

East Coker Poetry Group

Poetry Competition Entries 2007

Rain	Rochelle Moore	
Weather	Isabel Berkeley	
Three Nonsense Limericks	Katarin Privett	
Walkies – A Conversation	Joyce Best	
Rain, Sun and Fun	Jean Caunter	
Eating the Weather	David Cloke	
Our English Weather	Barbara Chatwin	
We are above the weather	Brian Patman	1st Prize
Whatever the Weather	Diana Turton	
Eggardon – in fog	Virginia Astley	2nd Prize
Autumn Day	Iona Lambe	
Weather	Anne Bingley	
Changing rains	Ian White	
Shipping Weather	Sally Jackson	
Inconstancy – or the whether report	Gaie Vickers	Commended
Sea-Level	Anthony Watts	3rd Prize
Words in Winter Weather	Mark Turpin	

Jane Williams from Wells, who won our competition last year with her poem 'Cuckoo Call', was the Judge for this year's competition. She wrote about the winning poems :-

First Prize: We are above the weather

"An original poem that resonates with experience.....a clear winner."

Second Prize: Eggardon – in fog

"..atmospheric, precise, evocative....a beautifully descriptive piece."

Third Prize: Sea-Level

"some of the images excellent...'houses humbled down'. '.. fog trawls in'."

Commended: Inconstancy – or the whether report

"A witty poem with some vivid images....intelligent and interesting"

Weather

The weather lets man see that he's not in control.
Anathema to churchmen,
No law for politicians,
Rebellion at our teachers.
Weather's an anarchy let loose upon the world.

God's weather? Can it be that He whom we revere's
Chief Anarch? What then comes to man,
So lawless, cast adrift
In storm and tempest, flood and fire?
Safe haven from our fears is what we crave.

Anne Bingley

Sea-Level

Swabbing the sun's blood,
staunching the wound in the sky,
the fog trawls in, an almost kneadable mass
on a cushion of visibility,
knee-high.

Low cloud
has cottoned-on to everything:
even the loud-faced houses are humbled down
to a modest frieze –
the battlements of rising damp on the fog's wall.

The trees are in a cold sweat about it. They've twigged a plot
to rob them of identity –
a sapping of their silhouettes to inkless wraiths
lost in the fog's blotter. They sob silently,
their wrung hands clutching dough

while the grey-feathered fog bird
broods
like a body of knowledge
over a final
unhatchable fact of the world.

Anthony Watts

Our English Weather

An Indian summer is what we need
To dry out the field for children to play
It's global warming those at the top all say
But where is the sun to swell the hay
My bones need to be warmed to face to cold
As Autumn approaches with its' wind and rain.

Oh where have the hot summers of my childhood gone
When skies were blue and days were long
But came wind and rain hail and storm
At the end of the day with winter gone
Spring will be here with new life, new growth
With the hope of sunshine and flowers in bloom.

Barbara Chatwin

We are above the weather

by Brian Patman

From rain lashed Chep Lak Kok we leapt through jostling clouds
to find a place of safety
beyond the typhoon's grip.
A white-knuckled eternity later we sailed
into brilliant moonlight
exhausted and relieved.
And so to creature comforts and indulgences.
Hot towels to soothe away
turbulent memories.
Champagne and canapés. A choice of food and films.
"We are above the weather.
Relax. Enjoy the flight."
Below, the coast of Vietnam, shrouded in cloud.
Inland, a dull yellow flash.
Then others. Many more.
The whole country below me, racked by thunderstorms.
And I was back in childhood,
gazing through a window
And through the glass, the images of violence.
A great forest stripped of leaves
and naked, naked fear.
With each new flash, strange words exploding in my head:
Da Nang! Hanoi! Nha Trang! Hue!
Saigon! Haiphong! My Lai!
And through the glass, I saw a desert storm arise
with shocking intensity
and awful cruelty.
There was no scouring clean or hopeful aftermath.
A civilisation drowned
in its own oil and blood.
And through the glass, I look towards a red robed dawn,
promising the land sunlight
after years of darkness.
But the shepherd and the sailor give wise counsel.
As the sky above turns black
a deadly rain comes down.
And through the glass I gaze, with loaded fork in hand,
distracted for a moment
by someone else's fate.
But my reality is this side of the glass.
"We are above the weather.
Relax. Enjoy the flight."

Eating the Weather

Starters

Take one fresh breeze
straight from the Atlantic
Mix with the smell of salt spray
and the sudden whisk of white fluffy clouds
Pour on the bright, crisp sunlight
and gulp it down in one huge gulp
to start the day

Main Course

Take some clouds; dark, ripe clouds
and swirl them into a heavy overcast
Drop the temperature; chill them
Stir slowly anticlockwise with your back to the wind
Making a low depression in the middle
and fill with nutty black isobars
Drizzle on some warm rain
while piling on the thick, rich cumulous
Spice it up with scattered squalls
and crackle some lightning round the edge
until your storm is piping hot
and ready to serve

Dessert

Take one low sun
A streak of thin mist
And a huge bowl of turquoise and orange sky
Blend them together slowly and delicately
until the last vestiges of light
have melted to a red and golden glow
And done to a turn

David Cloke

Whatever the Weather

Whatever the weather it's sure to enthuse
Various people airing their views

"The darkening skies are quite overcast
The rain is refreshing but I hope it won't last"

A couple of days later you will probably hear
"Isn't it cold for this time of year"

"Snow spreading from the North I've heard
It's the middle of April how truly absurd"

"This freezing fog has not lifted all day
You would never think it was nearly May"

"The sweltering sun is parching my lawn
I would rather have it a little less warm"

"The frosty mornings seem really serene"
The nip in the air soon shatters that dream

"The chill factor wind with its horrible whine
Makes me wish for sunnier climes"

"A horrible hailstorm happened last night
Everyone heard it and the roads were quite white"

One thing for certain, people will never
Stop airing their views whatever the weather

Diana Turton

Inconstancy – or The Whether Report?

Like-sounding words that both suggest
A lack of constancy;
A world of indecision
Caught between rainbow and a cloud.
Precipitate, a shower falls
From darkening, gloomy skies,
To open up a shaft of sun,
Gold across water streaming.
Ambivalent, that other word
Is paradoxical,
Suggesting to the mind
An adamantine stance,
And yet betrayed
Within the Judas-kiss of 'or',
Needing an opposite for status
And meaning in the living word.
And so it seems we hang,
Con conversationally,
Like washing on the line
Caught in a drying wind,
Unable to impose our will,
As, victim to the elements,
We suffer storm and snow and sun,
Fair and dismal days,
And cannot, even in our speech,
Insist on this or that,
Unable to decide whether
The weather will be this or that,
Or whether it will be something completely different!

Gaie Vickers

Changing rains

Mackerel sky, red sky at night, the oak before the ash,
Rain before seven, a ring around the moon, the ash before the oak.
Patterns we learnt at our grandmother's knee,
Passing them on to our children's children.
With these rhythms we wrought
Some comfort against the darkness.

But what shall we say now?

Drought through Spring.
Then rain, and rain, and rain again.
Still hot into September.
Not our thing.
This belongs on monsoon plains,
Or somewhere east of Java.
A different drum,
A broken beat,
A darkening time.

Ian White

Autumn Day

This is a gift of a day.
Trees capture precious sunshine, hold
It in their crooked branches, enfold
The heat within their grasping limbs. The leaves
Gather into store October's treasure, gold
Hoarded in shimmering coin. Then cold
And wind, those heartless winter thieves,
Snatch it, steal it away.

Iona Lambe

Weather

Whether we shout as the sandbags pile on
Over riverbank and wetted vale
The tidal wave of butterflies' change
Beaten by a million rash adult wings
Is swooping through the sky now and
Tearing at the treads of sense which
Held the waves together and buried our
Inner-sense. The laughter of a thousand men
Who built on hilly ground will soon outbear
The foolish ones who stay upon shallow sound
For when the waves come crashing,
Gnawing their teeth at our homes
We'll know not why they leapt up high.
It's our daughters and sons who carry
The weight of unthought deeds, packaging
And the smacking of countless needless beads
Are pouring down our window panes,
Drilling into our minds, that what we did
But yesterday, our planet deems unkind.

Isabel Berkeley

Rain, Sun and Fun

In Macs and boots they splash and splosh thro' puddles,
Chase sticks, for boats, floating along the runnels
On windy days they run with arms outstretched,
Shouting with glee as leaves fly out of reach.

Swallows arrive , summer has come at last
Sand sea and sun the days go by too fast,
'heat wave' the grown-ups say put on your hat –
the rush outside to play – can't stop for that!

But snow is best of all, it whispers down
Ready for snowballs when it clothes the ground,
As the year turns these children laugh and learn
How seasons change, each lovely in its turn.

Jean Caunter

Walkies – a Conversation

‘We must go for a walk’-

‘Why?’

The sky is grey and it’s going to snow

The air is clammy with freezing fog.

‘That’s unimportant we have to go

And anyway we must walk the dog’.

‘We must go for a walk’.

‘Why?’

The air is heavy and dry with dust

The sun is hot and I want to read.

‘That’s not the point, to go we must

The dog needs walking, fetch the lead’.

‘We must go for a walk’.

No!

The fields are flooded, the sky is black

The dog has died so we needn’t go.

‘It’s what we are used to, it’s what we do,

And anyway we’ll soon be back’.

Joyce Best

Three Nonsense Limericks

There was an old lady from Pether-
ton, who always maintained that a feather
if tossed in the air
when tied to a chair
Would come down, whatever the weather

There was an old fellow from Clun,
Who went for a twenty mile run,
But the sun and the rain
Were too much for his brain
And he finished before he'd begun

There was a young lady called Heather
Whose mother disliked the cold weather;
She said "rain or shine,
If I don't think it's fine,
I shall dress little Heather in leather".

Katarin Privett

Words in Winter Weather

I am the rain, which
like a diamond explodes
and scrapes on my lungs.

Ten thousand thousand glowering suns,
and tattered clouds blown,
and a winter sky,
and roads turned into rivers.

I am the vacant air, like an iron magnet
WHEN the hedge by the orchard sings,
and dim forest of grass
below the trees.

A halo, circling
the moon and a misty veil,
the smell of damp
in a lonely house,

hills mired in sunsets of fire and fog

leaves withered by frost,

a spider's drowsy sleep.

Mark Turpin

Rain

Upon smooth wood
damp fragrant rain
Of the Fall
disrobes Summer
All flora's treasures
burnished bronze
Gentle breezes
turned to churn
The scene unfolds
now rearranged
The scent of Fall
bestirs the onset
of yesterday
The shifting of
the seasons
take me back
with loving visions
of Summer days
Immortal charm
as light grows dim
Fall is nigh
hipped with generosity.

Rochelle Moore

Shipping Weather

Round the islands of Britain there are warnings of gales;
Round the islands of Britain from Shetland to Wales.
The general Synopsis is a slow moving low
From the Western Atlantic toward Scapa Flow.

The Area Forecast for the next twenty-four hours
Starts with Viking, north, six or seven, thundery showers.
Moderate or good, occasionally poor. Then
The Utsires, north-east backing north, gale eight to storm ten.
Surely not good! Nor for Cromarty, Forth, Tyne,
With north-west gale eight or severe gale nine.
Then Fisher. And Dogger and German Bight –
Oh! The fisherman's Alsatian has got into a fight!
So let's go on to Humber, to Thames and to Dover,
Where thankfully the gales all seem to be over.
Then Wight, Portland, Plymouth, south, four or five, good.
So I think we should moor here and stock up with food.
In Biscay and FitzRoy it's south three or four,
Fog patches, moderate, occasionally poor.
Lundy, Sole, Fastnet and then Irish Sea,
Which is where in bad weather we'd rather not be.
Shannon and Rockall, Hebrides, north gale eight.
We must batten the hatches before it's too late.

At Bailey and Faeroes and Fair Isle the same
It could reach storm ten, but it's all in the game.
While at South-East Iceland our troubles are past,
For that is the end of the Shipping Forecast.

Sally Jackson

Eggardon - in fog

Today Eggardon is swept in fog,
acres of ashen light bringing
the memory of childhood holidays:
of bunkers shrouded on the island.

Cobweb nets laced between the dying
teasels, trampoline in the breeze.
Fine rain drifts over this sheeted wildness
and damp distils in your bones.

You hear nothing, only the close-up
of your breathing. No far-reaching view,
just gorse lights strung across the gloom
and the hawthorn, its bloodied berries.

You turn inland, slipping into the mist.
As the rain glazes the cobwebs you
resist turning, you know there is nothing
- only holes in your pockets.

And climbing the contoured ramparts,
past the wind-torn tree and over
springing turf, with mud between
your toes you head for home.

There will be no sunset tonight,
but a slow darkening of the mist.

Virginia Astley