

## **Cossington in Bloom EXTRA 2023**

### **SHORT STORY / POEM**

### **CATEGORY ENTRIES**

*(works displayed as presented)*

#### *Judges' Comments*

Despite there being only seven entries, they were all well-conceived, well written, and very much enjoyed by the judges, both deciding independently that there was little to choose between 'Herbert and Hilda' by Sue Harte and 'Little Black Cocker' by Leona Naish for the winner. In third place there was a clear joint decision for 'Home with the Range' by A Nun, mainly for its quirky humour. 'The Little Black Cocker' was selected for first person (first canine?) approach which brought the dog to life and told the complete story of a dog's day so realistically. After much debate, however, the judges settled on 'Herbert and Hilda' to be the overall winner. The whole poem is dialogue, cleverly using colour to distinguish between the protagonists. A very pleasing and complete Christmas story of panic – which we can all appreciate – with a heartwarming conclusion.

Faye & Eddie Edmondson  
Judges – Yeovil Literary Festival

Herbert and Hilda - Status Panicus - A Festive Frivolity

"Hurry up Herbert, I can't find the tree -

Is it up in the attic?" "Don't ask me"

"Where did you put it after Christmas last?"

"I can't remember, tis a long time past"

"Well look in the garage and under the stairs

Is it behind the sofa or one of the chairs?

Come, get a move on, we haven't all day"

"No need to keep shouting, I hear what you say!"

"Mother's arriving she'll be here before one

There's stuffing needs making and sprouts to be done"

"Oh do keep your hair on, I've located the tree

Just stop for a moment, I've made us some tea"

"I can't stop for tea-breaks; I'm icing the cake -

And two-dozen mince-pies I still have to bake"

"Hilda, just listen, I've something to say

You really work wonders, day after day,

So all will be perfect, it is every year -

The reason for that, quite plainly is "you" dear

Now come over here and give me a kiss

While I whisper sweet nothings and Merry Christmas"

*Sue Harte*

## R.I.P. CUTHBERT

Life with Cuthbert was often embarrassing but never boring. Although small, he oozed personality with his bright eyes and inquisitive nature.

The latter frequently landed him in trouble.

Having a cache of hiding places he would unexpectantly emerge, startling everyone with his speed and tenacity.

Some lost their ice cream to his sudden grab or had drink spilt over them as he landed in it.

My most embarrassing experience was his sudden desire to investigate under my sophisticated friend's beautiful African dress. Shrieking whilst trying to disentangle herself did nothing to deter Cuthbert. He simply went higher. I had to intervene! But how does one remove a squirming mongoose from a lady's body?

Simple! I had to catch him. Reaching under the skirt, grabbing his furry tail and pulling, eventually I won, chucking him across the floor. Sadly my Sierra Leonean friend was not enamoured and made an early exit. I can't remember if she ever came back!

Unfortunately Cuthbert's curiosity was his downfall. The workmen next door did not appreciate his clicking noises or his upsetting their tin of paint, but they did enjoy a meaty mongoose stew at the end of the day.

R.I.P CUTHBERT

## Firelight

Tommy sat huddled against the headstone. The tall stone steadily extracted all energy and warmth, claiming his little body for its own. Fragrance from the damp earth gathered like phlegm in his raw throat. Uprooted worms and woodlice began wiggling beneath the seat of his trousers.

‘I can’t let go. Why is there nothing I can do?’ said Tommy wretchedly.

‘Life is about nurturing joy without seeking to control time,’ said Grandad softly.

‘I want to hear her ‘ objected Tommy savagely: ‘striding around the house, clattering plates, reading me stories.’

‘To hear her, you need to rid yourself of expectations. You must listen with your heart, not your ears,’ said Grandad, crouching in the mud before Tommy, his grey eyes glinting like firelight.

Daringly, Tommy loosened his grip on the stone. His fingers were so numb he was uncertain his body had obeyed.

A rush of heat began to sweep through him, gushing like hot oil into his limbs. Dizziness descended like a mound of earth on his swollen head. Battling, he saw Grandad’s worn hands outstretched towards him. ‘Remember,’ said Grandad, welcoming Tommy into his arms and holding him tight: ‘your mums not gone further than your heart.’

## Nature At Its Best.

The stillness of a Summer afternoon,  
The brightness of a harvest moon,  
A field of rape, a blaze of yellow,  
An Autumn day, so cool and mellow,  
The hovering flight of a bird of prey,  
The cold grey light on a Winter's day,  
The gentleness of the big blue whale,  
The bold destruction of a gale,  
The sweet temptation of a juicy peach,  
The quiet beauty of a remote beach,  
The trees laid bare in the Winter rest,  
These are the essence of nature at its best.

Sandy Cracknell

## Little Black Cocker

I thrash through the woods, in ditches I run  
Through puddles and hedges and brambles - what fun!  
I crash through the bushes, get lost in the maize,  
Don't listen to whistles - or what my mum says.

And when I return at the time of my choice  
To my owner, who has by then lost her voice,  
There's twigs in my ears and I'm covered in goo,  
A heady cocktail of mud and fox poo.

Inside the house I do like to shred  
Newspapers, the mail, yet another new bed,  
Talking of beds look and see what I've managed to store -  
Missing underpants, socks, reading glasses, and more...

There's toys I've beheaded, a slipper, a pen,  
All chewed up nicely in my special den.  
Wrong side of the door I'll bark and not wait,  
I'm back in the room, then back out - oh, it's great!

My naughty day's full but the night time's the best  
When you cuddle me close and tickle my chest,  
These soft eyes will tell you my sweet little heart  
Will be yours - and yours only - 'till the day we must part.



LEONA NAISH

Camsell Downing, Poetry Competition, 'I'm Burning Now'

It was dark and the valley was quiet  
The moon was bright and the wind it was howling  
I'd gone from the deathly quiet  
And now I'm here and prowling  
The sea was brown and rolled with exhaustion  
I ran the coast with my feet so bare  
The glint in my eye rolled with revulsion  
I was bounding along, a snow white hare  
'Fire' I cried, loud and then silent  
The crack of the whip wasn't far behind me  
I looked over my shoulder with hatred and fear  
Sometimes you're blind to the good you can see  
I'll grab the reins, the stallion I'll steer!

I watched those fields burn, burn, and burn  
I cackled and screamed and wailed up to the sky  
Now I know that this world it is changing  
But I surely don't question why  
Now, I've hopped in the water  
I've got my shoes and my oar  
Maybe when you're down by the coast  
You might just hear me roar

'Oh ain't I burning now!'

### **Home with a Range – Ode to a New Aga**

She sits in her shiny new kitchen

Admiring her lovely new Aga

But she can't switch it on 'til the worktops are done

So goes off to the fridge for a lager

But she knows she has to stay sober

sitting with her new range patiently

There's much work to be done when it is switched on

Meanwhile there's a kettle for tea

The "lone ranger" sits there with faithful hound

Hoping it will be ready pronto

Because Agas are best, says Mary Berry no less

(with a "Woof!" of agreement from Tonto)

She knows it will be any day now

It's needed for the Christmas bake

But to Aga deniers, you can keep your air friers

Stand back, be impressed - and eat cake

A Nun