

Poetry Series

Brian P FitzGerald
- poems -

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Brian P FitzGerald()

A Christmas Wassail Or Be You Healthy This Christmastide

We gather today to wish you health -
Wæs hæl, wæs hæl a toast to all;
For you we raise a glass for wealth
A heartfelt toast that's not too small.

Wæs hæl, wæs hæl!

Ignored he sits, cold and homeless -
Wæs hæl, wæs hæl to Bernie dejected;
Bottle in hand, unloved and rootless
By shoppers avoided, despised, rejected.

Tesco customers pass him by -
Wæs hæl, wæs hæl a toast to you
Christmas is coming, so much to buy,
God bless us all - so festive and true.

Wæs hæl, wæs hæl!

Ebolo, this Christmas to families so dread -
Wæs hæl, wæs hæl for those who wait to die;
And to those who bury the dead,
For doctors and nurses, their safety deny.

For those who flee Islamic State -
Wæs hæl, wæs hæl to those who perished;
Beheaded by blades of butchers who hate.
For evil that stalks, a demonic that's cherished.

Remember the dying of war-torn Syria -
Wæs hæl, wæs hæl to children of famine,
Orphans alone from Guinea to Somalia,
Scratching existence from a soil so barren.

Wæs hæl, wæs hæl!

So raise your glasses enjoy your health -

Wæs hæl, wæs hæl a toast to all;
Happy are we, but what's the truth -
A birth, long past - a child so small?

Wæs hæl, wæs hæl!

Brian P Fitzgerald

A Salute To The Dead

Spare a moment to salute the dead;
(Grieve oh grieve for victims who died!)
Facing religious extremists in dread,
For their god their lives denied.

Death by Taliban bullets in Peshawar
(Lament, oh lament for those who mourn!)
Children once lived, but live no more.
Innocent youngsters slaughtered and torn.

Many now flee Islamic State -
(Sigh oh sigh for those who perished!)
Beheaded by blades of butchers who hate.
For evil that stalks, a demonic that's cherished.

Those in Paris knew not their fate -
(Mourn oh mourn for those who died!)
Slaughtered by guns of killers who rate
Life so low and lives deride.

Remember the dying of war-torn Syria -
(Weep oh weep for the children of famine!)
Orphans alone from Guinea to Somalia,
Scratching existence from a soil so barren.

People of Baga, butchered and slain
(Wail oh wail! for those who perished!)
Slaughtered by Boko Haram profane.
People's lives no longer cherished.

For all of us, whatever belief,
Renounce, renounce such hate demonic
That brings to many, abysmal grief -
By extremist actions so diabolic.

16 January 2015

Brian P FitzGerald

Ah! Little Woodlouse - Are You Unreal?

Ah, little woodlouse,
wood-rot emerging,
light-avoiding, damp-a-seeking
along the path you crawl.

Yes, little wood louse,
surroundings-aware,
dryness-detesting,
distressed and sad you are.

Know, little wood louse,
the journey you make
exists for me and me alone,
An illusion you are.

Go, little wood louse;
I shut my eyes -
Depart my world, exist no longer.
Back to dank and dark decay.

You, little woodlouse,
In my mind a passing glimmer;
You live no more, a brief transition:
I alone, created your being.

Get this, wee creature,
So 'Meaningless! Meaningless! '
Your life is but a thing imagined;
I alone, am real.

Ah, little wood louse,
My eyes I open, I see you've gone;
What manner of being were you?
You held no thoughts,

No soul, no mind, no spirit,
Of these, not one;
Whimsy, I say, a fancy - no more -
Just a creation of my consciousness.

(East Yorkshire, UK, 25 December 2011)

Brian P FitzGerald

Dancing On Teg's Nose

Poppy alone, so tired, so bored,
On the bench, shiv'ring and cold, □
By all her lovely friends ignored.
'Poppeeee! ' - a voice so clear and bold.

'Good to see you, Pixie, my friend!
I've nothing to do and all alone!
Time with you I'd love to spend!
Your kindness to me you've shown! '

'Poppy dear, let's dance and dance!
With you, my pal, so happy, I'll be!
This way and that, we'll jiggle and prance,
On Teg's Nose unbound and free! '

Pixie and Poppy, hand in hand,
Side-by-side away they flew.
Across the forest and over the land,
Soaring through the sky so blue!

And now they glide, down and down,
Across the lake so tranquil and deep -
And on Teg's Nose, above the town,
They hop and skip among the sheep.

Up and down they frolic and romp
Through the bracken they hop and flip
Over the heather they scramble and stomp
Through the mud they splash and slip!

Arm in arm, so cool, such fun!
To the heights they dance and skip -
Covered in muck; they jump and run
With tights all torn; with mud they drip!

'Time! ' says Pixie, 'now, to go! '
'Oh dear! ' says Poppy, but off they fly.
Till they see the garden below -
And down she wallops from on high!

Now back on the bench Poppy's so sad,
As Pixie's gone she's so shaken.
'Poppy, time for tea! ' calls Dad.
'Supper tonight - liver and bacon! '

'Ugh! ' thinks Poppy, 'Yuk! Oh no! '
'Nice time in the garden? ' asks Pa.
'Cool! ' says she. ('Now trouble I know! '
'Your tights are torn! How muddy you are! '

(East Yorkshire,15 August 2014)

Brian P FitzGerald

Ermine The Earwig Is Shocked

speaking of shocking things
as people do these days
i noted an incident in the centre last week
which really made my blood run cold
a portly but dignified gentleman with a green monocle
and a nonchalant manner

suddenly reached up to his left eye
pulled it from its socket and ate it

the consternation in the chooch was immediate
coffee cups were upturned on all sides
and fay traders screamed loudly
i sat huddled in the corner

the chooch wadding, or was it the honsic, was equal to the occasion
sweating profusely he drew on his dignity and
said you cannot do this ere

you cannot intimidate members of the fay trade team
i am wise beyond my many years,
man and youth in this chooch
you are a glass eater and that was a glass eye

why cant people mind their own biz
that was no glass eye it was a pickled onion
this is a curse of the chooch that waddings are forever
attempting to interfere and restrict the liberty of the individual

he picked himself up swallowed his cup of coffee strode into the vestry
and passed out of my life for ever....

ermine

(East Yorkshire, 16 August 2014)

Brian P FitzGerald

Middleton Wold

The morning wakes: the sun's misty rays
Touch yonder crest
Of Middleton Wold above the hazy vale
T'wards the distant west.

Snared by a gentle breeze, the gossamer filaments
Of early morning mist,
The wraiths of night, now quit the ling'ring shade,
And chalky slopes gently kiss.

Fleecy clouds, whose shadows pitch and toss
Across the wave-like hills;
Cruise the rolling seas of earthly life,
'Till over the summit spill.

Above the copse of beech where now I stand
Red kites soar and glide.
A timeless scene: so humble, so small I feel;
Such rural vistas wide!

Wither now, with passing years I wonder -
Vistas wider still?
I pause and breathe the air so clean and fresh,
And hear a woodpecker drill.

Are transient shadows that briefly cross the hills,
And birds that soar on high,
But elusive fleeting moments in the passage of time?
- no more than a passing sigh?

Are we but tiny specks in time and space?
Within an ageless infinity?
What other worlds await the other side?
In sublime and blessed serenity?

The sun is high: I've far to go, my journey's long,
Across the distant hills
Of Middleton Wold, above the hazy vale,
Which Heaven's rich suffusion fills.

Brian P FitzGerald

Millington Wood

I stroll along the winding track
That leads me down to Millington Wood;
The sun is warm upon my back -
I pause, and look where once we stood.

The chalky slopes down which we scrambled,
The Pastures where sheep now safely range,
Millington Wood through which we rambled,
And on and up to Millington Grange.

"Remember, " she said, "remember me."

In the copse where quiet we sought
We heard a thrush, its call repeated;
For us, great joy and peace it brought -
But now, no song, my joy depleted.

My soul is gripped with sudden chill;
The air is laden with decay;
No birds sing; the air is still,
Bittersweet thoughts upon me weigh.

In midst of grief, 'though now apart
My Love is near, but how I mourn
Distant memories that touch my heart.
My love to you was ever sworn.

My sight is blurred with tears of sadness
Memories of times, so loving, so blessed;
Times of laughter, joy, and gladness,
Of walking together, our love expressed

"Remember, " she said, "think of me."

A gentle breeze caresses my cheek
Above, a thrush begins to sing -
Is this the consolation I seek?
Is this the solace that God will bring?

I see the swallows dart and wheel,
Through the languid air they chase;
My lips a gentle touch now feel,
I close my eyes, I raise my face -

"A feather, " she said, "remember me."

My love, my sweet you're with me now
Your tender kiss, (such joy I've found!)
Your loving warmth and care, I vow,
Bring to me such love unbound.

My eyes I open; in the wood I stand.
Alone I am, but not alone;
A feather so soft, now in my hand,
Your presence my love - this you've shown.

"Remember, " she said, "think of me."

I see the swallows dart and wheel,
Through the languid air they chase;
I turn to walk the way I came
I close my eyes, I raise my face -

"Remember, " she said, "remember me."

(25 June 2014, East Yorkshire Wolds)

Brian P FitzGerald

Morning Prayer

The freezing draught deeply bites;
A grey-robed priest now shuffles past
"Let us Pray" the rector cites,
My collar I raise, I glance at the words.
"We have erred and strayed like lost sheep....."
I strayed last night; I froze in the yard....
I erred and sinned, for me no sleep
I followed my heart's devices and desires...."

Now on he drones, glasses perched on nose.
Th'old man sniffs and agèd feet they shuffle.....
My heart's desires I followed, He knows
"O God, make speed to save us."
The words, they echo in chantry cold.
The chill - it muffles and stifles - no reward
Face down - in snow incarnadine behold;
"O ye Ice and Snow bless ye the Lord...."

An old crone, she coughs and gasps,
The murky breath, it hangs suspended.
"Lord, shew thy mercy upon us, " the priest he rasps
"Mercifully hear us, when we call upon thee."
No mercy from me was shown.
My fingers in pockets deep I thrust.
So tainted with frozen guilt, I own
For him in whom I betrayed his trust

The old priest sniffs, a dew-drop hangs,
To holy book is close and low.
My innermost guilt my mind harangues
My secret is buried by fallen snow,
From whom no secrets are hidden?
Who knows but thee, O Lord?
To me, O Lord, is salvation forbidden?
"Give peace in our time, O Lord."

"Let my cry, O Lord, come unto thee! "
O grant to me thy peace, O Lord.

(East Yorkshire, UK,15 March 2012)

Brian P FitzGerald

On Bempton Cliffs

I hear the waves below the cliffs,
I smell the new-ploughed soil,
I hear the gentle whirr of bees
And watch the clouds pass me by.

On top of Bempton Cliffs I stand,
A headland proud, above the shore.
Far below the rocks withstand
The thud and crash of North Sea waves.

The sun above: its light now dancing
On waves below in glittering sparkles;
A fleeting spray, a momentary halo
Of diamonds, flashing high.

The sunlight catches the flutt'ring wings
Of puffins racing across the spray.
Noisy kittiwakes with fish they bring
To nests that cling to ledges so high.

From heights above a lark now sings,
Unseen, but soaring high and free.
From east the gentle breeze now brings
The sounds of surf from far below

Overhead, the keening cries
Of herring gulls who swoop and fly,
Proclaiming 'tis they who rule the skies
Above the cliffs and sea so high.

Through the fiendish bustle below
Haughty gannets sleekly glide,
No lordly favours to any bestow,
Onward, unperturbed, side by side.

Puffins and gulls in crowded profusion;
Their nests on ledges inches wide,
Perched on cliff in perilous fashion -
A frenzied city on rock face clinging.

Above I see the soaring chase
And hear the restless realms below;
I feel the sun upon my face
And feel the breeze so gently blow.

The sun is warm, air now still,
My drowsy mind is put to test
As back I lie on chalky till,
Perchance to ponder as now I rest.

Detached from all I start to think
Of heaven's domains in the skies
And restless realms upon the brink,
With life frenetic and shrieking cries.

A cliff-hanging city, so congested,
Squabbling and scrabbling above the rocks;
Above, a world not constrained,
Fresh and free in every way.

One below, one so high.
One so brutal, one so free -
On the cliffs and in the sky;
What manner of worlds are these I see?

I hear the waves below the cliffs,
I smell the new-ploughed soil,
I hear the gentle whirr of bees
And sleepily see the clouds slip by.....

(East Yorkshire 21 September 2013)

Brian P FitzGerald

On Some Primeval Shore

I

No soul sees:

The sun is hot, the water's warm,
No children laugh, no joggers run;
On sandy beach no footprints are left;
No bathers splash, no sea-gull's cry, not one

No humans observe:

Torrents of water from far-distant mountains
Through alpine ravine with slopes of scree,
With fragments of tree-fern and coarse sandy grit –
Now sluggish and slow and dropped out to sea.

No person hears:

A rumble of thunder across the strand;
Raindrops spot the beach before the tide
Now spreads its mud across the sand,
And wavelets with silt the ripples hide.

II

Investigation:

"Sir", he cries, "that boulder, on the shore! "
The students they watch as chisel strikes the block
The fissile gritstone begins to crack; "more! "
They cry; it splits, they stare, "see, the rock....."

Revelation:

No sitting in class, no passage in book, I swear,
Can grip the mind and so amaze
As now the sight on which the pupils stare -
A hidden revelation as pupils gaze.

Understanding:

Their minds now thrill at what's before,
Gritstone is split; a gasp of breath:
A scene revealed - a sandy shore:
Ripples in the sand and a shower that passed.

Brian P Fitzgerald

On The Death Of Petal - 10 July 2012

So what is memory? Why so fleeting?
It catches the soul when time has passed -
Recollections so soft and warm,
But 'neath the tree asleep she lies.

Why does the past intrude so sorely?
The past is not to stay, hold back the tears
and look towards the sky; the leaves rustle,
a breeze so gentle, so soft so warm.

My Beauty, stiff and cold, rests
where corruption takes its hold.
Now grief returns, I turn away
I look towards the sky.

The garden, where I doze, the sun is warm,
Behind, a fleeting shadow, a softness stretching;
I turn, a leaf, it wafts across the grass;
where once she lay, a piece of fur.

A presence soft, a silky touch
Beneath the tree now lies
Is memory but a fantasy?
The now is here and I look towards the sky.

(Cherry Burton 19 July 2012)

Brian P FitzGerald

Poppy And Moppy

One day soon, so soon, thought Poppy
I'll walk and walk on the moon with Moppy
"She's funny and strange! " said Poppy
"So weird she has three pegs for legs."

"Oh dear, oh dear, my dear! " Said Mummy
"It's funny, so funny, so pleasant and sunny
Have some bread and runny honey."
"Please! " said she, "three slices for me".

Poppy and Moppy felt so glad
They ran and ran and hopped and had
Cabbage for luncheon - ever so mad
Not cat, nor rat so black and fat.

Moppy hopped and hopped and hopped
Three legs had she, and slopped and slopped
Don't worry said Mummy and up she mopped
The cup of ink she'd had to drink.

"Poppy, come back now from the moon! "
Up called Mummy, so soon, so soon.
Down, down in a maroon balloon
"Time for bed instead" she said.....

(East Yorkshire, UK,13 September 2013)

Brian P FitzGerald

St Helen And The Ghosts Of Kilnsea

1831

At my desk I sit and stare,
An etching, old, dusty and grey -
A church on a cliff and a tower that leans
And fishermen below caught in the spray.

They struggle to land their catch:
The sea is rough, with an east-wind blast.
The rays of the sun now pierce the clouds,
Like life itself - a moment soon passed.

Risking the dangers and tempests at sea
And scratching, a living close to the soil;
Fishermen and labourers, the sons of centuries,
Who lived and died a life of toil.

With unknown mariners lost at sea
Whose lifeless forms are washed ashore;
Unknown to all but God alone,
Their corpses cry to God no more.

With none but villagers to mourn their dying,
Among the dead of the village they rest
In graves secure by Helen's Tower,
They sleep a sleep no longer distressed.

No longer the feel of the sun on their backs
As they reap the corn and cut the hay;
No longer they savour the draft of beer
In the tavern at the end of the day.

No longer they hear the cuckoo in spring
Nor swallows that fly above their graves -
No Longer they hear the howl of the winter's wind
And the thud of the stormy waves.

The winter storms, they gather and rage,
The cliffs they slip, now slumping and tumbling

No man can save the graves from sliding
Into the sea - falling and crumbling.

Oh, St Helen, your tower now yields;
The church resists the waves no longer,
And graves are open to the sea's predation:
The dead who rest, now rest no longer.

The noisome bodies of those who died;
Clawed by storms from silent graves
Now litter the beach, and dragged to tombs
In icy waters below the waves.

Can those who rested for cent'ries past
Now find their peace below the storms?
Aware of seamen who struggle to ply
The stormy sea above their tombs?

And can they hear the tolling of bells
By ghostly ringers far out to sea?
For those who rest so deep below
At Colden, Newsham, and Hornsea Beck

Colden Parva, Monkwell, and Hyde
from Ringborough and Odd to Ravenspurn,
the bells they mourn the unknown dead.....
Who hears the bells for Skipsea Sands?

2013

I sit on top of Skipsea cliff -
The sea is calm and waves are peaceful;
Seagulls wheel and swoop to shore
A gentle breeze now ruffles the water.

A hazy moon across the bay
On wavelets casts a spectral light,
That shimmers and dances a wraithlike ballet
As dusk now turns to sultry night

A mournful sound across the water
Softly tolls the knell at last

Of parishes long-since lost to sea,
And those who lived in centuries past

The bell now tolls in turn for Skipsea;
The road to Ulrome collapsed and barred.
The steps to beach exist no more;
The café for tea is shuttered and scarred.

I stand and stretch and wonder no more
Of people whose graves are under the sea,
Of villages on cliffs about to fall -
The bell may soon be tolling for me.

(East Yorkshire 24 July 2013)

Brian P FitzGerald

The Church

My heart is held in icy grip
A biting wind now takes my breath
Along the path I struggle and slip
Before me dance the wraiths of death.

So bleak the church ahead I knew,
Grey and spectral in ghastly glow.
The tumbled tombs and gnarled yew
And drunken headstones covered in snow

The lych gate beckons with moonlit chill;
A frosty welcome offers me.
An ashen light from shuttered grill
What solace there can find for me?

Along the frosty path I tread
In wretched pain and hapless grief.
The door creaks open, with deathly dread
I step inside, but no relief.

Here death pervades the icy air;
And now amongst the ghastly flock
Whose twisted bodies sit and stare
I sit: my memories I try to block

The air is bitter, no warmth I feel
My fingers freeze in icy air
On bench I sit, on floor I kneel
No comfort now I find in prayer

I hear the preacher preach
Absolving all by Godly prayer
Of joys eternal he tries to teach
But thoughts of joy are dim I swear

"O Lord, make haste to help us."
The priest now mutters – a plea indeed
"And make thy chosen people joyful."
O, how can joy be so decreed?

No joy I find in here displayed,
As death pervades the arctic cold;
I swear to God in all I prayed
That joy for me would ne'er unfold.

I join a world, of gruesome dead
A nightmare grim in mortal terms
The ghoulish priest in fear and dread
My life and death he now confirms.

I slump and fade; I sigh and then.....
No thought, no feeling; I dream no more,
I reap the sleep of sinful men;
In death I rest and live no more.

Brian P FitzGerald

Under The Market Cross

A murky mist now grips my brain.
My thoughts, they reel in mire so chilling;
My eyes see nothing but driving rain;
Despair is such, no hope instilling.

In abject grief, on pillar I lean;
Those I knew, now know me not,
I'm now a part of life's unclean,
In lonely squalor I exist and rot.

People pass, heads bowed low,
Thoughtless, complacent and unaware
Of those who lie in anguish, tho'
Cold and bloody, in despair.

Declared unclean, hated, abused;
Despised and broken, and rejected I be;
Spat upon, cursed, punched and bruised,
Forsaken by all - no longer free.

I try to forgive, so difficult I know,
Battered and mugged, no life held dear,
I lie so cold, no future now?
I'm left to bleed with death so near.

To bring the Word to them I strove
For them it was I lived and died
For them it was for truth I drove
For them it was I cried

For them I prayed, this I vow;
For them I gave my life my all.
Forsake me not! Hear me now!
In you I trust, hear my call.

Am I forsaken? - my heart-felt cry;
Forgive; they know not what they do;
In you I trust! death defy!
My life in death I offer you.

Early hours in the Market place
Upon the cross a body bared -
A corpse, unkempt, with bloody face;
The crowd, so curious, stood and stared.

(Beverley, UK, 16 April 2014)

Brian P FitzGerald

Where Moses Crossed The Nuwebian Shore

Where Moses Crossed the Nuwebian Shore

He ponders the tide caressing the beach -
Its ripples cross the glist'ning sand,
From Sinai's cliffs sun-setting rays reach
Far-distant peaks that shimmer in desert heat.

Across the darkening sea, turquoise and blue,
The haze begins to change on Midian's face, whereby
The golden russet transforms to purple hue,
As rays from sun-set reach across the sky.

A ferry sails by; its wake now washes ashore.
A gliding crane appears and lands on water's edge;
The boat is safe in port and seen no more.
On one leg, the crane surveys a rocky ledge.

The sun is hidden, the horizon dark,
The water is quiet, the air is still;
Jihad now scribes in sand and makes his mark,
A breeze so softly stirs the dust; a chill I feel.

Generations whose names, inscribed in shifting sand,
Now fade in the dusk, like the crane on the shore,
And those, who make ripples that die away,
Pass into port and are known no more.

My footprints are covered; what augurs await?
The ripples have died; generations come and go.
What names survive the sands of fate?
No Red Sea will part for me, this I know.

19 October 2012

Brian P FitzGerald

Why The Tears?

Through hopeless gloom and chill I stare,
With icy drops on branches wet,
No longer distant hills I see in sunlight glare
My memory dim, my eyes are blurred - and yet
I see my love and still expect
A little touch, and thoughts unchecked.

The fest'ring stench of death from life
Corruption pervades my soul
And darkly mirrors my inmost strife□
My life devoid of meaning all,
From darkest feelings, no relief
My thoughts are filled with dismal grief.

The rotting leaves beneath my feet
And woodland drips, like tears, in winter's sorrow
My darling, my own, my sweet
Life's past years I cannot borrow.
Revenge I would against nature's toll,
And little does my grief assuage my soul.

It fills my heart, with cruel torment,
For opportunities missed; these I know,
They fill my soul, my tortured lament
The years have passed, regrets still show
And trouble my sleep; no longer the warmth
Of sweet embrace I feel, as alone in bed I lie.

My love, my life, lies bleeding in the past
I stand, I ponder, now alone I stand, alone,
My tears provide some comfort at last
My plight to all remains unknown.
Where in this world my future be
If no love there be to comfort me?

(30 August 2012 - East Yorkshire)

Brian P FitzGerald