

POEMS ON THE MOVE
Guernsey International Competition 2016
Judge: Ian McMillan

List of Winning Poems

OPEN CATEGORY

1st prize:

GÂCHE MELÉE, **Julian Dobson**, Sheffield

Poems on the Move & Poems on the Buses Exhibitions, £600

52poemsinayear.wordpress.com

GÂCHE MELÉE

Apple peel spirals, the big mixing bowl
sailor-striped and chipped as old teeth:
a tickle of cinnamon, scratch of nutmeg.

Great waves of sugar, the flour and suet
scooped and folded, stroked or beaten.
A battered square tin: perhaps the rust

improves the flavour. Heave the gloop in,
feel its suck and pull, the letting go
clinging as embraces on a quayside.

Food for cowherds, trawlermen. You
anchored the ordinary, reeled us from winter
to a fading light swollen with scents of apples.

2nd prize:

YOUR LANGUAGE, **Jennie Osborne**, Devon

Poems on the Move & Poems on the Buses Exhibitions, £400

www.poetrypf.co.uk/jennieosbornebiog.shtml

YOUR LANGUAGE

Your joy is a dozen sparrows and a blackbird
a flash of fox at field's edge

your purpose the heft of an axe
performing for trees
the service of undertaker

your lips have no words for endearment

you offer me stacked logs blazing hearths
a dozen sparrows and a blackbird

3rd prize:

WHEN CHARLES & CAMILLA CAME TO VISIT,

Janet Lees, Isle of Man

Poems on the Move & Poems on the Buses Exhibitions, £200

janetlees.weebly.com

When Charles & Camilla came to visit

they didn't take the hill where cars
roll upwards; didn't stroll among the ruins

of our fairy village. They didn't meet
the Pearly King who cruises the charity shops,

the lollipop ladies christened Hinge
& Bracket by Angie in the vets.

They missed the mushroom ice-cream,
the museum's pair of space suits,

the yellow polar bear on his resin iceberg.
They didn't even come close

to dipping their toes in the blue shriek
of the Irish Sea. They only had time

for a nose around the new kipper factory –
a film of this runs on a silent loop in the library.

4th place:

RETIREMENT HOME RESIDENTS POLISH OFF GREYHOUND STEW,

Geraldine Clarkson, Warwickshire

Poems on the Move & Poems on the Buses Exhibitions

clarksongeraldine@hotmail.com

Retirement Home Residents Polish off Greyhound Stew

and bingo fricassee, and a shedload of architrave
fritters, before the Matron alerts
the management—*too much*
grandstanding—and the locks
are put back on, huge ruby and sapphire
and carbuncle bolts, placed
where visitors will gawp
and think they've come to the eternal
race track, where Uncle Wayne
and Auntie Wanda can stride out anew—
altered state benefits—
always one lap ahead of Mrs O'Hare.

5th place:

LATE ROAD HOME, **Pat Borthwick**, Yorkshire
Poems on the Move & Poems on the Buses Exhibitions
patborthwick.wordpress.com

LATE ROAD HOME

Nothing can erase the pale owl
moored on the metal,
the way he turned his bonneted head
to challenge my headlights.
Beak, talons, pole star bright.
A blood-red moon in his full crop.
Then, like the sure hauling of sails
for a long outward passage,
he hauled his quiet featheriness
up and into the encircling night.
Wingbeats as slow, as silent,
as this road home,
away from you.

6th Place:

HOTEL GARDEN, CARNAC, **Sheila Wild**, Lancashire
Poems on the Move & Poems on the Buses Exhibitions
www.sheilawild.co.uk/poetry

HOTEL GARDEN, CARNAC

a silver fish floats above dahlias –
follow me to the sea, it says,
as bats shoal
under pines
and darkness pours in like ocean.

CHANNEL ISLANDS CATEGORY

1st place:

THE KISS, **Simon Crowcroft**, Jersey

Poems on the Move & Poems on the Buses Exhibitions

THE KISS

Klimt's lovers' love is so slow, 'The Kiss'
won't happen till the artist has gone home.

Night falls. He grazes her cheek, pensive, intent;
her face, calm, moonlit, might be asleep
apart from her toes which curl on the bed;
her right hand fidgets on his bull neck,
as if her mind is elsewhere.

Klimt's wife asks him at dinner
where their counterpane has gone.

The unfinished canvas glows in the sun;
she dreams of a field of flowers
and the approach of rain.

2nd place:

THE LAST THING FOR THE VAN WAS THE AQUARIUM,

Sandra Noel, Jersey

Poems on the Move & Poems on the Buses Exhibitions

THE LAST THING FOR THE VAN WAS THE AQUARIUM

Removal men were parading muscles
before the final lift,
and the guppies were circling in Gran's silver gravy boat
on the beige carpet.

Shy skirting ran the void
of the house,
its dust-blanket taunting my clean eyes.

Wiping the years back with a discarded tea towel,
I spot, in the tank's space,
our dwarf African frog.

I'd always wondered at his disappearance.
No more than origami
the size of a squashed popcorn,
my eyes rest on his pin-prick nostrils.

3rd place:

ABIDE WITH ME, **Judy Mantle**, Jersey

Poems on the Move & Poems on the Buses Exhibitions

ABIDE WITH ME

A glimpse of her tweed coat in a crowd,
her laughter in the garden
as she cups a nasturtium in her palm.

Her shoulders bent over handlebars
as she pushes up Belvedere Hill, paniers bulging,
pedalling home to make our tea.

Late in the evening
her footfall on a gravel path,
receding.

The distant creak of a gate,
her shadow as she melts
through a doorway

beyond my reach.

4th place:
SUBMARINER, **Judy Mantle**, Jersey
Poems on the Buses Exhibition

SUBMARINER

I wade backwards into the sea
with flippered feet and feel my bare back
break its polished shell.
Sorry to leave my traces here
like footprints spoiling untouched snow
I cannot resist turning, arms outstretched,
curled fingers combing the water,
feet paddling quietly so as not to be heard.

Seagulls sear a mackerel sky
as I stop, let myself sink, look down.
Far below, anemones clutch rocks,
a crab resents my shadow,
and I watch, caught by fishes' eyes ...
calling me down.

5th place:

IT COULD NEVER HAPPEN, **Mick Morris**, Jersey
Poems on the Buses Exhibition

IT COULD NEVER HAPPEN

Impossible, it could never happen,
Yet a man walked on the moon.
I know it's true, I was there.

Impossible, it could never happen,
Yet in Berlin the wall came down.
I know it's true, I was there.

Impossible, it could never happen,
Yet Nelson Mandela walked out to freedom.
I know it's true, I was there.

Impossible, it could never happen,
Yet because of that screen in the corner.
I know it's true, I was there.

6th place:
A PERFECT ART, **Mo Ogier**, Guernsey
Poems on the Buses Exhibition
mo.ogier@freeuk.com

A PERFECT ART

Behind a sea wall
a solitary gull
perched on one leg
in patch of blue
halts my intrusion.

This her boudoir
her place
to trim her plumes
head tilted
in apparent self reflection.

Final touches with her bill
two legs to steady
then a faultless glide
to the water's edge.

YOUNG PEOPLE'S CATEGORY

1st place:

FRENCH LESSONS, **Bathsheba Lockwood Brook**, Derbyshire
Poems on the Move & Poems on the Buses Exhibitions

FRENCH LESSONS

Between the moonlit motorway from Dijon to
Calais we found a cat, dying. Its bones
lit lithe in the strip split street light,
heart still hanging in the balance. We unstuck it
limp from the tarmac, toes tangled tightly.
My schoolroom French knew enough to say
it was *un chat*, called it *mon cheri*, and
even tried *je t'aime*. Spilled sweet nothings
until it loosened, stiffened, and turned
my mouthings *mort*.

Crossing the ferry, the wake whipped
away my nouns, bore up the verbs
and left behind a breeze, white whiskered,
dancing.

2nd place:

SILENCE, **Heather Després**, Guernsey

Poems on the Move & Poems on the Buses Exhibitions

SILENCE

Silence is not golden.

Only a fool stores his jewels as teeth and

Only a cat can wake from sleep and still yawn.

I yearn for words to co-exist

In the space between my mouth and yours.

Like rain drops tumbling,

Searching for the perfect path

To glide down the window screen.

Your eyes reflect Orion–

How small man must have been to

Name great burning stars after themselves,

When they are bleached even by torchlight.

3rd place:

LOLA BEWAILS, **Bathsheba Lockwood Brook**, Derbyshire
Poems on the Move & Poems on the Buses Exhibitions

LOLA BEWAILS

Lola, you mustard seed you, you
beautiful girl, you coal eyed black haired laughing
you vixen-at-ten-years-old,
you fit in the palm of my hand.
Mine, my god my dusty footed darling:
screaming-down-the-camera-lens-Lola,
Lola of the chipped teef, whistled esses
Lola on every street corner from the Argentine to
New Delhi. Ox-eyed Lola, Lola in the National Geographic
Lola Lola lazy languid laughing Lola
rolls off the tongue. Mouth to mouth rosebud you
you, mine. Show me baby, let me see you
cheap kohl sheep eyes, give me a twirl.

Why don't you laugh any more, ma cherie,
Darling-of-my-heart?

Honourable mention:

FIRE, **Leila Dickinson**, Dorset

OWL BABIES, **Bathsheba Lockwood Brook**, Derbyshire

ALONE I SIT, **Jude Wegerer**, Guernsey

POEMS ON THE BUSES

(listed alphabetically by poet's surname)

FROM AN ALBUM, Robert Archer, Valencia, Spain
Poems on the Buses Exhibition

FROM AN ALBUM

...And this from fifty-four, that holiday
I got these cratered scars in both my knees,
bolting blind across an empty street they'd strewn
with biting scree and left there uncompacted
in the oozy tar. A hospital bandage
bulges where I straddle tight the promenade's
one snapshot prop, a short-legged dappled cow.
She moos a happy grin. Me, I'm grinning too.

And here's my Mum and Dad, discreetly backdropped
to their offspring. War's long shadow surely
touched them still, but note the smile with kids
and cow, their candid young survivors' faces
turned to this benignity of sun
that melts all doubts of conflicts lost or won.

STRANGE CREATURES, **Chloe Balcomb**, Sheffield
Poems on the Buses Exhibition

STRANGE CREATURES

Grandad stored old elastic bands. Strange creatures,
they lounged like scraps of gold in screw top jars,
entangling eagerly with each other, or coiling

themselves into pale tight snakes. The good ones
could catapult stones or tourniquet a limb white,
stinging your hand as they spat back into place.

Yet others perished, grew slack and sticky as tripe
or cracked and brittled up like butterscotch,
snapped without warning at the lightest touch.

NEW YEAR, **Isabel Bermudez**, Kent
Poems on the Buses Exhibition
www.poetrypf.co.uk/isabelbermudezpage.shtml

NEW YEAR

"It's a long time since I had champagne."

Chekhov on his death-bed

I make my quiet toast, just gone midnight, as sirens on the high street
speed to their first call-out. Fireworks and Auld Lang Syne
are done with, the bells have chimed.

Life resumes her drunken brawls and sheds her would-be suicides
as the year sets a course: cherries will blossom on the tow-path,
gulls drift on the current in a wash of sun
and the tides move forward and back, ebb and flow
while male mallards carry out their ritual rape and drowning.

But there's a king of peace wherever you are, love,
and I look back a decade to the year – this vintage, it so happens –
I saw the world as new – the creatures, the seasons –
as I imbibe your gift of ten years and a quarter,
an essence reverberating in the mouth, as artichoke hearts,
plucked and eaten, release their taste again with just a sip of water.

CLIFF, **Sharon Black**, France
Poems on the Buses Exhibition
www.sharonblack.co.uk

CLIFF

Your heart is wind-torn,
salt-stained, snagged on rocks.

They say the ocean isn't blue
but a reflection of the sky –

as if the clarity you seek is relative,
as if you had a choice.

Above, the cliff is silent:
only the crooning

of cormorants and kittiwakes
nesting in the nooks

makes you think it has a voice.

POSTMAN, **Jonathan Edwards**, Wales
Poems on the Buses Exhibition
www.poetryarchive.org/poet/jonathan-edwards

POSTMAN

The man who knows exactly where you live
plunges his hand in the lucky dip

he carries on his shoulder, conjures up
your day: the papers, packages, the words

to make you sing this morning or to stop
your heart. *Sign here*, he grins, with something from

the court, or offers you a bill and whistles
badly, leaves his footprints in your drive,

with his clean conscience and his paid-for stride.
His day starts anytime before the day does;

he goes to bed as early as a child
and sleeps so well – as well as you would like

to face a day of carrying that sack –
the weight of all those futures, on your back.

TEENAGE SON, **Jonathan Edwards**, Wales
Poems on the Buses Exhibition
www.poetryarchive.org/poet/jonathan-edwards

TEENAGE SON

Hair like someone scribbled out his face
and a look like he did, you might find him
on the top deck, on a half fare into town,
or trying for a pint in the Fox and Hounds
in my voice. He has an old man's shoulders
and my wife's eyes. I call him Mr. Cold Ears,
with those huge bloody headphones always plugged in.
He's what I love, but never fell in love with.

This morning, I breakfasted with my stunt double.
In the middle of the night, I poke my head
around his door: he's on some computer game,
tells me he's just killed Saddam Hussein.
His chin is fluffy as a chrysalis.
Photos of body parts stick out from under his bed.

SEA CHANGE, **Ruth Fry**, Clackmannanshire, Scotland
Poems on the Buses Exhibition
www.ruthfry.co.uk

SEA CHANGE

A sea change turns the weather round
And causes waves to lift:
A fundamental,
Elemental,
Continental shift.

The ripples that you feel today
Were born then, at the start,
When you first caught
My eye and wrought
A sea change in my heart.

FANCY, **Anthony Head**, Japan
Poems on the Buses Exhibition

FANCY

Fancy phoning her up when you're drunk –
all that about love and taking the chance
just to tell her. Such is the reassurance
of the blind, the last gulp of the sunk.

Still, lesser fools have fashioned ways
to spoil far more sober songs of praise.

Take pen and profit from this state
that sorry man is given to. Who knows
which lines Will Shakespeare writ
when he had sunk a few?

INSIDE THE TOWER, **Doreen Hinchliffe**, London
Poems on the Buses Exhibition
poetrysociety.org.uk/poets/doreen-hinchliffe

INSIDE THE TOWER

Let down your hair! he calls one night.
'Not yet. I can't,' I say.
A full moon casts a silver light
As I watch him move away.

Let down your hair! Let go your fear!
Again, I whisper, 'No.'
Around his head the stars career
As I watch him turn to go.

Let down your hair! I'll set you free!
'I can't. Not now. Not here.'
A darkness falls on land and sea
As I watch him disappear.

SWALLOWS AT CANAL D'ILLE-ET-RANCE,
Eve Jackson, Isle of Wight
Poems on the Buses Exhibition

SWALLOWS AT CANAL D'ILLE-ET-RANCE

We rest bikes against the diamonds of scuffed ironwork,
watch swallows below angle their flight
along the canal as they dip and dent
its mellow skin of pollen and dust
to a brief shiver. Reflections skimmed off
as semi-silvered by small baptisms of autumn sun
each one rejoins the congregation to balance
and preen, and like us, look down
as the upturned hands of leaves
gently carry the year away.

ELBOWS ON THE SILL, **Alistair Lane**, Nottingham
Poems on the Buses Exhibition
altheauthor.wordpress.com

ELBOWS ON THE SILL

As a child, I'd sit right at the front
On the top deck of the local double decker,
Elbows on the sill.

I'd imagine we were flying,
Cruising at low altitude along defined routes,
Courteously humouring the cars and bikes below,

Obeying their terrestrial traffic restrictions,
Then opening the throttle on narrow country lanes,
Skimming trees and hedgerows

Gorged with summer's possibility,
Buoyed on soaring wings of yes,
Eyes gently closed, the breeze on your face whispering the way

Elbows on the sill
Of the local double decker.

AFTER AN ARGUMENT, **Owen Lewis**, New York, USA
Poems on the Buses Exhibition
www.owenlewispoet.com

After an Argument,

dust-words,
in the in-streaming light;

walking a molecular frenzy,
for hours, I

vacuum carpets,
curtains, shake the rugs; you

move the easy-chair back,
forth, empty the trash bins.

BEACHCOMBING, **Kathy Miles**, Wales
Poems on the Buses Exhibition
www.poetrypf.co.uk/kathymilesbiog.shtml

BEACHCOMBING

A sheep, slipped from the cliffs,
legs shattered, head a cave of stone.

Frayed rope, knotted stems of wrack,
the bleached dry husks of snakelock and starfish.

And you, driftwood, sitting with your back
to the ribs of slate, sleeping perhaps,

watching dogs sniff the smashed masks
of spider-crabs, muzzles grizzled with salt.

Rock drinking your shadow, half-eaten
by heat, you could just be a bundle

of abandoned kelp, a baked fall of clay,
a dredged-up chimera.

PENULTIMATES, **Rob Miles**, Leeds
Poems on the Buses Exhibition
www.facebook.com/RobMilesPoet

PENULTIMATES

The night bus ignites a tipsy kissing couple
waiting at the stop after time. Acetylene

in their crystal box, they don't part
until the very last chance she has

to step on, while he,
all of twenty at most, watches with owl eyes,

besotted. Melding with the glare of the bus,
she's gone, but as it rises

and it dips with the lane, he's left
a spark, lit for a second with his phone.

SWISS ARMY POEM, **David Smith**, Derbyshire
Poems on the Buses Exhibition

SWISS ARMY POEM

Here, let me show you.
This one captures the messy taste of watermelon.
Look. This one tickles just like your giddy first kiss.
See, this one jemmies the box where you had hidden your secrets.
This funny little one? I have absolutely no idea.
Perhaps it's just to put a smile on your face.
Please be careful how you close them though;
These things are sharp, your skin so unprotected.

FIRST DATE, **Rosalind York**, West Yorkshire
Poems on the Buses Exhibition

FIRST DATE

It should have been easy, but it wasn't.
It should be love, but it isn't. So why
expect things to go well? And why doesn't
rain make you miserable? As the sky

empties buckets upon us the night bus
sails past and you laugh and you say *Let's walk
then* and I follow you, so that makes us
two which is weird 'cos we laugh and we talk

which is odd 'cos it should have been easy
but wasn't, and it should have been love but
it isn't and we're getting wet. Is it
right to suggest this is fun? What we've got?

That this friendship's not burning but warming?
That the night turned to morning this morning?

FROM BED 27, **Rosalind York**, West Yorkshire
Poems on the Buses Exhibition

FROM BED 27

2: Ante Room. Why are you asking me this?

My blood's unhurried. The anaesthetist helps the nurse hit my hand.
The vein won't raise for the cannula's proboscis. He asks, *What
would you like to dream about?* I wonder how they move the monitors
into the OR? *A holiday? Dream about a holiday?* OK. A holiday.
The fluids approach drip by relentless drip. The tingle of liquid sleep.
Where do you want to go on holiday?

I wonder why he bothers. France, I croak.
Why France? Are the people friendly?

No, I say. That's why I like them.
Then France, England, earth,

the moon of his smiling
face are
gone.

BLODEUWEDD, **Rosalind York**, West Yorkshire
Poems on the Buses Exhibition

BLODEUWEDD

An idea in me when I jumped the broom,
you swam through your fish life, your reptile,
a primrose petal filled with spring.

Little cockle, your eyes are as green as nettles
under your banner of chestnut hair.

Old thorn trees sheltered us,
old oak.

Now you're stitching a wedding dress,
meadowsweet lace. Flower face,

you're growing like a bean.