

# Thanet Poetry Journal

Volume 1  
May 2017

## FOREWORD

I feel extremely honoured to be the Thanet Poetry Journal's first editor. Firstly I would like to mention Connor Sansby and recognise all the hard work he has done to make this Journal happen. Without all his efforts this project would be dead in the water.

I, of course, would like to thank everyone that has submitted their work to be published, the quality of poetry we received was nothing less than exemplary.

The Thanet poetry scene has changed dramatically in the last couple of years with existing events evolving and growing and with new and exciting events being created too. We have tried to reflect this by including the work of poets have travelled to perform here time and time again, we owe you a big thank you for you continued support. All local poets have grown so much in my time performing but so many new poets have found the courage to share their work, which for me personally is something that continues to make me smile.

Being a part of such an open and welcoming community makes me very proud.

So without any further ado, I would like to declare the first of many Thanet Journals open and ready to read, share and enjoy.

Stefan Gambrell  
Neanderthal Bard

## DAFT THINGS HAPPEN ON TRAINS

I heard a woman say  
“I have never known anybody  
use so much toothpaste  
in one week”.

I wasn't sure  
how significant this claim was  
as she didn't say for how many weeks  
she had been observing toothpaste usage.  
She gave no clue  
as to how much she meant by “so much”.  
Weekly toothpaste use must vary from user to user;  
there are different sized mouths, with different contours;  
the nation is not evenly toothed.  
But what are the two ends of the range of acceptable levels  
of weekly toothpaste use?  
All I knew was that she had never known anybody  
use so much in one week.

It was unclear  
whether she said it with admiration or frustration.  
It was said with a more neutral sort of disbelief -  
that she had never known anybody  
use as much toothpaste in one week.  
So I didn't know  
whether I should sympathise with her because she shared a house  
with a voracious toothpaste consumer,

or celebrate with her because she had witnessed  
such Olympic oral hygiene.  
And as I pondered the question,  
she caught me smirking  
and returned it with a vast, burnished smile.  
She gets by quite well on the three-stripe scraps.

*Matt Chamberlain*

## SELLING ELIOT BY THE POUND

Can you hear it  
Hiss, it falls  
The wheel turned once more  
Margate sands  
Were almost gone  
HURRY UP IT'S TIME!  
Whistler my familiar  
Whispered to me...  
Glug glug glug  
We are saved  
Now Albert's coming back  
Oak panelled ears  
Wide and to the ground  
Highbury bores him  
His pearl stoned eyes  
Brine at unreal retrocities  
Skimming the cream  
Clean off the crest  
Of the waves  
With dirty fingernails  
HURRY UP IT'S TIME!  
For burlesque rockettes  
Selling peek-a-boo  
By the old glug glug  
Rub a dub dub  
Humble people  
Expect nothing  
And we shall sell

Them Eliot by the pound  
Whistler whispered  
We have been edited  
Hiss hiss  
HURRY UP IT'S TIME

(After Elliot, obviously)

*Barry Fentiman-Hall*

## Darlings

Here, on the water's edge,  
the land holds its breath.  
Flint walled cottages  
crouch below the gales  
and on the altar of the season,  
trees have laid  
their brightest offerings on the ground.

Only death  
flourishes now;  
graves gape  
to meet the winter's harvest  
while banshees  
dance  
to the promised feast.

But all this is for others;  
you and I will light  
a fire of driftwood  
gathered when the sea was kind  
and in its warming glow,  
whisper *darlings*  
above the roar of winter.

*Tony Frisby*

## Buried

Benign, invisible, barefoot on the timeless Jurassic coast,  
With muddied nails, her fingers deftly manipulate sharp tools to scrape,  
scratch and carve out the revelations of earth's geological mystery.  
Plagiarised by scholarly men, her future history in their museums and  
minds.

She scrambles unladylike amidst the squall and spume of advancing  
tides,

Time changes with every find, untold truths and scandals unfold.

Under threat of the workhouse, she sells sea shells on the seashore.  
In her hand she holds a fossil, In her heart a dinosaur roar.

A Shower of dust, tumbling pebbles, quickening stones, clumped earth  
and chalk,

The weakened cliff face launches it's age old matrix in an almighty  
deluge.

Battering. Beating. It's crushing force collides spectacularly with the  
angry waves,

Initial fright stifled quick as a gasp, soberly she accepts fates brutal  
embrace,

She is consumed, reclaimed treasure entombed in history to become  
forever preserved as stone.

At last, the sea draws breath and the landslides inevitable energy is  
spent.

Calm presides over the once catastrophic scene, revealing newly  
violated shoreline to explore.

In her hand she held a fossil, In her heart a dinosaur roar.

But what of the grave goods, evidence of her humanity unjustly buried,  
The stoic servitude to her only passion, its legacy crusted and cracked.  
How many stories remain mistold, waiting correction to redress the  
patriarchal epoch.

And who shall excavate, catalogue and record these unmarked graves,  
These future bones, these bones that live and breath and heave and  
sigh and cry...

While crashing waves and fearsome bitter winds conspire to cast  
new specimens and exhibits, now and for the next 65 million years or  
more;

In my hand I hold a fossil, In my heart a dinosaur roar.

*This poem is inspired by Mary Anning who discovered the first Dinosaur bones about 200 years ago. Being poor she had to sell her finds for a living to wealthy men in the city and as a woman, she was banned from joining The Geological Society to present her finds herself. Consequently, she had to fight to get any credit for her work which was often exhibited under the men's names.*

*Tracey Thompson*

## Trying To Dissect Sunlight With A Scalpel

Groping blindly to see the unseen,  
to graph the power of nothings that are not,  
to map the beyond beyond the immeasurable,  
to chart the breach of unreachable worlds  
in the plot to plot the endless guess  
while love lies unexplained,  
the sunbeamed 'n'th dimension,  
the something that is the all of everything.

*Sarah Tait*

## Nature

We have a secret, just we three.  
The robin, and I and the cherry tree.  
The bird told the tree and the tree told me.  
And nobody knows but just us three.

But the robin knows best.  
Because it built the nest...I shan't tell the rest.  
And laid the four little...Something in it...  
I'm afraid I'll tell it every minute.

But if the tree and the robin don't peep,  
I shall try my best the secret to keep.  
Though I know when the little birds fly about.

*Zach Capon*

## Not the Season for Songbirds

*(This could be for Chris Packham)*

When you hear about the children cupping their small hands  
to capture robins, and bold men swaggering down the hills  
dressed in cartridge belts of carcasses pitted with buckshot.  
When your mind's eye swims with the vision of Maltese trees  
adorned with feathered bunting like shreds of coloured kites  
filleted between the bones of budding limbs and greening bark

it's not easy to think of birdsong.

There, on that island midway between Gods  
midway between worlds where spirits turned skyward  
and Knights Templar rested their journeying hearts  
into tombs of gold, the spirit of Ascension  
rises into the cathedral of air  
trapping all that flies, flits, falls to sacrifice.

Alleluias flush blooded hearts like picks  
making men of boys, taming tigers grown soft

on poolside loungers, fast food restaurants  
halting passages mid-flight  
small birds like prayers anointing  
the blue of a Mediterranean sky

and somewhere in Sussex or Chard, some gardener  
will miss a swallow, a swift, a chiff-chaff  
and lend his ear to a silent, empty sky.

*NB: A eulogy for the migrating songbirds massacred annually in Malta en-route to Europe. It happens in many other places too, East Africa, Spain. Wildlife expert Chris Packham just won a case related to him trying to protect the birds on Malta.*

*Maggie Harris*

# I AmBergris

Our knotted bodies,  
more than hands held by the sea  
bridging the distance between beds  
under the starlit canopy of duvets.

I used to wonder  
if the sweat of our skin had bound us too tightly,  
leaving snatches of my being grafted on to your ribs,  
so occasionally,  
when you feel an itch,  
we hold hands again.

We'd argue.  
Your immune system pushing  
the infection of me from your veins.  
Pet names like  
"unstable"  
"narcissist"  
Scribbled with sticks in the sand,  
hoping the tide would wash the words away.  
When you'd go home,  
I'd sit on the steps and watch waves retreat,  
leaving snapshots of our anger for the morning,  
when the sky is only blue because it reflects the sea.

*Connor Sansby*

# Happy

Happy in the hills, away from all the ills, as the wind blows, its wild and magical sounds, as nature feeds. The two swans entwined on the River Wye, along the tall yellows of the reeds, alongside the lush greens,

Many a walker's last stride in their mud-drenched boots sodden along past the ferry inn, where the locals are lively with their black shots knocked back, another day over, their stifle hidden.

The old hand ferry, just like it's always been, still goes as darkness sets in, and brings trade, as it's always done, and instead of workers, it brings tourists in.

The river roars, flowing fast, over the rip tides, the small boats sliding down the muddy slopes, as they hit the mighty water, Rush paddle, paddle as we slide across to the sounds of the mouth ready to snap at us.

The deers are watching, but not seen, dogs bark, peasants, run, feathers flutter, as the richness of the river brings life and vibrance, like no other.

The 13th century French rebel as he was known in local circles who was the tolerated gentry, if there is ever such a thing, a resident to stay and never go away in his castle, good, rich, near the mighty river Wye, in between England and Wales written on the sign as the walkers go by, a reminder of different times as the bell chimes.

*Sam Rapp*  
*The Dyslexic Poet*

## Some Days

Some days:

Some days – you wake up

Some days – you don't

Some days – you speak

Some days – you don't

Some days – you eat

Some days – you don't

Some days – you function

Some days – you don't

Some days you say you ache, you have pains, you say it's in your body, but I know it's in your brain.

You are young, numb and feeling dumb.

But

A world without you would feel so bleak.

You are wonderful.

You are beautiful.

You are the missing part of me.

*Scarlett Page*

## Loneliness requires bravery

Yesterday  
for the first time  
not afraid of my thoughts  
I have let you in  
together in my head  
we were talking about love  
looking through words actions movements  
burning nights  
sometimes taking a step away  
not understanding ourselves  
we were fighting  
fighting for something that was never ours  
we thought things could be different  
and it wasn't our fault  
we burnt in desire to change something  
not because we had to  
but because...why not  
I suppose that was never enough  
I became alone in my thoughts  
there wasn't much room left for thinking  
I will just take a breath...and a step  
perhaps I don't need all this chaos  
you can't be the only one on this earth

*Apollinarya Orlova*

# Antigen

This is for you,  
every Tom, Dick, and Harry who never grew  
into something more beautiful.

Because they were told that they couldn't.

This is for you,  
every poet who got midway, were told they were great  
but lost faith in themselves and lost faith in this system.

This is for you.

You stone cold lyricists,  
you heartbroken tower blocks of strength,  
you torn clothes left in back alley classrooms,  
you hypodermic pens, pushing pen pricks into the  
ink of your arms.

This is for you.

This is for our kind.

And though you may feel like you are the last of us,  
we are here in our silent numbers.

We are the thank you's for holding open a door,  
we are the last drop of a pint painted on cold air alcohol lips,  
delivering lines of poetry on street corners.

We are the writers dodging bullets like they were our father's fists,  
drawing our next lines on our bodies,  
that were mostly bruises and barely human.

We are eggshells to walk on.

We are symphonies spat from the backs of mouths,  
coughed from lungs as unforgiving as their owners.

We are crowd control.

Methodical mass drugging.

And you, you are one of us.

Birthing from the canals of streets that no longer speak your name like they used to.

This is for you.

This poem is for you.

This piece of page poetry, spoken word, performed from lips finally with enough passion to give a damn, is for you.

You who taught themselves life lessons

whilst holding back bedroom doors from would be intruders.

You who could never hear the words "son" or "daughter" without the stale film of last night's bottle etching from the corners of daddy's lip.

You who learned to walk on crossed feet.

You whose first words were written in uterine blood.

You who looked after brothers and sisters after mothers and fathers walked out.

You.

You who grew up when they were nine.

You who buried more than their father's hands in your body.

You who at age five had less than an inch of your life to hold on to.

You who learned to breathe water.

This is for you.

You boys and girls made from aged stardust.

You heroes of your homes hallways.

Your collection of photographs printed on the knuckle indents of your fists.

You broken plasterboard champions.

You kitchen pan percussionists.

You midnight moderators.

You doom and gloom anteroom antigens.

You who when told to leave said "no."

You who when told to leave said "I won't"

You paragon of your own heart.

This is for you.

This is all for you.

Every time you have paused for breath and  
the weight of your world has said "no"

Every time your cracked glass smile has been turned away,

Every time your cacophonous mind has choked you

Every time they would not say "I love you" back.

This is for you.

This has been and always will be for you.

When you are trapped in your bodies broken birdcage frame,  
when your fingers are too broken to type what you mean.

When you have bitten your tongue so much, the bitter taste of blood is  
all that you know.

When you do not know what a home cooked meal is.

When you do not know what it is to be happy.

This is for you.

This has been and always will be for you.

So take it.

Take all the words,

take the full stops and capitals,

take the crossed tees and dotted eyes.

This is for you.

This has been and always will be for you.

*Alex Vellis*

## Home

Thank you for loving me  
When I've been less than loveable  
For never turning away, even when  
I had turned my back on the world  
When my tongue spitting, blood hissed  
Words that were never meant to crash into you  
When the tides turned and I found myself contorted in ways  
my body couldn't cope with  
And every movement was an assault course  
When my withered skin began to crack under the pressure

Thank you  
For pouring your gold into the deepest of my flaws as if  
I was priceless  
For giving me the strength to just.... unravel  
So that piece by aching piece,  
I could build myself back up again  
Because you told me I could  
And when every fibre of my being had lost faith  
You found me.

Thank you for loving me when I was nothing more than a shell  
When the wind carried me so far from myself  
I asked you to hold nothing  
But my silhouette.  
And without question, you followed me into the dark.  
Knowing  
All I needed to do was look up

Wherever I found myself, I was home.

Thank you for filling the empty parts of me and completing me so now  
I can light a whole city  
And together, we can set the world on fire  
But I need you to know  
I will keep the loneliest of shadows from claiming you  
When the horizon fades from view  
And the sun is too busy on the dark side of the moon  
To make shadows  
When the weight of hope for the next sunrise  
Is as heavy as oceans  
Your world can lay on my pillow  
My heartbeat can drown out the white noise  
My wrinkled palm need be your only path  
And I will guide you home.

*Jenny Barlow*

## Child's Play

We play like children, with our  
hands on each other's bodies.  
Our fingertips let out currents so  
strong that I can taste their colours  
on the tip of your tongue.

I'm falling, almost drowning.  
But you're keeping my head above  
water.  
As my armbands burst a long time  
ago, I just never learned how to  
Swim

Instead, I learnt to fly in your  
eyes as they reach mine.  
I gaze for days in the galaxy  
that bursts from your brain...

Eventually, I come down, you're gone  
And I'm okay  
Not for long.  
But just today, as your hand slips from  
mine  
I find the line I once crossed and  
Pull myself back up on the ledge.

*Kirsty Louise Farley*

**This Is My Love**

This is my love

There have been others like it but this one is for real

I am nothing without my love

But deep down I fear that without me love could be even bolder,  
stronger and more wonderful than she already is

Love has seen me at my worst, with the face that love has somehow  
grown to desire twisted and contorted beyond any recognition  
Into a grimace of hate and rage that love could never deserve, fuelled  
by my own insecurity and fear

And love has batted away the snipes and sneers and placed her hand  
so gently upon my chest that I feared the pounding of my heart might  
push her away

And love has held it there just long enough for me to know I'm safe; to  
know that love sees past the moment and holds her own truth

The truth that I cannot deny, that what I feel for this love could never be  
adequately summed up in words

But that my attempts to do so mean more to love than any present or  
trinket

This is my love

It is not perfect and it is not effortless, it is a daily battle of wills and  
embraces

It is a constant and never ending need to show our best and put on our  
brave faces

And it can never be contained, that's why these words pour forth on  
this stage and why I cannot hold her eye for more than a few seconds

Because I fear that if I stared into those eyes for too long I may  
become lost among the joy that I see reflected back in them

But I can never look away for too long in case love realises what she's done wrong in settling so easily for the first man with a heartbeat who knows all the words to every Coldplay song

This is my love

I don't know if I would die for it but I know I would get food poisoning  
I'm not sure if I would go to war but I don't think wars are for imagining  
I know that I would gladly give up my possessions to merely stand in her presence

OK so maybe not my Xbox but I could live with a few less socks  
And let's be honest we don't need warm feet when our hearts are so full of heat

This is my love. I cannot envisage a world without her and I thank the stars every day that I don't have to.

*Chris Bates*

## Killing Time

Annotate

sign the guest list on my way through the door  
some vague preparation for drilling fine  
the rest of my rehearsal  
forgone.

Ann I hate

she always turns up two hours early  
empty conversation and killing time  
it's not like she could just  
forget.

Annihilate

remember to bring enough shots for everyone  
dead end situation but filling mine  
metal shape in the hand  
forged.

A nihilist

clocks count me down but I smile at the others  
final culmination with willing lies  
my eye contact  
forced.

Anon I list

all is still now as the party is finally over  
wasted expectation a thrilling ride  
the name I gave  
false.

*Seb Reilly*

## Poem?

A Thanetian non-poet once rhymed:

"I don't struggle with meter or time.

I always start well,

but I guess you can tell,

That I often lose focus by the time I get to the last sentence of the piece."

*Chris Kempt*

## Present

The echoes of my voice  
Leave you with a choice  
Which road do you walk down  
What is your fear?  
That you may drown  
While the ship sinks  
As the fireworks go off in your head  
Was that the last time  
As I left your bed  
With your arms outstretched  
As my words dripped like honey  
And your desires I read with one look  
Do we let our fingers forever reach  
But never touch  
Home where we both felt safe  
Where adolescent dreams became a reality  
As time ticked on and on  
we'd become a shadow of what we were supposed to be  
Your image forever in my head  
In the sentences swimming before my eyes  
As I walked down the platform of my former self  
And shed past hurts like fishes scales  
We replaced them with wings that summer of our content  
You picked up my smile  
I gave you your unpredictable  
We had the ability to scratch away the ambiguity  
To hold out our hands to receive  
Our destinies

We made each other's skin sigh  
As we looked up at a cloudless sky  
My future and past collided in your presence  
So now as we sit shaking our heads  
As your scorpion tail flicks laden with venom  
My spiteful words freeze with a premonition  
I'd like to suture the ruptures  
Recapture the serendipity  
The alchemy  
That meant we had a future  
Not just a history

*Clair Meyrick*

## Amazing Pace

We create technology until technology recreates us.  
It's wrong to avoid biology and let autonomy judge, love, and trust.  
Windows 10 reading kids smiles while Google sees all that we know.  
Messages sent electronically through cables they all flow.  
Birthday greetings through Facebook from close friends we've never met.  
Our fears they seem to understand your hurt your fear and regrets.  
Gadgets supersede gadgets for gadgets aren't built to last.  
An app that tracks the beat of my heart and another to wipe my arse.

There were digital watches when I was a kid displaying seconds, time, and date.  
In silver and gold from a market stall with a light that always breaks.  
We have bits and bytes evolving into mega terras, IT fellas fixing syntax errors downloading upgrades they want to sell us.  
Automation stole villages of hard workers devout.  
Completely replaced by machinery, their existence since wiped out.  
With robots replacing conscious thought as drones control our airspace.  
Soon, no need to be human to be part of the human race.  
Necessity is the mother of invention, but that's not necessarily true.  
People Skyping on FaceTime when only a hug will do.  
Our language is being butchered so texting can always be fast.  
We've looked too far to the future when we forget we've had a past.

*Stefan Gambrell  
Neanderthal Bard*

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