

Anthology of Poetry



Photo courtesy of Naomi Grace Ockwell

TYSOE RECORD'S POETRY CHALLENGE
THE ENTRIES
April 2020

ABOUT THE CHALLENGE

Poetry comes in many forms and I've got to admit, some can be pretty daunting. It is a wide art form though. I don't suppose Beowulf is on everybody's reading list, but we all probably know a good limerick or two! The lovely Eric Morecambe gave us this one:

“They stood on the bridge at midnight;
their lips were all aquiver,
He gave a cough; his leg fell off,
and floated down the river!”

I liken poetry to sculpture - the art of creating an intense and powerful message using carefully moulded words. The form, flow, language and sound of poems can give more emphasis to stories, thoughts and feelings than regular prose. It can elicit powerful responses from within us. I have often read a poetry and marvelled at how the author could describe my innermost thoughts, which is where the true skill lies. The winner of the 1959 Nobel Prize for Literature, Salvatore Quasimodo, described poetry as “the revelation of a feeling that the poet believes to be internal and personal which the reader recognises as his own.”

The satisfaction when you sit down and the ideas flow, words almost taking on a life of their own, is immeasurable. William Wordsworth described this as “the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: it takes its origin from emotions recollected in tranquillity.” No better time then to set this creative challenge, amidst the chaos yet strange calm of a pandemic the likes of which we have never before seen in our lifetime.

In this booklet we have gathered together words from this unique moment in time. Our neighbours and friends have set pen to paper and finger to keyboard to share their poetic stories, thoughts and feelings. Will you be moved by them? Will they cause you to laugh out loud...or pause for thought? Perhaps you will be inspired to put pen to paper and when the challenge is given again you too will accept it. Please enjoy.

Beverley Thorpe

POETRY CHALLENGE—by Beverley Thorpe

In honour of Shakespeare's Day on April 23, 2020, we challenged our readers to...write poetry. The details are listed below.:

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Your challenge, if you accept it,
Is to wax lyrical in rhyme.
We think you have the brains for it
And the virus has won us some time.

No more than 39 lines
Will fit on the Record's page.
So don't think like old Billy,
It's not going to go on the stage!

Write to us by the deadline,
We get cross if stuff is late.
Be cheery or gloomy or funny
To us it will all fascinate.

You can pass it on to Shirley.
Or send your entry by email.
Wander down to see Beverley,
Or use the letterbox at Dinsdale.

You can tell that we are no experts
So the rules are pretty easy.
Just give us rhymes where they should be
And don't make us feel queasy.

We will judge them on character
On length and words and fun.
We will expect mighty fine language
That we can show to Beverley's Mum.

We're excited to read what you write
A prize we are yet to decide,
But what could be better than the glory
Of a page in the Record's inside.



POETRY CHALLENGE ENTRIES

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The Windmill

By Allison Aves

When walking from a Cotswold dale
My heart is lifted by a sail
A-peeping from the hillside top
As I stride up without a stop.
It rises high above the stone

On sturdy tower stood all alone.
If only I could travel back
In time, and find along that track
The miller with his floury sack
Trudging upwards in the morn.
Towards that hilltop in the dawn,
While larks and thrushes soaring glide
And wrens in shadowed hedgerows hide.

Home Thoughts from a Broad

By Judith Webb

Prelude

We mustn't grumble, we shouldn't complain
When the NHS out there is feeling the strain,
And some poor souls are fighting for life,
God Bless and help them, with this virus so rife.

Main bit

But let's move briefly, from spirits so low
To think of a lesser challenge, I know
It makes sense! And so over to you,
Lots of things, on your own, only you could do!

Commandeer the remote, for your very own telly,
Yawn, stretch, burp . . . and then scratch your belly!
Eat what you like! Cream eggs and ham!
Pickled walnuts! Marmite! Lard sandwich or Spam!
Get up when you please, drink endless tea,
Wear Waynetta Slob clothes. It don't bother me.

Talk to your dog. Converse with your gerbils,
No-one will know that you're losing your marbles!
So go on your walk, to stop getting fat,
But don't be too shy, always wear a Mad Hat!
Any bellow "HELLO" to the folk you will meet,
Don't worry, those people will soon cross the street.

Don't burden Bart with demands too fine,
Aged Parmesan, truffles, kumquats or lime.
Make do with leftovers, learn how to sew,
Knit your own Royal Family,
(Astounding, I know)
Or restore Lost Crafts from an age long ago:
Whittle sticks, make clogs, or maybe grow greens,
Or something that takes you away from those
screens?

So you see, there is always something to do.
If slightly bonders; that's me, not you.

Silly

By Jackie Keyser

Man in lockdown, lives in fear
Of hidden killer, not wanted here.
Keep your distance, six feet clear
Or stay at home and just drink beer.

When All of this is Over

By David Fellows

When all of this is over,
When all of this is through,
When this is just a memory,
Then what will we do?

Will we still act kindly,
Will we still take care,
Will we clap for someone
And say that we were there?

Will we still remember
The little things we've done,
That made the bigger picture
A happier, sunnier one?

These times were sent to try us
To see how we would do,
When all of this is over,
How well did we do?

A Sonnet of Isolation

By Ben Keyser

Thus he closes eyes, resting his sap head:

T'is not Covid but the fever of hay.

Nothing to do, he bakes another bread,

And patiently in his home he will stay.

Young come storms one then two then three then four,

Yet rough, cometh the worst storm of them all:

The storm of solitude, forlorn once more.

To hear sweet music that his friends should call.

Oft it 'scapes that we have such luxury:

Garden, family, a home, places hath they growne.

Belonging in noble community

At no time shall we truly be alone.

And though tempted by the outside, instead,

He doth bake another loaf of bread.

Daffodils for the Modern Age

By Jo McGinn

—Inspired by William Wordsworth

I wandered lonely as a cloud,
(That observes the rules in current ills)
Round empty aisle, my trolley loud
I saw the magic toilet rolls!
Not something that one often sees
Piled up on high, they waved at me!

Rolls procured and safely mine
I carried on my merry way
The queue, a never ending line
Two metre spaced, I wait to pay.
And then, outside, I take the chance
At “non essentials” throw a glance.

The journey home was quiet, I’ll say
A hand of folk was all I see.
Out for their legal, once a day,
Together, but not in company.
Normality, what we all sought
This exercise has surely brought?

For oft when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood
My thoughts must always truly lie
As I dwell in this solitude
With those that valiantly fight these ills
Returning us to previous wills.

We Shall Overcome

By Mel Johnson

This virus is strong and must be squashed
So our hands must be cleaned and thoroughly washed.

We scrub and we scrub till our fingers are raw
We clean all the handles and wash down the door

We vacuum the carpets and bleach the floor
We stop for a drink then find there is more

The windows are grubby the floormats are muddy.
We're exhausted and sad but then we recall

We live in a village that's lovely for all
The shop is open, the post office too

We applaud them and thank them for getting us through
Our neighbours are kind and go out of the way

To help out each other and make sure we're okay
We are surrounded by beauty, the birds and the flowers

We are lucky to live here so treasure these hours
Look out for each other, the young and the old

We must heed all the warnings and DO AS WE'RE TOLD

WONDER

By Lucy Stevenson

At each new dawn, sun rising in the sky,
I wonder, What? I wonder, Why?
What will I do to fill the day?
To make it special in some way?
Keep routine: Up, Shower, Get dressed,
Start home schooling, try our best.
By lunchtime, we've all had enough,
I wonder, Do the children give a.....stuff?
I take 10 minutes, sit and reflect,
What comes next? Still a half-day left,
Bake a cake? Our daily walk?
Perhaps like that we'll think and talk
About the things of wonder we see,
Birds building nests, high in the trees,
Young blossom and seedlings bursting through,
Nature progressing, holding true.
I wonder, Will we return to "Norm"?
Or with the ugly Coronavirus storm,
Will we find our own "new" path?
Why not a simpler, kinder path we carve?

AND NOW I MAKE CAKES

By Jo Small

There was an initial flurry
where everyone seemed in a hurry
of menu planning
and shopping orders
buying flowers for the borders.
Making a list of jobs to do,
Standing apart in the shopping queue.

Then there was a sense of doom
dealt with by buckets full of Pinot Grigio on Zoom.
Moments where I felt quite low
until I discovered PE with Joe.
Time when my legs felts like lead
and I had no yeast to make my bread.
Days when missing my mum is an ache
so I've turned my efforts to making cake.

The effect of the lockdown on the buzzard

By Jackie Keyser

Spring arrived, summer near.
All is changed. Now, I can hear
And breathe in deep the air that's clear
What a difference makes a year.

Blue Mist Rising

By A. Smallman

Come Tory faithful, buy your *Mail* and tell us all in Red Horse Vale -
The cover-ups, pretence, the mess that your lot's made of our NHS -
Arrangements slow, decisions waiting, everyone procrastinating,
Preparations never made, no PPEs to match the grade
Patients queue as medics warned, but still the horror hadn't dawned
Despite the rising Covid cases, thousands visit Cheltenham races.
Half of Europe shut its doors, airports closed, hotels and stores
But fired with memories of Dunkirk, Boris thought that wouldn't work
Ignored the looming Covid peak, and waited for another week.
'It's not that bad,' Dom Cummins said, 'OK, a few old folk are dead'
Then did a runner, literally, we all watched him on TV,
He legged it out of No 10 and hasn't since been seen again.
But Boris, in Churchillian way, took control to save the day
With smile, a quip, and tousled hair, got carted off to Intensive Care.
His side-kicks haven't fared that well: Raab, or Hancock, or Patel
Every single day at five, pontificate on TV, live
While health officials two by two explain just why the death toll grew.
The curves and graphs, each upward line makes grimmer reading every time
Two, four, six, eight, and now we all self-isolate.

'We're working hard,' our leaders say and hope the heat will go away

The PPEs are out of stock, but Ministers say, 'Oh no they're not'

'There's loads been brought from near and far, it's just we don't know where they are.'

A hundred thousand tests per day? Let's see what happens to that by May.

And Care Home folk who died in bed? 'Oh they don't count' the spokesman said.'

New ventilators, in short supply, will help prevent more people die

But, aimed to keep the costings leaner, are made from bits of vacuum cleaner.

Now Captain Moore with zimmer frame has put the Tory ranks to shame

Seventeen million old Tom's earning - Hancock fiddles while Rome is burning.

Tired medics come and go trying to keep the death rate low

Mornings, evenings, afternoons are metered out with medicine spoons

For days on end and weeks ahead, attentive at their patient's bed

They give their all, deserve much more, a better government for sure.

Life in the Lockdown

By Shirley Cherry

Patterns disrupted, new rules applied:
STAY HOME, SAVE LIVES, we must to survive.
Normality exits through the door
Replaced by fear, uncertainty and more.

Boris our PM fights for his life.
We pray he'll come through this strife.
This vicious virus has us in its thrall.
A spectre hangs over us, will we get the call?

Our brave NHS are our front line troops.
They battle and minister till they droop.
Selflessly putting their own lives in peril,
Such humbling heroism in the face of this evil.

Community spirit comes to the fore,
There's kindness and warmth, unlike before.
Values are challenged, all this striving and hate -
Quick, let's make amends before it's too late!

Postmen and deliverymen are our new best friends
Without them our isolation would know no ends.
Our village store's more important than ever before
Keeping food on our tables, we come back for more.

So what lessons to learn from Covid-19,
What positives can we possibly glean?
Maybe we're not as clever as we first thought -
Too greedy, self-centred to do as we ought

Take care of nature and love one another,
Value our neighbours, treat them like brothers.
Funny, I've heard that message somewhere before
At Easter time on a hill, back in days of yore.

. Let's learn from this lockdown!

Loss, Remembrance & Healing

By Reuben Connolly

I went to see my Mum today,
She wasn't there, of course.
The trees, the stone, the clay below,
Now taken by the earth.

The horses over yonder grazed,
The sheep beneath them, too.
The wind blowed with an icy chill,
Above, a patch of blue.

Today would be her Birthday, see?
Suppose it always will,
At least while we remember,
At least while we can still...

A pheasant made his way along,
A pathway through the trees,
A distant peacock made a squawk,
A glider rode the breeze.

Although I'd brought no flowers forth -
A bit too late for grapes -
Another mourner left some stems,
And helped me share laments.

For loss is never yours alone,
Although it feels that way.
And though they grieve for someone else,
Your grief is shared the same.

A distant figure on the hill,
With purpose moved, but slow.
And then a break of clouds above,
He warmed in sunshine's glow.

For life is short and time is long,
Don't blink for you might miss,
Take pause a while and drink it in,
Observe sweet nature's kiss.

Vulnerability

By Miranda Forrester

Powder blue sky and blossomed branches
I watch as iridescent wings
And the busyness of bees
Dance amid the silence and the breeze.

I twitch and tap and agitate and listen to my heart
I love the spring.... yet....
Underneath uneasiness unwraps my fear
And guilt for watching here

While the world tilts and I shift
And all I must yet cannot do is only stand and stare.
To keep us sheltered, safe, our life on hold
....Am I really now this old...?

Tysoe in Lockdown

by Gayle Tompkins

I look

I see

The windmill through my bedroom window

Still there

Nothing's changed

I look

I see

The Church tower from the garden

Telling us each 15 minutes

Still there

Nothing's changed

I look

I see

The sledging hill from my favourite chair in the conservatory

Green and glistening in the sunshine

Still there

Nothing's changed

I look

I see

Tractors, horses, dog walkers going past my lounge window

Busy farmers, trotting horses, sniffing dogs

Still there

Nothing's changed

I look
I see
Families walking around the village and saying hello
In the same friendly manner as always
Still there
Nothing's changed

I look
I see
Each day at 5pm on my television
What is happening across the world
Each day
All changed

And yet
Safe
In my home
My village
It appears
Still there
Nothing's changed

BELIEF

By Linda Leonard

Where is God in the middle of disaster?
Where is God in the depths of our despair?
Where is God amidst fear and isolation?

He is there.

Where is hope when the world is falling round us?
Where is hope with such panic in the air?
Hope is faith in the selflessness of others

Everywhere,

Where is love in the middle of the stockpiles?
Where is love in the hoarding that we see?
Love is God living deep with the hearts of

You and me.

Grateful for the Time

By Pennyann Wells

It was with trepidation we heard the news
To stay at home and be alone
No longer shall we go out and stand in bunches and in queues
There's no wiggle room but at least there's Zoom

So homeward bound the kids did come,
Sat at the table to do their work,
Online classes on laptops, can it be done?
Discreetly mother must lurk.

Although the fridge fell empty, I was happy to have them home,
I have them to myself and don't have to share them.
Each day we do PE classes, cook and drink tea,
I'm glad they're back in the den.

The sun has shone, the garden has grown,
I wished this time would never go away.
The dogs just wanted some time alone
But soon got used to their hourly walk each day.

My memories of this time will be vivid,
Of TikToks, quizzes and Disney together.
No raised voices, no longer livid,
All held in the memory of a feather.

I will miss them when they are gone,
Back to just me, the dogs and the tortoise.
Will we forget how all this begun,
And go back to our usual circus?

Getting Home

By Rebecca Benjamin

Pink bikes, purple bikes,
Bikes with saddlebags and baskets.

I ask if I could ride on one.
Two girls reply...who's asking?

Me I say, I only live on the corner.
I've never had a bike....*I murmur.*

Susie looks at Ethel (*who isn't very nice*).
Ethel answers, yes of course, but for a price!

Susie, let the girl ride yours,
Mine's brand new and it's going back indoors!

NO WAY, says Susie. Not even for a pound.
It's very odd we've never seen her around!

Just then... Jack cycles by on his new Tomahawk.
The two girls swoon and rush over to talk.

The girl with no bike...turns to walk home.
But Jack calls out to her, as he takes out his comb!

Pushing his hair back like the older boys do.
Don't rush off he says, I've room for two!

Susie and Ethel are taken aback.
No take mine, cries Susie and I'll ride with Jack.

I run over to Susie's, luscious pink bike.
I jump on it quick. *Don't need to be asked twice!*

Susie sits behind Jack with her arms round his waist.
Ethel's jealous and angry; she's looking red faced.

Leaving them to fight over Jack's Tomahawk,
I set off down the road. Yay, I don't have to walk!

No one notices as I slip quietly away.
I don't live on the corner...I live miles away!

Molly

By Jackie Keyser

I have a cat. It isn't mine.
It came one day at dinner time.

She ate me out of house and home
And didn't want to be alone.

Her eyes implored "a place to live
Because I have so much to give".

She looked so cute, she wore me down.
I drove the ten miles into town.

And spent my mortgage on her food
Which she refused. I thought it rude.

Where do you live?

By Margaret Gibbs (aged 96)

Former Editor of the Tysoe Record

I knew a man whose name was Horner
Who used to live on Grumble Corner and Cross Patch Town,
And he never was seen without a frown!

He grumbled at morn and he grumbled at night,
And to grumble and growl was his chief delight.

He grumbled so much at his wife, that she began to grumble
as well as he!

And all their children wherever they went reflected their
parents' discontent!

If the sky was dark and betokened rain, then Mr Horner was
sure to complain
And if there never was a cloud about he grumbled because of
a threatened drought.

One day, later, along the street,
My old acquaintance I chanced to meet,
whose face was without that look of care
And that ugly frown it used to wear!

He said he had changed his residence – no longer living on
Grumble Corner
I'm living now in Thanks Giving Street.

OH TO BE IN TYSOE!

By Jennie Rake - (late entry)

Oh to be in Tysoe, now that April's here!
But we can't take those lengthy walks
Or meet our mates for gossipy talks
'Cos Covid 19 secretly stalks
To fill us all with fear.

Oh to be in Tysoe, now that spring has sprung!
But social gatherings aren't allowed
In pub or church or football crowd
'Cos Covid 19 whispers loud
To make us hold out tongues.

Oh to be in Tysoe, the best community!
Where Bart and Jacqui and many more
Serve us well with goods galore
To keep us safe from Covid's claw
In solidarity.

You Stole My Green Pen

By Caitlin Small

Would you like to hear my poetry about the Third Crusade?
It has facts, and a rhyme scheme! A useful learning aid.
I don't know trends or brands much to your frustration,
Can I state some facts to you about the Restoration?

My words may come out in a stuttered, tangled jumble.
The strangeness that comes out is an incoherent mumble,
My arms flap about like a flag on a pole,
My athletic ability could be compared to a dead mole.

You condescend me in a patronizing tone,
The mindless drivel of your conversation makes me wish I were
alone.
You assume that I am grateful for the honour of your judgement,
Reluctantly I don't mention how I find you repugnant.

Layers of foundation transform you into a cheese puff,
You scoff at my completed essay about the brave Macduff.
I should be more like you and copy from a friend,
Why work hard when you can easily just pretend?

Over four years and you barely know my name,
You assume that I am boring, which I think is quite a shame.
You call me a "try hard" as if it's some defect,
As you grumble at the front with your brazen disrespect.

I'd rather have a few good friends and be socially inept,
Than be loud mouthed and a bully and lose my self-respect,
Now schools over and all your friends are sparse,
I'm comforted that the lack of exams will kick you up the arse.

WE ARE COIV 19 WARRIORS

Lucia Millet Alvarez (aged 11) - (late entry)

Although it is a lovely sight
The sun is shining very bright
I seem to feel very tight
This has given me a rather big fright
I miss my friends
To the end
But **we** need to carry on

We wake early to do a fitness class
With the nations P.E teacher
'Joe Wicks at last!'

I thought home schooling would be great
But it sounds like I made a **big mistake**
The learning is ok
Maybe it's the teachers I miss
They stand up at the front and teach you the way
How to convert fractions and add relative clauses to sentences
What would I do without them? Now I know!

It's the **NHS** we need to thank
Without these people
This might be a blank
They're the ones who are saving lives
Putting themselves at risk
Many people went out at eight to give the **NHS** a little praise
We all need to **hope** this will work

Teddy's give the world some joy
Brightening up the community
Saying hello may be hard for us
But teddies save the day!

LOCKDOWN IN TYSOE

By Heidi Jeffries - (late entry)

I really feel the need to write with all the worry and the fright
Of things that are somewhat out of our control

Poetry is so good for the soul

Week 1

Amazing springtime sun, new life, bird song and flowers
We spare a thought for those who have to live in blocks of towers
Just so, so fortunate to breathe in this wonderful day
But stay home, stay safe, that is the Government advice so obey!

Week 2

I can't stop cooking something new
Chapattis , lentejas, rhubarb and ginger pudding to mention a few
Lots and lots to do.....or how about another brew?
Some time to adjust to all that is unfamiliar and new

Week 3

It has been feeling like an Easter Holiday
But just how long will this virus stay?
Somber thoughts for **our heroes the NHS** and the sufferers and
victims
God Rest.....what a very, very tragic and sad mess

Week 4

Things continue in our new routines

Will we start to become exercise fiends?

Up and start the week with Joe Wicks classes

Obstacle courses in the garden, dog walks, yoga and pilates

A cycle at the weekend, exercise is fast becoming my new best friend

Week 5

Continued homeschooling, who would have thought it

“We want to go back to school”! children are missing their usual classes

but learning of a different nature as each lockdown day passes

Valued lessons are to be had, the planet, our family time,

and the home school dinners.....well they're not bad

Week 6

How will we cope with the family dynamic?

Like caged animals if we begin to panic!

In the midst of strife community pull together, no need to reach the end of our tether

Just think of the frontline workers and their gargantuan endeavor

We will truly be grateful forever and ever

JUDGES COMMENTS

The judges really enjoyed reading all the entries and were impressed by the overall standard. Here are some of their comments:

P5 “I found this to be atmospheric and evocative.” **Annie Ashworth**, Director, Stratford Literary Festival

P14 “There is some wonderful imagery used in this poem that captures the treasures among the chaos of life in lockdown.” - **Dr Richard Goode**

P6-7 “Lovely sense of rhythm. Liked the line ‘Aged Parmesan, truffles, kumquats or lime.’ “ - **Sue and Robin Hancox**

P8 “Beautifully simple on the surface but well written and thought provoking” - **Richard Howarth**, Editor Stratford Herald

P14 “Strident and evocative. Reminiscences of Betjeman and Eliot. Very effective.” **Margaret Hunter**

P20-21 “There is a real meditative quality about this one - its like looking through a microscope - focused on one observation. The repetition is brave. Really fine.” - **Anton Lesser**

P25 “Great fun with strong stories. I particularly like Molly - nicely depicting the idiosyncrasies of cats.” - **Beverley Thorpe**, Tysoe & District Record

We would like to say a **BIG THANK YOU** to all of our judges for supporting our first ever Poetry Challenge. The ‘late entries’ were excluded from the judging.

Anthology of Poetry - collated and produced by Shirley Cherry for the Tysoe Record