

POETRY

20 +

Folio 1989



Mary Williams

Courtesy of Evening Gazette

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Elton Edenbury

Mary Williams

SONNET
OF THE FIVE THE GREAT ADVENTURE

Frank Strickland

LARRY MARPLES

POETRY TWENTY PLUS

The Group held its first meeting on 23rd May, 1962.
Regular meetings continued and Folios of members' work
have appeared almost every year since 1967.

Mary Williams was continuously Chairman and Secretary of
20+, notwithstanding her lifelong struggle with diabetes,
until her death in December, 1989.

She was well known for her contributions in the field of both
local and family history, as well as for her support and
encouragement to all lovers of poetry.

THE LAST ON THE BRIDGE

Victor Mollath

THE SNOWMAN
UNDER THE INFLUENCE
MASKS

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TIME TRIP

Step into the Time Machine.
Close the door, shut out the Present.
Fingers on the controls,
Eyes on the observation screen
As the Past unrolls
On the reel. The screen is dark
It clears,

Dimly at first, I see
The shapes of former years.
Sparrow Park - I know
That name, it's a farm
Quite near where I live
But I look at it now
From a Century and a half ago.

A young man strides across the fields ...
Knocks at the cottage door ...
An elderly man appears ...

"Why now school-maester, what does want wi me ?
Census, tha says ? Tha wants me to tell thee
What folk slept in my cottage here last night ?
Government mun have it ? Art sure that's right ?
Nay, I'm no simpleton, I know that's true.
Yon lads in London have naught else to do
But send thee troubling householders like us
With all that kind of foolishness and fuss.
Well - last night there were five of us - nay wait a minute,
Joe came back from sea, you'll need count him in it.
That do you, Maester ? What ! You need some more ?
That's different from the Census that we had afore.
You must write all our names down, everyone ?
You'll use a deal of ink afore you're done.
You must have all our ages ? Well, what next !
When Missus hears about this she'll be vexed.
I call you cheeky, Maester. Oh, I see,
Approximate will do. Young man, it seems to me
You'll be in trouble with your darned approximation.

YORKSHIRE FOLK HERO

I don't know what is coming to this nation.
Not finished yet ? Another column to fill in ?
Were we all born in Yorkshire ? Why you villain
Of course we were, the lot of us, but you -
Schoolmaster came from Scotland. In't that true ?
Now, if you've finished, I've some work to do."

Did I hear the door slam as the reel moved on
Beneath my fingers - very hard to say.
More likely it was another Time Traveller
Off home - back to the Present - in the street
I'm faintly surprised at the traffic I meet.

Mary Williams.

YORKSHIRE FOLK HERO

Long ago in Ryedale
Many tales were told
Of their hero, Elphi
In the days of old.
Of his deeds of kindness
Done for his native dale,
Of his deeds of valour,
Never did he fail ...
Even the Prince of Darkness
Had to give him best
Fighting every evil,
Elphi took no rest.
Some places claim King Arthur
Others Robin Hood.
Ryedale had its Elphi
Ever doing good.

What was hero Elphi like ?
Tall and straight and strong ?
Dressed in shining armour ? No
You've got the picture wrong.

Don't mock Elphi, little chap
For I tell to you
Those who mocked the little chap
Had cause enough to rue.
Elphi's legs were bandy,
Twisted, wide apart,
Elphi's head misshapen
Though kindly was his heart.
Elphi's voice was squeaky
Hard on mortal ear,
But to folk in trouble
Very comforting to hear.

ELPHI'S FAME

Elphi's fame has faded now,
His story few can tell,
But visit Hutton and you'll meet
Those few that know him well.
His spirit lingers in that dale
Though Elphi has departed
For there you meet the people
Who are kind and generous hearted.

Mary Williams

FANNY MANGLES

While digging in the Archives and
Reflecting on the angles
Our past reveals to modern times
I came on Fanny Mangles.

A natty name is that, I thought,
And being one that wangles
A closer look at oddities
I studied Fanny Mangles.

I found some facts about her, yes ...
She was a widow lady
Who kept a Saltburn lodging house
In its Victorian hey-day.

Whatever was she like, d'you think,
This long-gone Fanny Mangles ?
Was her dress decorous, discreet,
Or was she hung with bangles ?

Her skirts would brush the ground of course,
No-one would glimpse her knees.
Would she have bobbed a curtsy
If she came on Mr. Pease ?

Was she a cheery, friendly soul ?
Or were there frequent wrangles
Between the other land-ladies
And Mrs. Fanny Mangles ?

She'd catered for the tourist trade
For half a dozen seasons ...
And then she seemed to disappear ...
I'd love to know the reasons.

So Family Historians, please,
Sorting your kinship tangles,
Amongst your forebears, have you got
Someone called Fanny Mangles ?

Mary Williams.

THE INVITATION

I hold the lamp of love aloft,
Which sheds its golden warmth around;
Come, step within its magic ring
Wherein all happiness is found.

Come unto my sheltering arms
And lay your head upon my breast,
Cast the cloak of care aside,
And let me give your spirit rest.

Unlock the mind of every thought,
And let your heart your actions lead;
Forget, forget, the dreary day,
For I will fill your every need.

So stand with me upon this sacred ground
Our hearts beneath our feet, so softly tread,
And let your eyes reveal the things
That faltering lips have left unsaid.

L.F. Davey

EXIT

True Jazz of many years ago
Play often on the stereo,
Though artists from the world have gone,
Their words and music still lives on.
Heartache and anguish hidden there:-
The desperation of despair,
That knew life's truth without a doubt
"Nobody wants you when you're down and out!"
The good times come, to fade away,
For some, the words as true today ...

Why is it that life seems to be
So cruel to the likes of me ?
I've taken life's brickbats on the chin,
Tried hard, but still can't win !
No matter what I do goes wrong,
Life's rubbish heap's where I belong !

It wasn't like that at the start.
I faced each day with willing heart.
Whate'er I had, with others shared
Only to find that no one cared !
My pride and patience put to test,
Becoming apathetic, like the rest.
No job or prospects, cash or friend,
My life just wasted at the end !
So, one solution seems to be
To end my life of misery.

Obtained enough that I might choose
The easy way, with pills and booze.
So, in my pocket hold the key
To free from care, eternity ...

No one will weep when I am gone,
Lost in abyss of oblivion,
But trust my sins will be forgiven,
Should I reach and knock on the gates of heaven.
No-hopers like me received they say,
As none are ever turned away.
When futile life's beyond recall
Perhaps find someone who wants me after all !

L.F. Davey

A TRIBUTE TO MARY WILLIAMS

A shock to learn how suddenly she'd died,
So over Twenty Plus no longer will preside !
Just two months since we said 'Goodnight' to you,
Not then aware it was the last adieu
To bid farewell. Your poetry and prose
We so enjoyed; but now the folder's firmly closed.

The light shut out from content of the mind:
That active life ! And thoughts it left behind !
Though absent at eve of 1990's Spring,
To time and place fond memories still will cling,
And members soon recall some turn of phrase,
A certain theme, and much in other ways.

Still at the appointed time and place we meet
To paint word-pictures from our library seat.
Our circle shrunk (you are no longer there)
And yet perhaps unseen, you hover near,
A spirit transposed from somewhat distant sphere
To guide our pen, to whisper in our ear ...

Such words we use, if we but choose aright,
Shine forth with faith throughout eternal night,
Keeps us in truth with those gone on before,
Their journey's end now on a distant shore
All having shed earth's legacy of pain,
Their work well done, and so it will remain.

L.F. Davey and Frank Talling

**THE ROYAL HOSPITAL SCHOOL
(HOLBROOK)**

I've walked 'neath your lofty tower,
Along your lengthy colonnades,
Learned tradition, pomp, and power,
While marching in your Church Parades.
I conquered fear on your high mast,
Which now, alas, is there no more,
Your discipline my mould did cast
Like thousands who had gone before.
I boxed, I swam, cross-country ran,
In Alma Mater manner,
I did the best that one boy can
To gain points to win "The Banner".
Now as I walk your playing fields,
And look down on the flowing Stour,
I know the power this place wields
Through all my days will still endure.
My life within these walls began,
You took the child, and made the man.

H.W. Hart

SO LITTLE, SO MUCH

How little's a little, how much is a lot ?
Depends very much on how little you've got.
To those with a lot a little's quite small,
But to those with a little, a little's their all.

H.W. Hart

THE PAIN OF LOVE

The pain of love is hard to bear,
Its pangs are sharp as blade of steel,
To come and find you are not there
Oh, who could know how sad I feel,
How low I am and sick at heart,
How much I yearn for you my dear,
Or hate the times we have to part,
When days are long and dull and drear.
Yet would I change this course or sting ?
Nay, I must say, and in all truth,
That love would be more cheap a thing
If all its paths with ease ran smooth:
But love that gives such pain to me
Is love as true as there can be.

H.W. Hart

AUTUMN

The colours change, and leaves begin to fall,
Another season creating its own scene
Which soon the mem'ry only will recall,
In reds and yellows, rusts, and changing green.
The morning now becomes more crisp and cool,
The shining sun no longer gives much heat,
At night the starlit sky means frost will rule
To chill the air and harden 'neath the feet.
Too soon the noble trees are gaunt and bare,
The sap lies dormant, sleeping in the roots,
It's only then that we become aware
That we must wait for Spring to see their shoots.
This splash of beauty must be meant to last
Until the grey of winter is well past.

H.W. Hart

IN FLORENCE A LADY

In Florence a lady,
With her stall by the wall,
Greeted us daily
As we emerged from our door.

This morning was special
With flags flying high.
"What is the occasion ?"
We asked at the stall.

"Liberation Day",
We were told with joy.
"Liberation Day" ?
It meant nothing to us.

"The war, it was ending,
The Germans, still here,
Struck fear in our hearts
As we waited all day."

"Next morning dawned clear ;
We waited again,
Still fearing the outcome ;
The enemy still here."

Tears mingled with joy
As she told us the rest,
"In the morning the British
Came over the bridge."

And again came the words,
And the tears still flowed,
"In the morning the British
Came over the bridge."

Evelyn Henderson

THE LAST ON THE BEACH

We're the last on the beach
I see, as always,
Always a sandcastle
Cannot be left
Till the incoming tide
Has filled up its moat
And demolished it flat.
Other folk leave
With their deckchairs and surfboards,
Carrying pushchairs
Or dragging their children.
And as they depart
The sky becomes suddenly
Flashy with seagulls.
Clattering, swooping
They skim to the sand
And scavenge the leavings.
Lundy hangs low
On a silver horizon,
Part of my childhood
And part of my children's.
Now it's my grandchildren
Digging and channelling,
Last on the beach.
The seagulls scream
And the hooded crows gather,
One lone pigeon
Potters and pecks
Taking possession
As everyone leaves,
They're last on the beach,
As always.

Peggy Loosemore Jones.

THE SNOWMAN

The Snowman that the men had made
Is nothing but a pile of snow
That when it thaws will quickly fade
Will very quickly start to flow

Into the gutter, down the drain
That carries waste away
With litter washed by all the rain
That fell here yesterday.

There's very little left behind.
Two eyes that once were lumps of coal,
A broken pipe, a melted mind;
A snowman cannot have a soul.

A snowman has no need of arms
No prospect but to melt away
No woman to extol his charms
His life-span scarcely lasts a day.

The first mild thaw or drop of rain
We, all of us, unless we care
Can hurry down the nearest drain
Can end up in the gutter there.

Vincent Mulholland.



UNDER THE INFLUENCE

I think myself most beautiful
Intelligent and sane
Most moral and most dutiful
But, for a start, I'm plain.

And as for my intelligence
I know I am no fool
But can't forget that negligence
I practised well at school.

My sanity is without doubt
My most intensive care;
I don't know what to do about
The time it is not there.

My duty, ah, my duty can
At times be most imposing.
I do it out of habit, man,
Except when I am dozing.

So if I give myself what's due
From ingrained modesty
I guess I'm far too good for you
And far too good for me.

Vincent Mulholland.

MASKS

The mask of Pulcinella on my face
I can laugh and no one sees my tears
No one knows what my emotions are
They are hidden by a wooden mask
Which is held to cover my face
Most important that I be myself
The wooden me that I have taken on
Not the flesh and blood that hides behind.

Pagliacci was, we know, a clown
Rednosed and his massive clownish cloak
Covered with the tassels of his trade
This was the guise, it was the mask he wore
And while they laughed, his tears were seen to fall
A melancholy figure, full of fun
Full of grief and also full of love
But he was lost without the love he craved.

Vincent Mulholland.

SONNET

O faithful comrades of the silent night,
Myriad stars, that hold the tracks of sky,
Watching while men must toil and love and die,
Filling the mind with majesty and might.
Mute gazers on the world, kind sympathy,
Dreaming upon the beggar's homeless state,
Eloquent judges that can wisely wait
For time to show what ultimate truth must be.
When to my troubled eyes no sleep will come,
I look for you: behold you still are there,
Throngs of eternal quiet over the hum
Of this great city. In your eyes appear
Thousands of years of history now dumb,
And filled with peace I rest, for you are near.

Eileen Rattenbury

**"OF THE FURZE, THE PRICKLY FURZE,
OF THE FURZE IS ALL MY SONG."**

A road winds up to Dartmoor
And laughs beneath the sky,
On either side the moorland
With ponies scampering by;
And far off in the distance
Among the Cornish Hills
Into the blue dim spaces
The sun its beauty spills.
On the heathered moorland
Is yellow Furze in bloom
With rags of sheep's wool fluttering
To wait the pixies' loom.
But high up in the moorland
The village-maidens say
As long as Furze is blooming,
Love must have its way.

Eileen Rattenbury



15 9 84

SUSY

Sleek, black silken fur,
Green eyes, whiskers mottled white,
Our Susy was never far from sight
Or sound, with piercing call,
Whether night or day, clambering
On bookshelves for our attention.
Loner of the wild bunch,
Timid, taking refuge behind
Brother's back.
Yet, in later years, patient hunter,
Sitting hours long by the burrows,
Outwitting the rabbits.

As time went by, more attached to us
You became, climbing up sweater sleeve,
To snuggle under human ears
Or chin, purring, rubbing, with such a din !
Or sitting on our knees,
By the warm fire's glow.
Sometimes snuggled in the crook
Of our arms, asleep, between us in the bed,
Relaxed and warm, on winter's night.

The chair, your favourite, is empty,
Silence reigns.
No more, the sleek, black, furry ball.
Green eyes no longer shine,
Whiskers won't twitch again.
Laughter, tears, memories, we share,
Dear Susy, these will linger long,
While you laze in the sun,
With our other long-departed feline friends.

Frank Strudwick

LOVE'S LABOUR

"A garden is a lovesome thing, God wot !"
That's not an apt description of our plot !
We tamed the jungle, with blood, sweat and tears,
Our only tools a spade, a fork and shears.

Ten years the task had taken to complete;
To wrest some order out of chaos was our feat.
For thirty years the weeds had run amok,
With waist high nettles, couch and giant dock.

These, now controlled (but never vanquished quite !)
Replaced by flower borders bright,
Dame violets scent the evening air,
With cranesbill, cowslip and the primrose fair.

Among a vast array of flowers and trees
Which flourish and can offer nectar for the bees,
But, even now, with broken dyke restored
Which, to the garden, shelter can afford.

Salt-primed gales, from every quarter sweep,
And, from our floral beds a bitter harvest reap !
No English garden, fanned by gentle breeze,
Is subject to such cruel blasts as these.

Though we must labour, day by day,
To keep the weeds and ruthless wind at bay,
Sometimes we can sit down beneath the boughs
Of wind pruned sycamore and ash to browse.

And gather strength to salvage, once again,
Some calm, in spite of storm and hurricane,
Love's labour is not lost, if we can be
At peace, in our Orcadian garden by the sea.

Mavis Strudwick

THE CHURCH

In isolation stands the church
Its outer fabric soiled with grime,
Defiant still, but unavailing,
A witness true, but not prevailing
Against the ravages of time.

No country lane or meadow pasture
Attracts the stranger to its door,
But planted firm in close connection
With terrace homes, 'mid dereliction
As tragic as the spoils of war....

It stands a monument of service,
A record of an active past,
Fond memories both grave and pleasant
A link between the past and present,
Yet teaching - nothing's built to last !

All earthly things are formed and perish,
'Our little systems have their day'
And time's fell hand will curb and fashion,
Ending life's most noble passion
And love and beauty pass away.

All living creatures bear this burden,
Finite is their lifetime span,
Growing, loving, laughing, crying,
Living long or short, then dying,
Every creature, even man !

This the problem every nation
Has to face and answer find,
And across the world's wide spaces
Countless men in countless races
Have accepted there is Mind.....

.....Behind the facade of the sunset,
In the beauty of the day,
In the splendour of the starlight
Seeing, trembling, gaining insight,
Mankind feels the urge to pray.

Out of this need escapes the cry -

** "Thou wilt not leave us in the dust:
Thou madest man, he knows not why,
He thinks he was not made to die;
And thou hast made him: thou art just".*

Frank Talling

** (Alfred Lord Tennyson)*

THE BOMBARDMENT OF HARTLEPOOL

(by units of the the German High Sea Fleet,
December 16th 1914; fifty five civilians
were killed, one hundred and fifteen wounded)

My father stirred his tea, and said
"It's blasting at the works, I think"
Then, "No, it's wind in chimney flue".
But distant thunder growled and grew
As we our morning cup did drink.

We sat around the breakfast table -
(This day began as any other)
With gossip and with cheery quip,
With food to eat and tea to sip,
My father, mother, and my brother.

It's true that we were then at war
But, - far beyond the sea.
We read of things remote to us,
We did our duty without fuss
And prized our liberty.

Despite the noises in the distance
We had no reason to delay,
'Twas very nearly time for school !
But now began in Hartlepool
A very different day.

Our neighbours stood at open doors,
Slow comprehension came,
Disturbed and then appalled, because
The savage ire of far off wars
Now seared them with its flame.

Oft had we heard the thunder roll,
Seen lightning bridge the sky,
But this new sound did chill the soul
And bursting shells did take their toll,
And innocents did die.

And as we sat at school that day
Absorbed in daily task,
Could we but know had passed away
In carnage grim across the bay
Our heritage, at last !

The earth was now a smaller place,
And close across the sea
Were people of another race;
Now eye to eye, and face to face,
We stand - eternally.

Frank Talling

