

# East Coker Poetry Group

Newsletter February 2007

## Forthcoming Events

### **Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> February “Maiden Newton Ecliptic”**

**Virginia Astley** and her daughter Florence present a poem based on a twenty-four hour walk around the village of Maiden Newton near Dorchester.

This long poem is set with a Harp accompaniment.

Virginia lived in East Coker several years ago and has family connections here.

She has been involved for many years in the music world as a singer/songwriter.

Her debut album “*From Gardens Where We Feel Secure*” was first released in 1983 and re-released on CD again in 2003. Recently she has been devoting more time to her writing and poetry.

### **Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> March Fire River Poets**

The **Fire River Poets** from Taunton come to East Coker for this meeting. John Stuart and Anthony Watts from this group are already well known to the East Coker Poetry Group having read poetry at our Poetry Summer Evening. Anthony Watts’ poem ‘*Blackberries*’ won second prize in our poetry competition this year.

### **Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> April Open Evening**

Bring your own poems to read, or read your favourite poems, or just come and listen.

There is no theme, so this should be a poetry ‘Happening’

Let’s see what the East Coker Poets can do!

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Meetings at the Helyar Arms, Moor Lane, East Coker  
All meetings in the skittle alley - 7.30pm

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### **Christmas Quiz**

The Christmas Quiz, cleverly devised by Clive and Anne Bingley and the ‘centrepiece’ of our December meeting was won by Lesley Lindsay - a fine effort as there was fierce competition.

Some of the quiz questions were certainly taxing and Iona Lambe wrote an excellent (poetic) explanation for her lack of success with the quiz :-

### Can Do.....No Can Do

I can grow a plant or two  
Brussels Sprouts – Busy Lizzies,  
I can even name some birds  
But I'm not so hot on quizzes.

Occasionally I find a rhyme,  
I'm praying that's what this is,  
But even at my very best  
I'm rubbish doing quizzes.

I can drive and ride a bike,  
(Don't you love those downhill whizzes?)  
I can, sometimes, bake a cake.  
I'm just no hand at quizzes.

I love to join in party fun  
Drinking wine that fizzes.  
I cannot sing a single note  
And I'm even worse at quizzes!

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### Night of Winter Warmth

Good poetry, good food and good company - hosted by Brendan and Iona Lambe in the Apple Loft of the Helyar Arms, was just what was needed on a cold January evening. John Burgess launched the proceedings with a wassailing entrance that set the tone of merriment for the night. Food and poetry followed, not forgetting Amelia Bennet's single-handed mummers play.

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In November I received an email from **Rochelle Moore**, a freelance writer and poet living in Ireland, who had seen our web-site and noted that our subject for our competition had been 'The Seasons'. She sent one of her poems for our newsletter:-

#### THE WICKLOW WAY

I walk along nature's way, alert for any sound  
Aware of my soft footfalls upon the soggy ground  
Towards a path of hushing leaves and bogs all verdant crowned  
My spirit alive with imaginings of history all around  
So let the art of silence, penetrate the clouded mind  
Live your walk through mother-nature, and the answer's you will find  
As sun and cloud change places, and shadow turns to light  
You understand the answers, because you get the questions right  
Revealing landscape's that appear like laid-out inner dreams  
The healing sound of water, in busy rushing streams  
Time to count your blessings, diminish your extremes  
Stand still with Mother Nature and remember what life means  
Enshrouded by such vastness, you humbly find your pride  
Each step you take gets stronger upon a goodwill tide  
A new reality rise's, as you walk the moor's at dawn  
Of light and air and hope renewed, ongoing not withdrawn

Rochelle's books include *When The Levee Breaks* ([www.mandala-press.com](http://www.mandala-press.com)) and *Karma* (amazon.com) and for children, *Snodvark the Naughty Dragon*. Her latest book is a collection of her poems called *Spiritual Whispers* (amazon.com).

## Local Poetry Events

Poetry Dorchester present:

### Simon Armitage

**Friday 23rd March at 7.30pm**  
Dorchester Arts Centre

Simon has published 9 volumes of poetry and won numerous awards and prizes as well as being shortlisted for the Whitbread Poetry Prize and the T.S Eliot prize. His most recent collection is *Tyrannosaurus Rex Versus the Corduroy Kid* (Faber 2006).

**£6.00** (£4.00 unwaged) Box office phone: 10am - 4pm **01305 266962**  
**(£1.00 booking fee unless paying by cash)**

By post: send a cheque to Dorchester Arts Centre, including £1.00 booking fee - stating which tickets you require to:

Dorchester Arts Centre, School Lane, The Grove, Dorchester, DT1 1XR

Poetry Cafe offers food, drink and live literature in a warm and friendly atmosphere. Other local writers can book a reading spot in advance with Pam Zinnamann-Hope (01300) 320826

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The Johnson Studio in the Octagon Theatre, Yeovil is the venue for a poetry café led by **John Stuart** ( of Fire River Poets) on the 17<sup>th</sup> May. He will be talking about, and reading some of his own work and inviting the audience to read some of their poetry.

**£3.50** 7.30 - 9.30pm Box Office 01935 422884

Of course John Stuart is coming to East Coker in March so we are getting a preview!

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### Poetry at Café Piano

Sadler Street

Wells

These lively poetry-reading evenings are well worth attending. If you are coming for the first time, Café Piano does not front onto Sadler Street but is tucked back through an archway. The atmosphere is relaxed and anyone is encouraged to read their own material – or just come and listen to others. **£2.00 7.45 – 9.30pm**

Dates            Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> April  
                      Monday 4<sup>th</sup> June  
                      Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> September  
                      Monday 5<sup>th</sup> November

Enquiries, contact **Jane Williams** 01749 677241

# T.S. ELIOT PUBLIC LECTURE

By The Rev. Dr. Peter Mullen

24<sup>th</sup> March 2007 11am  
St Michael's and All Angels Church, East Coker  
and afterwards at Tudor Wing, Coker Court

ALL WELCOME

Admission Free- Any donations to the East Coker Vicarage Fund



Peter Mullen is Rector of St Michael's Cornhill, London and is a regular columnist for the Times, The Sunday Telegraph and Spectator Magazine as well a contributor to radio 4. He has also published several books on theology, philosophy and politics and also a number of novels. He is a lifelong Eliot devotee and enthusiast.



For details contact Ewen Stewart 07976 528535 or  
Rev Roger Burt 01935 862125

- Ewen Stuart has asked if the Poetry Group can let him know the number of members who will be attending, so that he can plan the catering. Please call me (David Cloke) on **01935 862623**, **before the 17<sup>th</sup> March** so that I can let him know how many of our group will be going.

## Winter Poems

### It is

It is winter –  
the trees  
show themselves

tall in the fields  
arterial  
as fragile.

The hard wind  
takes us all on  
the roads

full of things  
shattered  
by night;

on still days  
our quiet breath  
blooms

the dusk – is paint  
thinning and thickening  
in a water glass

the stars  
are thrown;  
the long nights are a reel

I know  
from memory  
but still

it takes me in  
surprising  
the clarity

the trees  
like rare diagrams  
our own

hidden selves -  
all vessels and veins  
and the ebbing and flowing of light.

*Catherine Simmonds*

### Magic (for children of any age)

The moon is a slight and fragile curve,  
The sky a cold blue-green,  
Turning black on the moonless side  
As the first bright stars are seen.

The trees stretch black towards the sky,  
All movement held frost still.  
Christian folk have locked their doors  
While a fox goes out to kill.

Into this cold enchanted world  
The magic people come,  
And paint their pictures on our glass,  
A silver scene, each one.

They scatter diamonds on the grass  
And throw their jewels around,  
Then, having left such wealth for us,  
They leave without a sound.

If you should wake before the sun  
Has turned their work to air,  
You'll know by all those lovely things  
That magic folk were here.

*Iona Lambe*

## On the Web

The Internet is a huge source of poetry – knowing where to find it is the difficulty. Here are some sites that have been brought to my attention:-

[www.poetryarchive.org](http://www.poetryarchive.org)

“The poetry archive’s mission is to make poetry accessible. As well as listing poems and poets on the site and allowing people to read them, it also includes audio samples where available. These include a fascinating recording of Robert Browning forgetting the words to his own poem, *How they brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix*.”

<http://rpo.library.utoronto.ca/>

This site, based at the University of Toronto in Canada, is a huge repository of thousands of poems. The ‘rpo’ in the web address stands for ‘Representational Poetry Online’ and lists poems by first line, last line, title and author. There is also a calendar showing poetic events by date, including births, deaths and first publications.

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**Open Poetry Ltd** announces the launch on 10 January 2007 of its inaugural International Sonnet Competition, closing on 31 October 2007. The judging panel comprises Susan Bassnett, Jacqueline Osherow (USA poet) and Don Paterson. First prize is £1400. Full details and on-line entry form can be found at [www.sonnetcompetition.com](http://www.sonnetcompetition.com)

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## In the Press

It is heartening to see poetry commentary in **The Times**. Frieda Hughes’ column always has something of interest and many thanks to **Micky Hall** for passing on all those cuttings to me. Recently Simon Armitage (appearing in Dorchester - see above) had one of his poems featured [*The Six Comeuppances*]; there is often more to a poem than first meets the eye, and Frieda brings this out well. She has also tackled poems by Jo Shapcott [Goat] and Bill Greenwell [The Invisible Man in Love] recently. Her own book of poetry is due to appear this Spring published by Bloodaxe Books.

Jeanette Winterson also writing in The Times is a poetry enthusiast and has been reading Don Paterson’s new book of poems *Orpheus*. She pens some memorable lines – “A poem is direct and charged with energy .... the friction of the language can cause words to spark and fire...” Last words though to Don Paterson :-

*And should the world itself forget your name  
Say this to the earth: I flow.  
Say this to the quick stream: I am.*

Material for the May Newsletter, or any correspondence, can be sent to :-  
David Cloke, Group Co-ordinator,  
Church Cottage, Burton Cross, East Coker, Yeovil, Somerset. BA22 9LY  
Tel. 01935 862623 or Joyce Best 01935 862317  
Our website - [www.eastcokerpoetry.org.uk](http://www.eastcokerpoetry.org.uk)