



## THE THOMAS HARDY SOCIETY

### THE JAMES GIBSON MEMORIAL PRIZE FOR POETRY

## RESULTS



The introduction to the James Gibson Memorial Prize attracted 320 poems from 250 entrants. The eminent poet Bernard O'Donoghue, who judged the event, said that the standard of submissions was very high.

However he had no hesitation in awarding the first prize of £3000 to Sheila Smith of Nottingham, for her poem "Burial (Triolets)". Bernard said of this poem: "a lovely poem and very Hardy-esque".

### Burial (Triolets )

The shiny brass and varnished wood,  
which has nothing to do with you,  
yet haunted me as a revenant would,  
the shiny brass and varnished wood,  
in the black rain as I lonely stood  
to board the train, taking me to  
the shiny brass and varnished wood  
which has nothing to do with you.

Mourners trailed over the graveyard grass,  
wet, and crushed from last night's gale.

I let the family and coffin pass as  
mourners trailed over the graveyard grass.

Sun lit a gate where a roan horse was,  
a robin's song fell shrill and frail.

Mourners trailed over the graveyard grass,  
wet, and crushed from last night's gale.

As though my heart had found its king,  
and lodged where it had always been,  
when I stood at the earth's black opening  
as though my heart had found its king  
my flowers flew like a bird's wing  
to your breast. The throw quick and keen,  
as though my heart had found its king  
and lodged where it had always been.

Second prize of £1000 was for "Woolbeding" by James Simpson of Heyshott in West Sussex, about which our judge said, "I love the place-name title and it has a nice atmosphere to it".

## Woolbeding

It is like the scene in the oil painting.

A mother and her daughter  
walk into night;

the light from the cottage windows  
behind them,  
two glimmers of an oil lamp.

And so it is when the world marks time  
some light remains;  
from candles at the carol supper,  
  
of sheep on the hill  
above the church  
blinking at the gold cupped moon;  
  
from slow progress  
across fields  
sorting potatoes and stone.

There is still a light from the window  
but it is diminishing now  
only our voices gather in the dusk.

Jane Croft, from Chesterfield, received a third prize of £500 for her poem entitled "Frost". In Bernard's opinion this was "There were a lot of sonnets and this was much the best. ...some lovely bits: thick-furring a very good verb".

## Frost

We turned the horses out at fade of light  
And saw the moonrise on the meadow's crest  
As brilliant stars announced the coming night  
And fiery gleams sank slowly in the west.  
On hill and hollow frost had lain all day  
Thick-furring turf and tree and hawthorn hedge  
With ice, and bound like iron the rutted clay  
And rimed the furrows at the pasture's edge.  
Its beauty held us and we lingered yet  
Both careless then of time, the passing hour  
That brings the silent blight; the unseen threat

Whose stealthy touch destroys the budding flower.  
The carefree day is gone that found us there:  
Mere shadow, glimpsed like breath in frosty air.

All three prize winners were present at the opening of the Eighteenth Hardy Conference and Festival on Saturday 26th July and each gave a fine reading of their poem.

Bernard O'Donoghue also introduced and read three short poems of his own.

The poems written by the main prize-winners will appear, later this year, in The Hardy Journal.

In addition to the main prize-winners, there were seven 'Runners Up', as follows (in alphabetical order):

- Kate Blackadder, Edinburgh. - 'Postcards from Arran'
- Atar Hadari, Yorkshire. - 'First All the Guests Leave'
- Jonathan Hadwen, Queensland, Australia. - 'Along the Cliffs'
- Robert Hamberger, Leicestershire. - 'Lobster in a Chinese Restaurant'
- E. Margarethe Jolly, Hampshire. - 'Weymouth'
- Don Nixon, Wolverhampton. - 'A Signing Lesson'
- William Radice, Northumberland. - 'The Ship'

In view of the high standard of entries, Bernard then chose a further group of poems as 'Next in Line'. They are, in random order:

- Paul Kingsnorth - 'The Bird Killer'
- William Palmer - 'Letters to the Sea'
- Caroline Price - 'The Hauntress'
- Enda Coyle-Greene - 'Alaska'
- Michael Tanner - 'Roughtor Revisited'
- Mary-Patrice Woehling - 'Haunted'
- Janice Fox - 'Emma'
- Alison Brackenbury - 'On Page 66'
- Marcus Smith - 'The Gulf of Certainty'
- Pamela Coren - 'All Souls'
- Bill Morgan - 'Of Earth and Air: Two Secular Homilies'

- Vidyan Ravinthiran - 'Hardy's Shiraz Varietal Range, 2005'
- Carole Bromley - 'Bockhampton'
- Joy Waren - 'When They Rode Down to Morecombe Bay'
- Andrew McCulloch - 'Woods in Autumn'
- Elizabeth Burns - 'The Whitener'
- Jennifer Hunt - 'To Little Bredy'
- Merryn McCarthy - 'Hauntings'
- Tim Cook - 'High Winds in Patterdale'
- Christopher Stocks - 'Hardy Country'
- Janet Kirwan 'Pilgrimage'