

## MUSIC AND WORDS

Poems by Cooltan Arts poetry group 2014

### *Red Sky at Night*

Charles Browne

I hear the distance of war  
Trumpets that pound out the light  
Never so close but o' so far  
I hear the trumpets shepherd the night.

Flashes of cries passing by  
Clouded the mists of night  
Rain falling down as moist screams  
Blooded the sky red by night.

Trumpets fell silent I hear,  
Trouble blew over a storm  
Bodies strewn over the fields  
Clutching each other by dawn.

### *The Old Lie*

Brian Ring

Tell us the old, old story  
A tale of death and glory!  
The promise of a happy demise  
The sure and certain coming prize  
Fighting for freedom, fighting for the right  
Piles of corpses; heaps of wounded; an awful sight  
For in lies the kudos  
We're in the glory?  
With such a pitiful sight so gory  
With death come a greater life  
Resultant from this incessant strife  
Such might be the old, old lie  
Which one does not wish to belie  
But will truth out?  
On this miserable end to talk about?  
Til it happens no one knows  
And like an angelic soul, it onward goes  
The glory of the spirit that is  
But is there such a thing as this?  
Who know. Does it matter?  
Do we mind?  
One does. Of course it does - I think you'll find  
To find out what 'glory' is  
One has to look back into the world's history  
And find there it denoted a dignified death  
'the kind of thing that happens after one's last breath'  
A nether world where all is made uncertain  
And God himself draws back the curtain  
And all is revealed as truth  
And is unravelled the final truth

But this does not explain 'glory'  
Where the twisted meaning of the word  
Increases til bordering on the absurd  
Does one die in glory, or live forever in glory

***Sunday Rides***  
**Aaron Pilgrim**

Nearly every Sunday, we would have a cycle ride though Kent.  
Unless it was bad weather or Christmas, other than that we always  
went.  
We'd met up at Bromley South station, sitting on the wall.  
With our expensive racing bikes, and cycling clothes we felt really  
cool.  
We'd cycle along the busy A21, and turn off into the picturesque  
countryside.  
In our club jerseys, we felt a sense of pride.  
We'd ride in double file, having a good chat as we went along.  
We loved speeding down the hills, and the muck spreading pong.  
Riding up the hills, I pretended to be in the Tour de France,  
with sounds in my mind of motorbike hooters, and the real sounds  
all at once.  
We would ride pass the spitfire, and low flying planes at Biggin Hill.  
On our way back we stopped off at Downe Village, & have from  
our back pockets our refuelling meal.  
Charles Darwin once lived there, he too thought it was brill.  
I'll always remember our Sunday rides, which were great & such a  
thrill.

***Dancing Around***  
**Howard Luke**

A fictional character dances around  
Her handbag in a club full of purses  
While I wonder where have all  
those dancing days gone  
A body pumping endorphins from Amsterdam  
To Edinburgh, receiving compliments  
While dripping with sweat  
In an era long gone  
The dance-floor, a war zone the most  
Exciting space on earth  
to the die-hard clubber  
to the wallflower, a place of shame  
Ah to be able to dance  
forever says that fictional  
character as she picks up her bag  
and leaves

***A Panic Attack***  
**Gary Stevens**

A trip to the doctors  
Something's not right  
I'm tired all day  
And awake all night

Where does it come from  
Does anyone know?  
It came very suddenly  
And started to grow

Weakness, strange feelings,  
Sweaty palms, dizzy head  
I think I'd be safer  
If I went home to bed

I feel like I'm dying  
It's worse in the dark  
I can't even manage  
A walk in the park

Will somebody help me?  
I feel gloomy and sad  
I keep crying for nothing  
It's driving me mad

My family keep moaning  
It's something I dread  
I'm sure they are thinking  
"it's all in his head"

So please tell me doctor  
What do I lack?  
"The diagnosis for you  
Is a panic attack"

***Wade in the Water***  
**Howard Luke**

The TV is on the blink  
The holiday season has commenced  
Escapism has lost my seat  
And I am trapped in a tomb of  
High streets, trains, buses and  
Derelict corner shops,  
London  
To plan a resurrection and greet  
The beach  
With my toes, on the sand  
And the sea against my ankles prodding  
My Achilles heel  
Lagos and the Algarve yells at me

But Escapism has lost my number  
As I breathe in the polluted air  
Yearning for a break

### ***My Childhood Trips to the Coast***

**Howard Like**

My dad was a sub aqua diver, which I suppose is really cool, & nearly every week he took us to the club swimming pool.

In the holidays my family went to the British coast, places such as Wales, Weymouth & Cornwall which is where we went the most.

We would stay at the campsites, caravans or in little chalets, in what seemed in the middle of nowhere in the coastal towns. But of course we were always near the sea which was always a good place to be.

When the divers were on a dive, us kids found fun to be had. We mucked around in dinghies, surfed in the waves & looked in the many rock pools, there was always a delight to see.

Sometimes the divers took us kids out to sea, more often than not on an inflatable boat at one with nature we'd be. We'd crash through the waves of the sea with the engine roaring, with the salty spray & wind in our faces, it really wasn't boring.

Then in the evenings we'd go the clubhouse or the local pub, where we'd enjoy the drinks, crisps and the local grub.

Often behind the bar worked the lifeboat men, so if a flare went up to the lifeboat they were always sent. We'd all rush to the cliff edge so we all could see, the lifeboat go down the ramp and crash right into the sea.

This was in the early 80's when I was just a child, what wonderful memories of the coast, it really was quite wild.

### ***Indian Summer - from Indian Seasons***

**Sasha Dee**

Night and day the heat blows out  
Like the bellows pumping  
The flames of the furnaces  
All look for the cool places  
To escape from  
The torture blazing  
From the sun in the cloudless sky

The mad dogs and the English men too  
Go for the hunting of the waterhole cool  
The tigers and deer without fear or dare  
Sit near each other  
In the drying water pond in a catnap

In the cities and towns streets are empty  
The shoppers and shopkeepers both  
Take long siestas until the sun is drowsy  
And the cool wind is blowing and breezy

No enemy of India would invade India  
In the hot summer fear of dying of fatigue  
The armies on either side with their rifles  
On shoulders would lie as if dead defeated

But the heat of the summer in India is challenged  
By the cricket matches in the stadiums and streets

***Sawan - The Rain***  
**Sasha Dee**

The people restless by the roasting heat  
Pray to the Rain God by offers of clarified  
Butter in the fire and mutter the mantras  
Circumambulate the divine shrines of gods  
Prostrate flat before temples and holy places  
And assemble before the gentle calm sea waves  
And wait patiently for the rain clouds to gather

Their prayers are answered and they see  
At the distance the rain god riding on the dark mountain of a cloud elephant  
Along with the armies of many heavy rainclouds on horsebacks and infantry'

***One's Own Trenches***  
**Brian Ring**

Silhouettes in the duck pass me in the cloudy foggy misty moonlight  
Exhausted, fagged and fatigued they wend their weary way through no man's land  
To their own trenches  
And dispatch a scout afore and aft to protect their rear and van  
Night is drawing nigh and they have nowhere to spend it  
The regiment, once a battalion, and now a detachment has dispersed  
And disintegrated, and all the Tommies care for is the tranquillity of a hide-out  
The dryness of a billet and the warmth of a watch fire

They marvellously step over the barbed wire and they're coming home to their 'own' lines of trenches excites  
their enthusiasm

They'd left their 'own' dead or wounded behind and not taken prisoners themselves

So they demanded this evocative reply of the bad old days when salvation is round the corner

But only just - but there remains a dicey situation where bullets, shrapnel and shells might yet still have each  
comrade's numbers on them

***Someone's Someone***  
**Charles Browne**

Depressive this journey  
Wheels cog up around  
As the sky falls slowly over,  
Many a man had gone  
Over the top to nowhere land  
Same old routine  
Made the fantasy of getting home  
Harder to visualize.  
I've seen with eyes peeled  
Men get shot in the foot  
But by their very own hand  
To stop the torture, stop the rot.  
I've seen my mate Tommy  
Gun down thousands  
And always wondered  
The letters home, the tears cried.  
For they were all someone's sons,  
Someone's someone,  
As I am just a man  
Trying to get home  
As best I can.

***Goodbye Mum***  
**Gary Stevens**

Ferdinand is dead  
Now war has been declared  
I feel very nervous and excited  
But I am just really scared

The postman has been, my papers have arrived  
My mother opened the letters  
Her eyes are all red  
And I think she has cried

These are your papers son you have just been called up  
You are in the 7th Battalion  
East Kent Regiment- they call them the "BUFFS"

I know I am a lad Mum, not yet a man  
But I will fight for my country and do all I can  
You see I have never been away from my family before  
But the call up has come and I am off to the War

My bag is packed and I am ready, it's time for goodbye  
I love you my Mother please, please don't cry  
Just be proud of your soldier Private G 1451  
I promise I will be back soon  
When the job's finished and the War has been won

My mother said I love you and will miss you son  
Please take good care  
We cuddled for that moment and she ruffled my hair

It's sad to say William was never able to keep his promise to his dear Mum  
Her son Private William Duty Moore  
Was killed on the first day of action  
At the Battle of the Somme  
(1st of July 1916)

## ABOUT THE POETS

**Howard Luke** is a London born and based published poet and artist who has been attending CoolTan Arts for several years. His art work has been exhibited at several institutions including Dulwich Picture Gallery.

**Charles Browne** has been with CoolTan Arts for a number of years now and this is his second collaboration with Southbank Sinfonia. He has been writing poetry for about ten years and finds it to be a great release.

**Aaron Pilgrim** grew up and lives in South East London with his partner Michelle and his daughter Grace. He is a painter and poet. He has attended Morley College and CoolTan Arts for five years.

**Gary Stevens** is a rhyming writer of dark and light poetry. He finds inspiration in family, faith and war themes. He has had work published in books and newspapers - his Bullseye poem was well-received in the Dickens newspaper.

**Brian Ring** is a London poet and longstanding exponent of poetry, having provided many works for CoolTan Arts over the years. His work has also been published through the Lambeth Poetry Group.

**Sasha Dee** is a retired civil servant, Chair of the Board of Trustees of CoolTan Arts and has had many poems published in various anthologies. He is enthusiastic in all artistic areas and has also had recipes published in the CoolTan Arts cook book Food for Mood. He has delivered talks and written articles for the Science Museum.