

East Coker Poetry Group

Newsletter May 2007

Forthcoming Events

Tuesday 29th May “Flora Poetica”

Poetry on the theme of Plants and Gardens

Jean Caunter presents her selection of poetry spanning the floral world

This should be a varied and lively collection
ranging from John Clare to Sylvia Plath

***BBC Radio 4** will be recording at this meeting
for inclusion in their series “Poetry Societies”
to be broadcast later this year

Tuesday 3rd July American Poetry

“A bunch of the boys were whooping it up in the Malamute saloon.....”

There is more to American poetry than Dangerous Dan McGrew

Approaching American Independence Day, John Darling hosts this evening
covering the wide range of American poetry.

May and July meetings at the Helyar Arms, Moor Lane, East Coker
In the skittle alley - 7.30pm

Tuesday 21st August Tennyson Evening

Our second **outside** event
Will be held at the **Vicarage garden** in East Coker
More details nearer the time
We are at present booking the good weather!

Who am I? by *Sally Jackson*

A bent old woman went shuffling by
Reflected in the window glass,
The poor old thing! She caught my eye;
I stopped, she stopped. I could not pass,
For there was I!

Where was the straight and upright form,
The jaunty step, the sparkling eye,
Prepared to weather every storm
With wit and humour, hopes riding high?
Where was I?

A firm hand gently took my arm –
A kindly soul with an anxious face.
“Watch your step or you’ll come to harm.
Let me help you to a safer place.”
And so went I.

With words of thanks and a grateful smile,
I went back on my way again,
With watchful step in a cautious style,
And eyes well away from that window pane.
On went I.

Am I the person that I seem to be,
A stumbling old woman needing care?
Or the one I like to think is me,
Bright, independent, with fun to spare?
Who am I?

Or is there someone in between
The outward look and the inner pride?
Someone hidden and unseen,
Someone permanent inside?
The real I?

Rochelle Moore, a freelance writer and poet living in Ireland, sent me more of her poems: This is from her book “SPIRITUAL WHISPERS”

Magician by *Rochelle Moore*

Enchanter, demon, alchemy's pride
A Magician of wonder forged deep inside
Betwixt two worlds that both intertwine
Overlapping, enlaced and completely combined
Incantations to empyreal beings, billowing breath
Immortality denied you, for you there's no death
Accursed your wisdom and your mystic reign
Of wizardry's abject darkest domain

Again a reminder that 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 17th 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

Poetry - was at Café Piano Wells - But is now held at

THE FOUNTAIN INN

1 St Thomas Street
Wells

£2.00 7.45 – 9.30pm

Dates

Monday 4th June

Monday 3rd September

Monday 5th November

Enquiries, contact **Jane Williams** 01749 677241

Sandra Howard, writing in Stella magazine, has been to some of Josephine Hart's Poetry evenings at the British Library in London and has had her interest in poetry rekindled by the excellent readings. Some of these readings are now on a CD that comes with her poetry anthology "Catching Life by the Throat", including Edward Fox reading T.S.Eliot. She quotes Somerset Maugham "The crown of literature is poetry.....the writer of prose can only step aside when the poet passes".

Richard Morrison, writing in the Times, is enthusiastic about modern poetry and has discovered *Generation Txt*, a collection by six young British poets that has inspired him to comment on this poetry renaissance. "...the mix of styles...quick-firing rhymes...rap appears to have liberated an artform that was well-nigh moribund after decades of turgid and impenetrable modernism....direct language is usually the simplest.....great news".

East Coker was the subject of a piece by **Simon Jenkins** writing in the Guardian on the 6th April. He had come to East Coker on Good Friday and with T.S.Eliot in mind writes "The village was to Eliot...an idea, a metaphor to put to poetic use, an idyll of England at the start of the second world war.....Eliot seems to regard East Coker as the embodiment of personal as well as collective despair". He goes on to add that "East Coker does not deserve the taint of T.S.Eliot's narcissistic gloom.....Ham is the loveliest stone in England, rendering the Somerset/Dorset borders a magic place.....This is no place for Eliot's grim poem. East Coker should wear a perpetual smile on its face".

On the Web

As our July 3rd meeting features American poetry, The Poetry Archive site :- <http://poetryarchive.uct.ac.za> may be one to look up as it features an early recording of T.S.Eliot reading extracts from his work –

“The Poetry Archive is delighted to announce the creation of a long-term partnership with the Poetry Foundation, based in Chicago. The two organisations share many common goals and, over the next three years, our collaboration will make it possible for the Archive to add recordings by more than 100 key American poets. To mark this announcement, we are delighted to have added a recording by a supreme American poet, T.S. Eliot. From today, the Archive contains recordings of Eliot reading substantial extracts from **East Coker** and Little Gidding (from Four Quartets) and the whole of The Waste Land. This recording, dating from 1935, is a particularly exciting find. It was made a decade earlier than Eliot's well-known and much more widely available 1946 recording. While the sound quality is understandably not quite so good, the recording is fascinating for Eliot's faster, more energetic rendition. Listening to this urgent interpretation blows the dust off this iconic poem and helps us encounter it afresh.”

John Stuart has also sent (by email) details of many poetry competitions and events in other parts of Britain. I will also bring some of these details to our meetings. Unfortunately there is not the space in this newsletter to even touch on the huge number of national poetry events but it heartening there is so much interest in poetry including the:-

Bristol Poetry Festival 2007 from **Thursday 6th** to **Sunday 16th September**
Poets booked so far include: **Brian Patten, Carol Ann Duffy** (back by popular demand), **Daljit Nagra, Sean O'Brien, Jean Sprackland, Ian Duhig, Jane Draycott, Collette Bryce, Ruth Padel, Ralph Hoyte, Steve Tasane, Rosemary Harris, Sally Crabtree and Elizabeth Whyman.**

There will be the **Bristol Poetry Festival Poetry Slam, this year Bristol v. Paris** and a special **BBC Radio 4 Poetry Slam** as well as **Big Mouth Cabaret** and local grassroots poetry with the **Acoustic Night Instant Anthology Open Mic and Festival Night at the Lansdown.**

Festival details and free brochures will be available from **July** by contacting the Poetry Can office on 0117 942 6976 or by email at: info@poetrycan.co.uk .

Frieda Hughes continues to keep poetry in the spotlight with her column in the Times and my thanks to Micky Hall for all those cuttings. Frieda Hughes takes a poem and records her thoughts and interpretation with an easy style that often opens the eyes to the hidden meanings and nuances within the poem. It would not do her justice to attempt to précis her column here and so I will bring these extracts to our next few meetings for people to read or borrow.

Material for the August Newsletter, or any correspondence, can be sent to :-
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