

Writing by Carers in Cumbria 2017

*“...fancies running wild
Beside clear streams and budding groves among
Will make thee happy, happy as a child”*



The Wordsworth family shared many of the concerns, anxieties, fears, losses and joys all too familiar to those caring for and about others today. The idea for the writing workshops came about because of these shared concerns, familiar experiences. It seemed like a great opportunity to explore some of these experiences with people who understand them from the inside out and it proved to be fascinating, thought provoking, very enjoyable and highly creative. Many thanks to all Carers involved across the county and to all those for who helped to make the workshops possible and for featuring the writers' work at their 2017 Annual Conference.

The writings included here are direct, honest, sometimes painfully so, often very witty and - occasionally - broadly humorous (be warned!). Some people made it clear from the outset that they didn't like poetry - it didn't stop them writing it! Others were equally clear that the last thing they wanted to do was write about their lives as carers - they didn't have to. The range of topics covered was as varied as the lives of everyone involved. Others relished the opportunity to explore that caring aspect of their lives in the company of people who got exactly where they were coming from and many surprised themselves by writing not just in the workshop sessions but in between times.

Thank you all for taking the time when time is so precious. I'm sure that everyone who hears or reads what you have written - individually and collaboratively - will find that it has been time well spent.

Susan Allen
Community Outreach Officer
The Wordsworth Trust
Dove Cottage, Grasmere, Cumbria, LA22 9SH
015394 35544

www.wordsworth.org.uk



WORDSWORTH TRUST

At Tullie House in Carlisle we played with ideas of Haiku. Originally Japanese, these short evocative poems most often focus on the natural world, sometimes capturing a single, startling image. They are generally made up of 17 syllables and are usually written in three units of 5-7-5 syllables. We took the view that rules are - sometimes - made to be broken! And, as in many of the sessions, we started with the Unbelievable and worked our way outwards... In Everyday Magic we took it in turns to write a line, fold the paper and pass it on to the next person to add the next without reading what had gone before. Other poems took as their starting point a line from a very touching poem by William Wordsworth. A companion pair of poems reflect on the bitter sweet experience of a mother and daughter and another was a spontaneous response to a very loud and repetitive announcement for someone to come to reception (there was no medical emergency!)

Unbelievable :

This poem doesn't need to rhyme.

Or so they say.

In a car boot sale

a postcard of Dove Cottage.

The garden seat waits.

Susan

Unbelievable :

*Behind the door at the tree,
little fairy world.*

*Unbelievable,
tiny door under the tree,
secret world awaits.*

*Somewhere to escape,
magical and mythical,
so many delights.*

Dreamy peaceful place.

*Real life is far away
and let's keep it there*

*Daniel Nixon
always up to some mischief
with his sideways glance.*

*Joshua Nixon
cheeky grin and party pose
funny little man.*

Katie

Unbelievable :

*A fish jumps out of the water
Breathless (now) almost*

*Unbelievable
marathon weary legs that
walk ever onwards*

*Construction today
build a tall high wall here then
pull it down again*

Wild Swimming in Paris :

*Cold, cold water.
Breathless in the Seine,
Only my movement to keep me warm.
Going wild, in Paris, in the winter
They said would be cool.
Cool - not really
Cold - definitely.
I swim to survive,
The cold drags me back,
Fighting against my feeble efforts
Cold, cold water...*

David

Everyday Magic :

*There is a yellow humming in the room
I can hear your voice in the sacred wind
Everyone finds some common ground with a hot drink
and some words
My fingers jingle as I write
I walk alone in the morning
Water cools in the corner, reflecting the light
The magic you give me from your soul makes the stars
in my soul shine brighter
Spring lambs compete to see who can jump higher and
ducks bob happily along on the water
I think of my grandad every time I see white feathers
Awake, alone, in the night*

Catherine, David, Emma, Katie, Susan

I Hear you Speaking In the Wind

*Standing in this field, shimmers of yellow,
bright blue sparks of vibrations, silky pink,
I see you standing out there under the sun
surrounded by a million flowers.*

*Your smile says it all even though
I see the nettles in your feet.*

*I too am sitting on similar nettles although
you can't see the invisible ones and
I can't show you the nettles stick in me
I know you feel them too.*

*Dark blue bursts of sparkling light
shimmer on your gleaming light,
a running river that is deeper than the ocean
but sparkles more than the stars.*

*I see you stand in the night
under the stars, crying in the same moonlight.*

*When I'd seen you swimming in the deep,
battling until you wanted to sleep,
I whispered with a tear, hold on mum,
just hold on. I got a boat
and kept you afloat.*

*you got a paddle and decided to row
right into the raging river, into a storm.*

*I took a turn down a different piece of river
You said, don't worry my dear,
Mummy is here.*

*Flashes of dark, flashes of fear,
Flashes of flowers in the stormy wind,
I then said, when sun sets and rises
I will be crying the same tears.*

Emma Summers

In the Void

*Emma, my daughter, screaming
with pain, lying on the
hospital bed.*

*Tears flow down my face as I'm
unable to do more than hold
her hand, to stroke her hair -
desperate for a doctor to help her.*

*Full of meds and pain she cries
Mum, mum, mum - she begs me
to stop the pain.*

*I call for the nurse again,
but they say that Emma has
had the total limit of meds.*

*Watching my daughter go
through this on a very regular
basis is heart-wrenching.*

*The night is vast but closes
in on Emma and me. I know
there are more hours of pain
for my beloved daughter Emma.
I will sit here and wait with you.*

*Emma is a true blooded warrior, fighting
through Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome Type 3,
Postural Orthostatic Tachycardia Syndrome,
chronic nerve, joint and muscle pain, fatigue.*

*Emma carries on the next day,
pain subsided to 7 out of 10.
Yes, her pain is usually medium
to high.*

*How Emma keeps going, I don't know.
The courage Emma shows is amazing.*

*My wonderful and
beautiful daughter, Emma.*

Iris Summers

“Three years she grew in sun and shower...”

William Wordsworth

Three years she grew in sun and shower.

Wow, she had a mighty power!

*She sang in the sun and shower
with mighty power. Three whole
years she grew in the sun and shower.*

Emma Summers

*Three years she grew in sun and shower,
Dark eyes, bare footed and strangely happy.*

Lindsey

*Three years she grew in sun and showers,
that loveliest of flowers,
a chattering of birds about her head
and garden of insects above that lovely girl.*

*She grew in laughter and dismay
at the antics of the creatures
which in her garden came to play.*

*At night she counted stars and threaded through
their mazy way to dreams of sunshine and of flowers.*

Susan

Tullies Tannoy

Can you contact reception please?

That's any medic

Can you contact reception please?

She's turning blue

Can you contact reception please?

Her face is swelling and she's choking

Can you contact reception please?

That's any undertaker to collect a body

Iris Summers

In Penrith and the Eden Valley we talked about some of the concerns shared by people caring for others and looked at some of the ways in which the experience of the Wordsworth family and their friends is reflected in their writing, whether in their journals, letters or poetry, and how it chimes with our own, often to quite a surprising extent. We also talked about writing - how creativity can be deeply personal, therapeutic, escapist and relaxing and how it can help us explore and understand history, other lives and our own. As in other sessions we tried our hand at making some collective poems, everyone taking turns to write a line without looking at what others had written and then sharing the surprise of how they turned out!

Tell me More

*Tell me more so I can see
If you are you and I am me.
Ties that bind, fetters that hold -
Voices drifting in, out and light softens.
Standing on other peoples' shoulders,
The only way to advance.
Call me once or call me twice
but please do call me for it is nice.
The circle binds but freedom calls.
Warm air, traffic and fancy taking flight..
The Carers' obsession? Food!*

Written in Rock

*History written in rock and drowned in waters: in over our heads.
As I sit and watch you from the shore of my mind
I marvel at God's hand in your beauty - peace, pure peace.
There are many "Lake Districts" - the Romantics, the Environmentalists,
the Visitors, the Farmers!
All leave their stakes (and prejudices). Is it perpetual conflict?
Ancient trails are still trodden in secret and en-masse.*

John, Mark, Trish and Susan

In Kendal our conversation ranged from farming (including an opportunity to hear a recording of David's wonderful poem, *Kirkwall Auction Mart*, published by Bloodaxe Books) to Lakeland tourism, from painting and stitch-work to quarrying and geology and included a fascinating discussion about everyone's experience (good and bad) of reading poetry at school.

As in other groups we wrote a poem by sharing the writing of lines and then another shared poem emerged as we explored the literary "conversation" about landscapes, agriculture and industry argued across time between two other very distinctive local poets, Wordsworth and Norman Nicholson. The group's response was made fresh and strong in their own wall poem, responding to Nicholson's poem, *Wall*.

An Appearance of Diamonds

A quiet day in Kendal, off the fells and into town

A flash of inspiration is all I seek

I wondered lonely as a cloud

I should be weeding, not wording

(I don't know what I'm supposed to be doing)

Just one line? Must it rhyme? I pollarded am!

Feeling apprehensive - not feeling creative

I'm not wandering now, just warm and well

The gull dives beneath the brine

Reappearing a glittering diamond

Season of mist and mellow fruitfulness

I Wandered Lonely as a Wall

I saw a falling, tumbling wall the other day.

Looking for the farmer to tell

There was no one there - a neglected house.

So the wall's still just pile of stones.

In winter the water freezes, the ice expands.

A wall should be made to move,

Ice moving stone so far it tumbles.

The water and ice can move them.

Check the quarry face every day,

The stone can move a foot -

Don't stand under it! You can see from below

Its arthritic form now exposed.

You have to move them for safety: a fifty ton rock.

They don't look very big but they ain't half heavy.

Think of all the millions of sea creatures that died to make it.

There are fossils in limestone, split the stone and smell the salt.

Stone blown in to the making of bridges:

Stone from Holme Park Quarry,

Gaitbarrow Quarry, extinct now,

Now climbers, flowers and orchids.

*Ann, Bernice, Bill, Cathy, Charles,
David, Ged, Ian, John, Miggy, Nellie and Susan*

Before MSA I Could...

Before MSA I could
Lecture and massage and counsel
And talk

I could walk 12 miles and act in a play
I could sew and crochet and paint
I could sing

I could enjoy having sex and respond
And dance and all manner of things
And enjoy

Now I do none of these things
I can feel useless old and a drag
I could wish I was dead.

BUT

I can walk 4 miles on a good day
I can organise a party for friends
Use a keyboard

I have enough money to have cleaners
To shop for clothes and gifts
From my buggy

I can enjoy going out to see plays
To listen to music to say my piece
Rejoice in the weather

I like where I live; my doctor is kind
Friends visit we laugh at life together
So much to rejoice in and treasure

And my love
When I count my many blessings
I count you twice

Ann Lancaster

Green Spring

Bright fresh green. Dark conifer green. Flashes of pink as the copper
beech unfurls; an avenue of love and glory; blue of bluebells, softer
blue of wild forget-me-nots and fields
of scented white garlic; horse chestnut chandeliers; May blossom
pouring over hedges outshining the remnant-dusty pink
end-of-season cherry; blue sky and floating stray lost white cloud;
loud birds, children shrieking in play on dry parkland grass.

Early summer this May. A sense of all flourishing growing.

What will be will be. The seasons move, gone in a blink.

My willow green and gold bed waits

Ann Lancaster

In Workington we explored ideas about poetry - whether or not people read it, liked it, understood it. The results were that people wrote it - collectively and individually. People wrote shared poems, exploring themes of time and the choices we make. Some wrote highly personal, very moving individual poems and together the group tried out a sonnet (thanks Jeff!) and a mischievous triolet (we can explain ... I think!). The sessions also allowed people time (a recurring theme) to pause and take breath while reflecting on the places they know, the landscapes and turns of phrase that belong there and the people who matter.

Not Really my Thing

Poetry is not my thing
I much prefer to have a sing
Go outside and take a look
at what's around or read a book

Poetry is not my thing
I've said it before and I'll say it again
Gardening gives me much more pleasure
That is my idea of leisure

Maybe I was quick to judge
and only needed a little nudge
to grab some paper and some ink
Sit right down and have a think.

Hilary Wilkinson

On the Road

Where to start?
There's the question.
Land or Sea -
Which way for me?
North or South,
East or West,
Which way is best?
Who's to know?
The choice is mine
Which way to go?

Time

Time ticks by
Sometimes very slowly.
Sometimes gone in a flash.

Too tired to dash,
Too tired to wonder
Where the time goes.

Sometimes we need to plan
And take a minute to think
Hoping it will stand still
But it never will.....

Anne, Becky, Dot, Dot, Hilary, Jane, Janet, Sophie and Susan

Mapping the Place

Heading for the ...

... should be heading for t',

Should be headin' (get rid of the g).

Heading for ... eh?

Are you still with us?

If you're not Cumbrian you won't have a clue!

Laid back in Lincolnshire,

Talkin' Lanky in Lancashire -

A tall person, taller tales, linkin' places.

Havin' a natter, a good crack

(or is that craic?), a bit of a yadder.

Youse bein' a bit mardy, marra -

stop being a mardy arse!

Now you've got a monk on -

Haway man - well I'll go for me tea.

Haddaway and shite man, get on your bike!

I was pinin' a worm - was missin' me marra.

Do you fancy a brew?

Where you frae? Where do you belong?

Anne, Dot, Hilary, Jane, Janet, Jeff, Michael, Susan

Miss-chief or 'It's never too late...'

(A Triolet in 30 Minutes)

Mischief is all over her face
Knocking on doors and running away
Fleeing the scene without a trace
Mischief is all over her face
Kicking the ball all over the place
She doesn't care what the neighbours say
Mischief is all over her face
Knocking on doors and running away

Andrea, Anne, Dot, Dot, Hilary, Michael, Susan

Just Another Day

Morning, a new day dawns
What lies before me amidst my yawns
Bring me, fetch me, help me, will it never end
I feel like a tree that will break and bend
We walk hand in hand , our love never dies
Although my heart aches and I sometimes cry
I'll care for him until the end
My husband, my lover, my very best friend
Night has come and sleep is calling
Another day over and I am crawling
Under the duvet warm and snug
In my own world but surrounded by love

Dot Bridges

Garden Makeover

The garden looks like a warzone
We've had the builders round
Full of holes, sand and rubble
No flowers or shrubs to be found

They arrived on Tuesday morning with
mini digger to hand
Spades, tools and wheelbarrow and
proceeded to churn the land

There's a problem with drainage you see
Standing there with water up to the knee
This problem must be sorted soon
In order for the flowers to bloom

My Daughter

I love you more than words can say
and when we are apart
I feel the strings of love are
pulling at my heart!

Hilary Wilkinson

Footsteps :

A Sonnet in 15 minutes

The plants and drugs around us as we walk,
The mushrooms, bluebells, cowslips, daffodils,
Inspiring conversation as we talk
Along the rugged pathways and the hills.
From Cumbria and Geordie-land we come,
Soaking up the loveliness of the views,
Escaping the everyday and humdrum
To chase away our worries and our blues.

Blue carpets of bluebells stretch wide and free,
Red rose of Lancashire, white rose of York,
Dutch fields of Lincolnshire fill us with glee,
We're seeing in our mind's eye like a hawk.
This day our journey has come to an end
These pictures are stored in future to spend.

Anne, Dot, Hilary, Jane, Janet, Jeff, Michael, Susan



Carlisle Carers
1st Floor, Fusehill Medical Centre
Fusehill Street, Carlisle CA1 2HE
T: 01228 542156
E: admin@carlislecarers.co.uk

Eden Carers
Mardale Road
Penrith CA11 9EH
T: 01768 890280
E: enquiries@edencarers.co.uk

Furness Carers
Hindpool Community Centre
Nelson Street, Barrow in Furness
LA14 1NF T: 01229 822822
E: admin@furnesscarers.co.uk

South Lakeland Carers
Unit 16, Shap Road Ind Estate
Shap Road, Kendal LA9 6NZ
T: 01539 815970
E: admin@sldcarers.org.uk

West Cumbria Carers
Unit 7F Lakeland Business Park
Lamplugh Road, Cockermouth
CA13 0QT
T: 01900 821 976
E: general@westcumbriacarers.co.uk

With grateful thanks to:
Cumbria County Council
The Wordsworth Trust
The Daffodil Hotel

