

# POETRY FESTIVAL 1982



THE MOUNTBATTEN SCHOOL  
ROMSEY



Reading these poems was a very enjoyable experience, and I must congratulate all the competitors on their entries which reached a very high standard throughout, and made the task of selecting four from each year an extremely difficult one. I think they all deserve an honorable mention.

Taste in poetry is very subjective, so perhaps I should try to explain the kind of thing I looked for. Some of the most unlikely subjects often produce fine poems - and the range of subjects was very wide indeed. Sincerity is important, and this often comes when writing from experience. Style is important too, and contributes greatly. When you read a poem - or part of a poem, even a line - and you think "Yes, that has been said in the best possible way", then for me you have captured the essence of poetry, and I found many haunting passages - a felicitous line, a happy choice of words - in these poems. Many of them revealed a fine sensitive use of vocabulary.

Some of the "free verse" I felt came rather close at times to being "arranged" prose, and some of the poems were too short to develop their themes fully. Occasionally there was some obvious padding, and a too conscious striving for "purple passages". I tend to agree with the tag that great art conceals art, and in short poems every word must be meaningful.

However, these are very minor criticisms. Every poem had interest, and many showed a quite adult perception and polished style. Again I must congratulate all the entrants, and thank you for the very pleasurable time you have given me. The whole enterprise reflects great credit on everyone concerned in the Mountbatten poetry festival.

Dorothy Bennett

ALFA-MY      Robert Moore

I surprised myself by picking this poem, as humorous poetry is not usually my forte. However, the satire is well sustained, and quite a perceptive commentary on modern advertising.

The rhymes and rhythm are well sustained. Couplets can be monotonous but Robert has varied his structure by using run-on lines, occasional inversions and shortened lines. Well done.

CLIMBING BOY      Shelley Stanley

I imagine this boy to be an old-fashioned chimney-sweep, tho' as the poem says

"I don't really think it matters."

I liked the questions in the first verse - they suggested loneliness and bewilderment to me. Perhaps "the clock's faint chime" is rather a contrived rhyme.

I found the last two lines impressive with their suggestion of menace - reminiscent of Causley - I thought making it the "shadow" of a man rather than the man himself was very effective - for me it created the idea of something looming and threatening.

FATE      Jacqueline Lowdell

I imagine this comes from the writer's own experience and this poem "rang true" to me.

I liked the dedication. I thought Jacqueline captured the distinctiveness of this breed especially the

"devilish sea-gull haunted noise."

Although this poem is rather short, it is a good example of what I meant when I said that in a short poem every word must contribute e.g. perfect poise. Technically well constructed.

THE SEA      Joanne Moore

A very commendable poem. I liked the varied length of verses, and the repetition of "here and back" suggested the sound of the waves.



### ALFA-MY

Attention Please! Attention Please!  
Don't dare to talk! Don't dare to sneeze!  
Don't doze or daydream! Stay awake!  
Your health, your very life's at stake!  
Ho-Ho, you say, they don't mean me.  
Ha-Ha, we answer, wait and see.  
If you are old and have the shakes,  
If all your bones are full of aches,  
If you can hardly walk at all,  
And life drives you up the wall,  
Then what you need to try  
Is ALFA-MY!  
Your eyes will shine, your hair will grow,  
Your skin and face will start to glow,  
Your rotten teeth will all drop out  
And in their place new ones will sprout.  
These rolls of fat around the hips  
Will vanish, and your wrinkled lips  
Will get so soft and rosy-pink  
That all the boys will smile and wink  
And whisper secretly that this  
Is just the girl they want to kiss!  
Each pill, as well, to you will give  
An extra twenty years to live!  
So come, old friends, and do what's right!  
Make your lives as bright as bright!  
Try!  
ALFA-MY.

Robert Moore 1J

### CLIMBING BOY

I stand there all alone,  
My clothes torn, now in tatters.  
Where am I? Who am I?  
I don't really think it matters.

My hair it is long and uncombed,  
My feet they are tired and unshod.  
I stand in a street disfigured with grime.  
In the distance I hear a clock's  
faint chime.

My arms are bleeding, my face is bruised,  
I feel unwanted, I feel disused.  
All I remember is a shadow of a man,  
Tall and dark with a knife in his hand.

Shelley Stanley 1F

### FATE

(To Lob, the first seal-point I ever owned)  
I fell in love with  
    Your blue eyes,  
That cold clear gaze  
    of ancient skies,  
Your lovely grace,  
    your perfect poise,  
Your devilish,  
    Seagull haunted noise.  
I fell in love  
    for the rest of my days  
With Siamese cats  
    and their heavenly ways.

Jacqueline Lowdell 1K

### THE SEA

Tonight the tide is full  
As I stare across the bay.  
The waves are high, the biggest yet,  
On top runs foaming spray.

Its colour is a murky green  
But then a kind of black.  
The pebbles sound as they are thrown  
Here and back, Here and back, Here and back.

What lies down in the depths,  
Unknown ruins  
Or old ship wrecks?

The sea is a mystery,  
Deep and black,  
Pebbles sounding, Here and back.

Green-Blue  
White - Black  
Calm  
Mysterious  
Vast.

Joanne Moore 1J

WAR

Ian Berthon

I thought this was a very good attempt to create the atmosphere of an early morning attack in France in the first World War. It was effective to write as from an individual - for me it created tension while avoiding wallowing in blood. Some felicitous phrases e.g. "the muddy field

That will be home and maybe a grave."

The last verse held the tension, and the final question was effective.

NIGHT TO DAY

Sharon Fox

This was a well-constructed poem, and I thought Sharon captured the passage of time very well. Rhyme and rhythm well sustained.

MOUNTAINS

Roy Biddle

A good vocabulary, well used. I thought the first verse very effective -

"Its sparse sprinkling of evergreens,  
Try in vain, to soften its harshness,"

Using a question to open the last verse gave variety. I liked

"Under the mighty foot of time,"

TERROR IN THE NIGHT

Lisa Bates

A realistic atmosphere - the feelings in this poem rang true, as did the ending.

### NIGHT TO DAY

Black is the night,  
Dim is the light,  
Against the sky.  
Moon shines,  
Clock chimes,  
Twelve.  
Garden darkened, daisy shut,  
Glow-worms in the highway rut  
crawl away and hide.  
Moon shines,  
Clock chimes,  
One.  
Grey is the bat,  
Howl of the cat,  
Noises everywhere.  
Moon shines,  
Clock chimes,  
Two.  
Children in their slumber,  
Mice among the lumber,  
Then they scuttle off.  
Moon shines,  
Clock chimes,  
Three.  
Parents move with candles,  
Turn the bedroom handles,  
Children still are sleeping.  
Moon shines,  
Clock chimes,  
Four.  
Dawn is a-breaking,  
Sleeping birds a-waking,  
Start to chirp.  
Sun shines,  
Clock chimes,  
Five.  
Every bush of roses,  
Where the dew reposes,  
Morning has broken.  
Sun shines,  
Clock chimes,  
Six.  
Just as it was shut away,  
Now I see it gleam with day,  
Under glowing sun.  
Sun shines,  
Clock chimes,  
Seven.



## WAR

Shells burst around us,  
And a machine gun clatters into life,  
As we slowly advance  
Through the morning mist  
And dew-drenched fields of France.

A single shot rings out.  
One of our comrades falls,  
Blood oozing out of a wound in his chest  
Staining his khaki battle tunic and the grass  
    around  
His lifeless body.

Advancing slowly towards the muddy field  
That will be home and maybe a grave,  
My life flashes before me.  
My childhood dream of being a soldier  
seems so far away  
Now I am here.

Squelching slowly through mud like treacle  
Shots were louder.  
We were told you don't hear the one that  
    hits you.  
A bomb whistles and explodes - four gone.  
I wonder who's next?

Ian Berthon 2W

✓ WW

### MOUNTAINS

This huge grey mound  
Leans over me like a god,  
Protecting yet faintly foreboding.  
Its sparse sprinkling of evergreens  
Try, in vain, to soften its harshness.

The youngest in the range, millennia old,  
Wise, slow but immensely strong, admires  
Their subtle yet fierce leader, whose noble head  
Looks high above the faintest whisper of a cloud  
And nearly reaches the blackness of space.

Aged barren rocky hill,  
Can you not be crumbled?  
Under the mighty foot of time  
My Life, though long to me,  
Would be, to him, a mere episode of Life.

Can it never cease?

Roy Biddle 2Q ✓

W.W

'TERROR IN THE NIGHT'

Slowly I walk through the park at night,  
Watching the trees swaying in the moonlight,  
Only my footsteps can be heard,  
Even the lake is silent and blurred.

Suddenly gentle footsteps sound,  
The pace quickens, crunching on the ground,  
My heart jumps and misses a beat,  
My blood turns cold, right down to my feet.

My pace quickens faster, faster,  
I start to run, he follows after,  
A lump in my throat, I want to shout,  
But what's the use, there's no one about.

What will happen, what will he do?  
Why does he want me, who is he, who?  
My body freezes, icy cold,  
My home is now a pot of gold.

He reaches to my shoulder with a gentle hand,  
Nervously I wait and stand.  
My icy thoughts begin to melt,  
"Excuse me dear, but you dropped your belt".

Lisa Bates 2F

THE OTTER      Debbie Saunders

Good observation in this poem. Debbie has captured the "otteriness" of the otter.

"the plump silvery muzzle"

"powerful paws with wide connecting webs"

"fish clamped between needle-point teeth"

A good simile

"Heavy velvet folds

Furled like a plush curtain."

I felt there was no padding in this poem, every line contributed. Some well-chosen vocabulary, but used meaningfully, not just to strain for effect. Neat conclusion.

I could see this otter quite vividly.

CONTEST      Mahmud Ahmad

I do not care for boxing, but I think this is a very good description of a fight.

Rhymed couplets can become monotonous, but Mahmud has avoided this (for me) by a terse style, and balanced lines. A good use of "run on" between last two verses.

GUILTY      Martyn King

A good use of question and answer technique. I liked the way Martyn showed the varying moods of "the accused" with single words - despondency - displeasure - indignation.

For me, the last verse is the weakest.

MY LITTLE BROTHER      Jeremy Inglis

I found this amusing and well observed. A good opening two lines, which Jeremy goes on to illustrate very well. I particularly like the under-statement of the ending, which I thought was very neat.

## THE OTTER

A plump silvery muzzle spiked with translucent whiskers,  
Broke the calm surface of the water,  
And two hazy puppy eyes  
Struggled to open in the piercing sunlight.

The otter's powerful paws with wide connecting webs,  
Lunged towards the grassy bank,  
Head above the water,  
Fish clamped between needle-point teeth.

The otter was coated with gleaming droplets of water,  
A shining suit of armour,  
Heavy velvet folds,  
Furled like a plush curtain.

It stood up on its hind-quarters, poised, like a  
penguin,  
And chewed at the twitching fish.  
The otter basked in the brilliant sunshine,  
Preened itself, a cat on a summer's day.

The atmosphere was silent and the water motionless.  
Silhouette of fish in the water  
'Plop!'  
And the otter's gone, surging beneath the reeds.

Deborah Saunders 3F

## CONTEST

In their corners both men wait,  
Cool and calm, eyes filled with hate.  
Bell is ringing, boxers rise,  
Each man's heart set on the prize.

Crowd is cheering, tensions mounting,  
Anxious gamblers, standing, shouting.  
Judges writing on their score sheets,  
Watching closely from their front seats.

Fighting speeds up, both men hot,  
Each man giving all he's got.  
Punching, dodging, counter, fake,  
Biceps, muscles start to ache.

One man weakens, gasping, panting,  
Sees the other's fist approaching.  
Contact made, drops to the canvas.  
Nose is bleeding all goes black, as

Ref takes over, starts to count,  
One to ten, he counts him out.  
Holds the victor's hand up high,  
Loser dreaming, let him lie.

Mahmud Ahmad 3T



## GUILTY

"How do you plead?" demanded the judge  
To the accused in the box.  
"Not guilty," said the man with despondency  
As the jury scribbled their notes.

"What crimes have you committed?" asked the judge  
To the man accused of crime.  
"None," said the man with displeasure,  
As the jury decided on his time.

"Who committed the crimes?" asked the judge  
As the man searched his mind for a reply.  
"I don't know," said the man with indignation  
As the jury watched wide-eyed.

"The jury have adjudged you," said the judge  
To the man who arose to listen.  
"You are guilty," said the judge.  
As the jury sentenced him to prison.

Martyn King 3Y

## MY LITTLE BROTHER

My Little brother,  
Is nothing but trouble,  
And his untidy bedroom,  
Is filled up with rubble.  
He leaves all his toys  
Around on the floor.  
And scribbles all over  
The back of the door.  
He cries all the day,  
And wets his bed,  
Has to be bathed  
And has to be fed.  
He is naughty, demanding  
And difficult to manage,  
Left alone for a minute  
He'll do dreadful damage.  
Leave him alone in your bedroom  
Is a costly mistake,  
Your most precious possessions  
He is likely to take.  
He digs up the bulbs  
And takes out the seeds,  
Hacks down the flowers  
But talks to the weeds!  
Apart from these few.  
Faults that I state,  
He really is not  
A person to hate.

Jeremy Inglis 3H

## THE CREATION

Swiftly swirling, securing smoky stitches,  
Silhouetted on black, the gases gather.  
Collecting for the grand finale,  
The chemicals clasp and grasp each other.

The gases' union created chaos,  
The chemicals' bonding caused all to cry,  
When suddenly, swiftly, all exploded,  
And fiery comets lit the sky.

Youthful, yearning, yet inexperienced,  
The Universe was thus produced,  
Charging, churning into existence,  
This was how the Earth was loosed.

Gliding, sliding, smoothly slowing,  
Whilst quenching its initial thirst,  
The Earth moved surely, steadily onward,  
Through the new born Universe.

Jane Stone 4Y

## THE HIKER

Legs pumping,  
Eyes searching the horizon,  
The hiker's solid form bent against the prevailing wind  
Alone and cold.  
Lost in a vast expanse of never-ending moor.  
Ditches and ankle-twisting foot holes hidden by rough heather,  
Marshes waiting to drag him into their cool dark depths  
Hair flying and flapping around his face  
Stinging his cheeks like tiny whips  
His jacket billowing, making him bloated,  
The wind licking the grass sending it rippling in sea-like  
motion  
The hiker's body smothered with goose pimples  
Every limb frozen.  
Like a packhorse he carries his rucksack humped on his back,  
Stooping like an old man.  
A light on the horizon brings new power to the straining  
muscles,  
New hope to the numb brain.  
Thanking God, he quickens his pace,  
Blisters, bruises, cuts, aching muscles and ripping wind  
forgotten.  
Flinging back his head  
He laughs at himself  
The tension of being lost, relieved -  
No one to hear, not even the moor -  
His words lost; taken from his mouth  
Enveloped and whisked away by the wind.

Serena Pead 4H

THE CREATION      Jane Stone

I think this is an excellent poem. An ambitious subject, but well carried out. A good vocabulary, well employed. Some very felicitous phrasing, and a skilful use of alliteration combine to make this a very interesting poem.

THE HIKER      Serena Pead

I liked the realistic details in this poem which gave credence to the solitary figure pitted against the vast moor. I could see his chunky figure bent against the wind. There is a clever change of mood when he sees "a light on the horizon" bringing the poem to a very satisfactory conclusion.

AGINCOURT      Rod Stedman

I felt this was a good interpretation of the thoughts of "the common soldier." The touch of fatalism

"March!" shouted the man on the horse.  
What else could he do? he thought,  
so he marched.

I thought the last three lines were superb.

THE OLD LADY      James Hoskins

This is a poem of considerable substance, with an interesting theme. The writer has a thoughtful approach and developed some interesting ideas. A good command of language.

### AGINCOURT

Samuel Carter remembered his home,  
As his open eyes saw the mass of bright blue  
Marching swiftly in the distance.  
He felt unworthy of his red coat -  
All the men around him standing defiant.  
"March!" shouted the man on the horse,  
What else could he do? he thought, so he marched.

Sam sympathised with the horse at the front -  
The beast would be the first to feel its own heat  
Streaming down its body to the earth.  
That beautiful hide stalking onwards,  
The first to be red meat for crows.  
"Is a horse braver than me?" thought Sam.

"Maybe if I had done my duty," he wondered,  
"With a few more ounces of polish and sweat, -  
If only there was another week to become brave."

That noble horse now looked butcher's work  
As eager blades sought flesh to cut.  
Sam saw a friend at work on a Frenchman,  
Sword jabbed into a trousered leg  
And levered out a sopping muscle.  
Sam felt a crash and blood on his chin.

His limp arms struggled with his leaden blade,  
But the fierce face was above him,  
Tearing off his helmet, leaving only hair.

O God, he thought, cover me now.  
But God was busy,  
And Sam was dead.

Roderick Stedman 4W

W.W

### THE OLD LADY

Clear blue sky, sun warm on the back.  
New cut grass smelling as it should.  
Skylarks' song clear to the listening ear,  
Yet so high, its source needing a search,  
With hand shading eyes.  
The buzzing of summer flies,  
The shouts of other children nearby.  
It seems as if it were yesterday  
So real, every detail so clear and true.  
In colour too.  
The steely cold light of the early morning,  
Hardly penetrates the curtains, thick with dust.

The cheap alarm clock, clacks a dying warning,  
The tick of the clock and laboured breathing  
From the half-open mouth,  
With thin, dried, colourless lips and  
Corrugated skin sucked inwards as if to aid,  
The passage of life-giving air.  
An old lady stirs into wakefulness.  
The blue sky fades to grey,  
The skylarks' song no longer heard.  
The sun loses its heat and pours out coldness,  
The playing children slow and lose their form,  
Their faces become unrecognised.  
All is fading, fading fast, all is now gone.  
Cold and stiffness take their place,  
Aches in every joint, raising clumsily on to an elbow.  
Dawn of a new day.  
Covers pushed back reluctantly,  
Bunioned feet that have walked so very far,  
Lowered gently to the bare linoleum, seeking slippers.  
Now, recovering from the small exertion,  
Before standing on thin rickety legs.  
Arms as thin, with gnarled hands,  
Push into the old feather mattress.  
The old lady has risen.  
A rusty-red gown around a bent frame,  
Moves to let in the grey day.  
Glasses on the bedside table,  
Sought by trembling fingers  
Bring the greyness into focus.  
Teeth captured in another glass,  
Fill out sunken jaws.  
Coldness fills every corner of the room,  
Fills every bone of the person.  
Slipperd, gowned, teethed and sighted,  
The figure shuffles to the kitchen.  
The old lady leans against the worn  
Stone sink, stained orange brown in places,  
Looking blankly through the twisted sash.  
A cracked pane here and there,  
Outside speckled grey with dust,  
Stuck there by the dirty rain.  
Inside, dappled off-white with dried soap splashes,  
From many a wash.  
Through this dusty soapy mist,  
An old brick wall is seen,  
Still black from soot of a bygone age.  
It has never seen the sun.  
Some aged growths of weakened moss,  
Manage to survive.  
Rain and frost, year in, year out,  
Have broken out the coursing,  
Just mortar crevices remain,  
And they, blacker than the blackness  
Of the brick, in dark perpetual shadow.  
A blood red gash, a bruise or two,  
Where something has scraped it,  
Is all the colour in the blackened wall,  
The only colour to relieve it.



As she gazes, the wall dissolves,  
No drabness is beyond it,  
Just brightness of a life now passed  
That passes again before her.  
Pale yellow primroses, leaves bright green,  
In clumps nestling, at the roots of hazel trees,  
Lining dark banks and shading a brook,  
Its surface mirroring the scene to perfection.  
Through the surface in a different plane,  
Small fish dart and dart again,  
Stirring the orange mud at every turn.  
Circles of sunlight, broken by the new year's leaves,  
Play across, brook, primrose and trees.  
How long she dwells there in the past,  
Could almost be forever,  
For in her dreams, there is no time,  
No day, no night to mark it.  
And so throughout the cold and grey,  
For the old lady,  
The relief of the past comes into play,  
Dissolving the grimness of reality,  
Willing her to struggle through, one more night,  
One more day.

James Hoskins 4W

CITY GENT      Andrew Ing

A very interesting idea - the poem was compact and neatly executed.  
Good telling details conveying the uniformity -

e.g. - "the evenly-printed green forms  
Fit exactly into your brief case."  
"home is a shoebox in a rack"  
(conjures up blocks of flats)  
"your religion is pre-packed."

The opening line of each verse gave a slightly different angle on the subject - I found this interesting.

A good strong conclusion.

DAYDREAM - Nick Stedman

Another excellent poem - I "hovered" a long time between these two.

Some fine use of language throughout. I particularly liked

".... contorted in a frozen prance,  
Pinned flat to an ink-thumbed page,"  
"Desperate men grit their compassion."  
"Cower in the privacy of their helmets."  
"As they fall they freeze,  
Sewn into rough canvas."

Is this an oblique reference to the Bayeux Tapestry?  
Very clever.

OUT OF REACH      Frances Metcalfe

I found this poem very sensitive and charming.

Three beautiful similes create vivid pictures, and it was an effective and clever touch to use the same verb in the first and third lines of the verses.

A lovely poem - again a strong ending can add so much as here.

SUNRISE - SUNSET      Maria Fielder

An excellent use of the sustained metaphor of the boats gives unity and strength to this poem, and the change of mood in the last nine lines deepens the effect.

CITY GENT

It's hard to be individual,  
When your suits come in boxes  
With white printed labels on the side  
And your umbrella comes trimmed  
To your British Standard length.

It's hard to work individual,  
When work is funneled to you  
Through a rectangular hatch,  
And the evenly-printed green forms  
Fit exactly into your briefcase.

It's hard to live individual,  
When home is a shoebox in the rack,  
With pre-fitted carpets  
And a washing machine  
Neatly fitting the space beyond the sink.

It's hard to think individual,  
When your religion is pre-packed  
And delivered twice-weekly  
Through early-evening slots on the television.

It's hard to be individual  
When it doesn't occur to you to try.

Andrew Ing 5K W W

DAYDREAM

....Battle of Hastings, 1066....  
A bright cluster of stiff-jointed warriors  
Teeters, contorted in a frozen prance,  
Pinned flat to an ink-thumbed page.

....William the Conqueror....  
As the muddied page melts to reveal  
A trampled, bloodied landscape,  
The figures ease their time-fused limbs  
And the battle takes up its thread.

....King Harold of England....  
Desperate men grit their compassion  
And carve fellow men into  
Carnage slabs to pave their way home  
To farm, field and forge alike.

....Broke the sacred oath....  
Farmers, labourers, blacksmiths and boys  
Cower in the privacy of their helmets,  
Smelling their own blood  
Above the metal's sweat.

....An arrow in the eye....  
Each man sees his own feud alone -  
His foothold means a print in history through sons to come;  
But the carrion birds' view  
Shows one cluster topple.

....The Norman Conquest....  
As they fall they freeze,  
Sewn into rough canvas;  
And laid out on a grubby page.

Nick Stedman 5H

W W

Note: This poem has since won the Thames Television  
poetry prize for 1982.

OUT OF REACH

Like the child who reaches through the bars of a cage  
To touch the bright feathers of a bird,  
I reach to touch your affection.

Like the boy whose hand strains to the bottom of the stream  
To catch a slippery, silver minnow,  
I strain to catch your attention.

Like the musician who strives to find the right note  
To complete his solemn song,  
I strive to find the right words.

But when my heart gives way to pain,  
And when my cries cry out in vain  
I know you are out of reach.

Frances Metcalfe 5T    WW

SUNRISE - SUNSET

Long ago  
A distant age  
Where time stood still.  
Caught between the pages  
Of a forgotten novel  
You and I loved.  
From our sunrise,  
Invisible to the world  
Yet beauty to each other,  
We built our boats  
And set them floating  
On a silver sea.  
Lost in the midday heat  
We laughed and cried  
Sharing joys and sorrows.  
We grew together  
In a carefree world.  
Lazing in the hazy afternoon  
We became quiet  
And drifted from our mooring.  
For a while  
We were content  
To follow the tides,  
But too late  
We lost sight of land  
And each other.  
Long ago  
In a distant age  
Time took its toll.  
On a far off horizon  
We felt the pain of our parting.  
The sun slowly set.

Maria Fielder 5Y    WW



