road outside,
the evening rush a slight perturbation of air
warmly acrid with exhaust fumes,
traffic moving at glacial speed as the fog chilled.
The day faded imperceptibly to dusk like an old death,
light bleeding slowly away with nothing resolved
no ending, just a waiting and a listening
until the dark finally closed in.

Anne Humphreys

Cyclamen

Like a pink shuttlecock,
the diminutive and lovely cyclamen,
batted up by dark green
hearts, modestly inclines
its magenta nose. Petals
upswept and poised on slender
stems, it clamours quietly
for our attention.

Closely observed by Leonardo
and caressed in silverpoint
on the margins of his manuscript,
also spotted growing wild
by Jean-Jacques on his Alpine
promenades, the delicate cyclamen
springs unbidden from round tubers
after the droughts of summers,

or burial beneath winter snows.
Its swollen roots take their circular
appellation from the Greek.
Let us pass over the common name
of sowbread or swinebread.
That does it no justice.
In the language of flowers it is said
to speak for deep love and tenderness

because those underearth and faithful
tubers consistently withstand
the most difficult of conditions.

Rosemary Wagner

Just One Step

(A journey through Headley Court)

Just ... one ... step
so painful
all effort spent
on just ... one ... step

You planned my first walk
over my mountain of thoughts
I dared to look at the footprint I left
you held me when I reached you exhausted

I gave you a rose
on bended knee, to propose
whatever I am or is left of me
I freely give to thee

Now ... fragrance daily erupts
as petals are crushed
by my carbon fibre leg, one arm with crutch
and me.

Judith Packer

Headley Court is nestled in the southern slopes of Epsom Downs and has for many years been a rehabilitation centre for serving personnel from the Royal Air Force, Army or Navy who are undergoing recovery from injury or illness.

The Witch's Broom Tree

You conjurer of contorted limbs
solidified in wood
such a curious sculpture of feminine form
with curvaceous cups and hollows
offering refuge, passionate rage
as filaments of twigs like a hag's wig
seduce us within hidden depths
of hollow places to hide and seek
like bunches of daffs bright as sun
or a skull without crossbones to burn
as homage for this ancient tree.
Wily wisps of gossamer sheets do woo
to capture, lure and encase insects too
amid the dark grey trunk of leafless limbs
awaiting springs rite to bloom and blush
making us all stare up, below its leaf plushed
coven where incantations billow from voices long ago
spoken in hushed tones as silent as a grave.
Like a boa Eden would have reclaimed
it stretches its muscle-bound limbs outward
reaching beyond its hidden roots
supported with a crutch and a plaque
its deepened roots expose its Gothic sign.
This tree spreads itself for display
saying "here I be and here I stay
so, linger for a while and pass on by
I will be waiting for the witching hour".

Jules Skylark



The Witch's Tree at Abinger Roughs

Does she shake her bird's nest hair
listening to the courting purr of doves
hearing harsh calls of homing geese
mournful hoots of hunting owls
the tap of woodpeckers on bark
raucous cries of nearby roosting rooks?

On stormy nights, wind lashing her hair,
creaking her arthritic crusted limbs
rising amidst the bluster of snow and ice
wandering these wild deserted woods
hearing again, the far-off wail of steam
clatter of pilgrims, seeking salvation for their sins.

Pauline Watson

Wild rabbit

Three hours ago, up on the Down, she paused
hesitant and aware, breathing in the cold
damp air of morning, tasting
the scents of thyme and dew, calmed
she lowered her head to graze.

On that vast hill, the sound of a shot
is a small sound, no bigger than the caw of a rook
in the tall, beech tree. There is a brief stillness, then
the body is picked up, a strand of grass still trailing
from its mouth, and stowed in the game-bag.
The hunters move off, hoping for another kill.

The body hangs limp from my hands
already cooling. Fleas scrabble through the fur
seeking a new home. The belly bulges
it's difficult to get the knife in
without cutting the gut. Inside, a shocking heat
as if life still lingered. There was a French King once
who had men killed then swiftly dissected
in a effort to find that life.

Remove the head, the paws, the tail
the appearance of rabbit. Now it's easy
to take off the skin, slitting up the front
releasing the hind legs, then pulling hard
like pulling a jumper over
a child's head: 'skin a rabbit!'

Without the fur, I see not a carcass, not
broken meat, but something akin, a creature frail
and unborn. Such narrow shoulders, and then
the long raking line from rib to hip, the powerful
running muscles of the hind legs. With my finger
I gently trace the interweaving muscles of the forelimbs
soft, pink skeins of flesh, warm and damp
it is as if I touch my own.

Anne Humphreys

The Worm (anguis fragilis - slow worm)

Making her debut after winter's time-locked torpor
This legless lizard blinks and stops us in our tracks.
Like polished bronze tight scales enfold her anguine form
A lesson in the art of tessellation

This legless lizard blinks and stops us in our tracks
Insinuating silent curves into the towering grass
A lesson in the art of tessellation
She moves with stealth and smooth articulation

Insinuating silent curves into the towering grass
Like polished bronze tight scales enfold her anguine form
She moves with stealth and smooth articulation
Making her debut after winter's time-locked torpor.

Heather Shakespeare



The Dragon

drinks from a dark and oily well,
gobbling meadows, heaths,
toppling trees with a slash of its tail.
It never sleeps: day and night

it guards its glittering heap
of groats and nobles, croziers,
caskets, brooches, rings encrusted
with emeralds, amethysts.

It's terrorised this land
for so long now, we ignore its roar
clawing our brains, the trail
of paws and pelts and broken wings.

If we could rise
above the smog of our smutted,
cluttered lives, we'd recognise its limbs
coiling around our towns, our homes,

its burning breath and brimstone eyes.
But we've forgotten how to fly,
nestling deep in the pit
of its leathery wing.

Elizabeth Barton

voted joint 2nd in the Orbis Readers' Award #180



Silent Pool

There's often a fable
or folklore begun
where silence is brighter
than birdsong
where light is quiet
even on a summer's day

Crystal clear shallows
under low slung evergreen
and the stillness of water
summon a Prince to ride by
and a woodcutter's lass
to bathe and discover
there's no fairy tale
ending, no mystery

Unlike the staged
ditching of a car
lights blazing through
early morning frost
making the most of mists
and myths mingled
Agatha's own whodunnit
determined in its accusation

Even on a summer's day
where light is quieter
than birdsong
and silence still brighter
folklore begun
is often a fable

Sue Beckwith

The Well

I stand on the brink of an apology,
sorry for the times I've walked
thoughtless over your handiwork as I
crossed to the sink to drink or wash plates,
not once looking down to what lies below
or back to then when a tap was unknown.

Yet I glimpse you over my shoulder now
digging relentlessly in the near blackness,
pressing down down towards the aquifer
with scratched hands and simple tools,
a mole, earth-thrower, scarcely seeing
but shivering as you touch the chill of
bared flint and pull muddied shoulders taut,
tingling as half-severed roots like
emptying veins brush over your skin.

To the rhythmic grating of iron against stone
you wait patiently for that moment
when the salt bead on your brow will
fall, swallowed up in the earth's cool water
which pools at your feet.

Five centuries on another came here
to build, stood on the brink – unknowing –
and dug, felt the ground crumble under
his dust-covered boots, stepped back as it
all fell in to reveal a dark hollow space,
every brick set in perfect place.

And they all flocked to see,
pored over the shaft for days,
applauded your daring and skill
though nobody knew your name.

But then they declared it a shame,
agreed it disrupted their plans
and regrettably could not remain,
poured into the shaft for days
ton after ton,
consuming your space till nothing was
left and their work was resumed.

This morning I stand in their walls,
fill my glass, drink the water you found
which flows here still.

Heather Shakespeare

Contributors

Anne Humphreys has written poetry for many years and has had a poem published in Orbis. She originally trained as a landscape architect and continues to be fascinated by landscape history and conservation. She has lived in Surrey for thirty years.

A A Marcoff - Tony is part Russian and part Yorkshire and has lived in Iran, Africa, France and Japan. He has used poetry as a therapy in psychiatric hospitals. He now lives near the beautiful River Mole.

Denise Bundred trained as a paediatric cardiologist and completed an MA in Writing. She won the Hippocrates Prize for Poetry in Medicine in 2016.

Elizabeth Barton lives in Cobham with her husband, Jon, and two daughters. She has worked as an English Teacher and as a Conservation Volunteer on Ockham and Wisley Commons. She is Stanza Rep for Mole Valley Poets. She has had poems published in Agenda, Orbis and The Frogmore Papers.

Heather Shakespeare worked for many years teaching English and Creative Writing, but now focuses on the therapeutic aspects of writing, facilitating workshops in prisons and her local community. She finds poetry an enjoyable and satisfying pastime but is most productive when faced with a deadline.

Helen Overell lives in the Mole Valley and has published widely in magazines and anthologies. Her first collection is Inscapes & Horizons (St Albert's Press, 2008) and her second is Thumbprints (Oversteps Books, 2015). Her website is www.overell.co.uk

Judith Packer's interest in Poetry was unexpectedly unearthed during 2017 by a combination of events since moving to the Surrey Hills. She is exploring whether Engineering is in fact 'The Poetry of Science' in recognition of '2018 Year of Engineering'; opinions welcome!

Jules Skylark is of Anglo/Irish heritage, lives near Dorking, and works as an SEN teacher. She likes to use poetry to explore the landscape of life by covering challenging topics in evocative ways.

Pauline Watson has always loved poetry, both reading and writing poems. Taught English at Wallington Grammar School for Girls before opening her first Antique Jewellery shop in Dorking. Enjoys living and walking in Surrey.

Rosemary Wagner studied modern languages and literature, and worked in education, administration and translation. She has written poems all her adult life.

Sharon Williams is a trainer with a keen interest in writing poetry. Has recently been introduced to Haiku.

Sue Beckwith has a background in marketing and worked for many years in the IT industry. She is the editor of the Mole Valley Poets Anthology and enjoys the process of pulling this together .

Susan Thomas is a Senior Staff Nurse in a Hospice and lives in Westhumble. She enjoys walking her dog every day and has a blog 'Topsy Trundles' . She won The Elmbridge prize for poetry.

Sylvia Herbert is a retired Modern Languages teacher and has been a member of Mole Valley Poets for nearly 20 years. She enjoys literature in general and reading and writing poetry in particular. She loves walking in the beautiful Surrey countryside as a form of escapism from mundane activities and the anxieties of growing older.

Tony Earnshaw is a Dorking based poet, librettist and playwright. His plays have been performed in London, Edinburgh and New York, as well as locally. He co-wrote the libretto for the choral pageant *George and The Dragon*, which premiered in 2014 and featured three choirs, orchestra, soloists and marching children. He is currently working on productions of two new plays, *Sex is Another Language* about the life of Elizabeth Taylor, and *Fred and Georgie*, a play with songs about Chopin and Georges Sand.

Dedicated to the memory of Stevie Jivani

Stevie was the daughter of one of the Mole Valley Poet's former members and in her memory £1 from every anthology sold will go to CRY (Cardiac Risk in the Young), a charity which works at preventing young sudden cardiac deaths through awareness, screening and research, and supporting affected families.

CRY (Cardiac Risk in the Young) www.c-r-y.org.uk
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