

Poetry Series

**Bill Clohesy**  
**- poems -**

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## Bill Clohesy(3 Feb 1950)

Bill Clohesy – a writer in his own residence.

When I was a kid I used to write, tear it up and throw it away because writing wasn't a man's thing to do. One day an Uncle who I was staying with came to me with what I had torn up – what's this? I found it in the rubbish bin. I admitted it was mine and said I threw it out because I didn't like it. That's when he made me promise never to throw my writing, my ideas, away. Just because you don't like it, doesn't mean somebody else won't like it.

The first poem I ever really wrote was called 'Red' and it didn't make the school annual, but I kept it. I also had a book of verse 'Up until Now' bound when I was twenty. I still have that although it is badly worn.

When my first marriage went kaput, my daughter went with her mother to live in Western Australia and from the age of eleven sent me her life in poems. I kept them all and recently gave them all back, nicely bound in leather, for her thirtieth birthday. You kept them all? Yes honey more than 200 pages complete with spelling mistakes.

I never dreamed for a moment that I could write a book. The first time I managed to get 10,000 words together in some sort of readable order, I was ecstatic. When lightning struck the power lines and blew the living hell out of my computers and my 10,000 words, I cried.

In more recent years I started writing short stories and was delighted when the first one I ever submitted was published in a book called Making the Connection (2002) . Woorilla Literary Magazine has published a few pieces and I have just finished a work 'Conversation with Joy' about the writings of Joy Hester, which will hopefully feature in a new book about the writers of the Dandenongs.

Wild Woman Dreaming was never intended as a book. It started from the true story of an ancestor, Annie, who went for the milk and never returned home. I mixed a bit of the legend of the Wild Woman of Gippsland and the prostitutes strike in Clunes during the gold rush and there it is – a book! I keep telling myself that I will never finish it, just as I never finished the Cammerata, but this time there seems to be a beginning, a middle and an end. I don't care if it is never published. I will have the final draft bound and I will keep it so that my descendants can have that little bit of insight into what I was doing in 2006.

Recently I went away for a week to a Celtic music camp where I spent time with other songwriters. I don't consider myself a songwriter (and I make no claim to be a novelist) but I came away from the week with a heightened sense of 'Yes - I can do it' and it doesn't matter who gets to hear you or read your work. The point is one has put it all down in writing. Song, poem or story - long or short - it doesn't matter. What matters is that you write it!

# Road Of Ancient Tara's Ruin

Road of Ancient Tara's Ruin

Two dogs bark  
A man nods and  
the pilgrims shield  
the flames on the hill  
known as Tara.

For if Ireland has a heart- it beats in Tara.  
Tara. Mating bed of sun and soil where  
fire was born and water bled from  
stone. Where winds blew seed  
that fed the men of Eire.

Tara - Seat of Kings - not born - but fought  
and Druid sworn. Where poet, priest and  
pauper stood - arm in arm to hold the line  
a thousand years. Nay! five thousand years  
this lore of Eire.

This rising hill - where men  
in battle roared and horses reared  
as blades rose high and  
curbed the arms that drove  
the lance into the heart of Tara.

Recall the kings once crowned -  
born of ancient creed who fed on  
goose - now dead and slain -  
and buried deep in  
ancient Ireland's name.

No more the threat from o'er  
the sea rapes Tara. But incest deep  
within her fathers land tears  
her skin and bares the secrets  
buried deep in Tara's womb.

Blows still the wind on Tara's slope and  
stirs the ancient soul – still the blade is strong  
and fast the lance that carves a path into her soul  
as unsworn kings bleed her dry  
while the jesters chew their fat.

Hold strong the Hill of Tara  
let her beat in silence, rest. Shield her  
burning heart and cheer  
the toil of weary pilgrims lest we ride  
the road of ancient Tara's ruin.

Bill Clohesy 2007

## The Road of Ancient Tara's Ruin

### Background

The archaeological site at Hill of Tara is 5,000 years old. Many theories and assumptions have been conjectured about its purpose. The popular belief is that the site served as the sacred ceremonial grounds from which the ancient High Kings of Ireland ruled for a thousand years.

It is Ireland's most sacred stretch of earth and one of the most important ancient landscapes in Europe. The Hill of Tara, with its passage tomb, earthworks and prehistorical burial mounds, is the mythical and ceremonial capital of Ireland.

But now the landscape in county Meath, north-west of Dublin, is the subject of a campaign to save it from what one archaeologist has called the 'worst case of state-sponsored vandalism ever inflicted on Irish cultural heritage'.

More than 50 senior academics have joined a protest against state plans to build a four-lane motorway through the valley and create a 10-hectare (25-acre) floodlit motorway exchange half a mile from the hill itself, slicing through what historians say is a hinterland of settlements and burial grounds.

St Patrick is said to have converted the Irish to Christianity here and in 1843

Daniel O'Connell addressed a gathering of 1 million in his campaign for an Irish parliament.

A pagan sanctuary which became the centre of Irish kingship, Tara served as an icon of nationalism and a symbolic battleground in the 1798 rebellion. In the late 19th century, when a group calling themselves the British-Israelites decided to excavate Tara, convinced that the ark of the covenant was buried there, outraged protesters included the poet WB Yeats.

On a good day you can see half the counties of Ireland from the Hill of Tara. It is not its beauty that drives campaigners, but its archaeological and historical importance as the 'heart and soul of Ireland' and one of the few prehistoric landscapes in Europe that is still intact.

They are demanding soul-searching about Ireland's apparent lack of respect for its history now that it has become wealthy.

Dozens of academics from Ireland and abroad have written of their concerns in the Dublin-based Sunday Tribune. Dennis Harding of the archaeology department at Edinburgh University called the plans 'an act of cultural vandalism as flagrant as ripping a knife through a Rembrandt painting'.

Archaeologists who have researched Tara say the nine-mile stretch of the new M3 motorway will mean the excavation of at least 28 sites and monuments in the road's corridor. But these, they say, will be 'ultimately destroyed'.

They expect many more sites to be affected, with 48 archaeological zones within 500 metres of the road corridor and around one site every 300 metres along the road itself.

Conor Newman of the archaeology department at the National University of Ireland, Galway, is the director of a state-funded archaeological research programme at the Hill of Tara.

'They are knowingly putting this four-lane motorway through the middle of what is actually a relatively compact but uniquely important archaeological landscape,' he said.

'I don't mean landscape in an aesthetic sense, I mean landscape in an

archaeological and historical sense. They are doing it willingly when they could have come up with alternative ideas.'

He said archaeologists had not been listened to.

What puzzles many international archaeologists is why Ireland has chosen this motorway route at a time when British authorities are spending hundreds of millions of pounds trying to undo past mistakes at Stonehenge. There they are grassing over one road and burying another in a tunnel to remove traffic from the surroundings of the ancient monument.

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Bill Clohesy

# The Marriage Breakers Tent

The Marriage Breakers Tent

'Cuppa tea', me mate said to me  
'Sure', said I with a smile  
'Then I'll be putting the kettle on  
It will only take a wee while.'

We sat there in the twilight  
Chattin' as the sun set low  
Sippin' on our cups o' tea  
And watchin' the campfire glow.

When – BANG – I fairly jumped  
Flamin' well caught me on the hop -  
A rusty old truck had backfired  
And came to a sudden stop.

This old bloke and his wife climbed out  
And started to unpack their load  
Cursin' as they threw their stuff  
Right across the road.

Then out they come with the canvas  
Old and ripped and spent  
Me mate said, will you not be lookin' at that  
It's a marriage breakers tent.

It was enormous – humungus  
It was coloured green and brown  
And tryin' to erect this type of tent  
Could, well, perhaps bring a marriage down.

'You've got it round the wrong way  
You've got it inside out  
That's not the door it's the window'  
The wife began to shout.

'Leave me alone, who's doin' this  
Get out of me flamin' hair

Go and blow the mattress up  
And get rid of all that air.'

The night came down and the moon went up  
But the tent was far from done  
'Bet you a fiver', me mate grinned at me  
'That it's not up before the sun'.

And he could have been right, I surmised  
As they kept up the hullabaloo  
'Don't tie that flamin' rope down there  
I'll trip over it when I get up to go to the loo.'

On and on and on they went  
Til finally - 'That'll do - it's good enough  
I'll fix the rest tomorrow  
But now I'm really stuffed'.

'Tomorrow, tomorrow, tomorrow - always tomorrow  
Why can't you get things right  
Why, you said yourself this morning  
We're only camping over night.'

'Another cuppa', said me mate  
And I knew just what he meant  
When he said, 'will you be not looking at that  
It's a marriage breakers tent.'

Bill Clohesy 2007 - Inspired by Matt at Lake School Koroit - 2007

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