

# The Hedgerow



Issue 28, Summer 2011 ...a tangle of words from local writers...

*The Hedgerow*, a free publication from writers in the Epping Forest area, is distributed in libraries and bookshops from east London to Epping. Thank you to everyone who sent in submissions or helped with this edition. If you would like to write for *The Hedgerow* we would be pleased to hear from you.

---

## **Does the fact that other people have produced good work reduce my incentive to produce similar work now?**

No. Let me put this into context; it is said that everything in photography has been done, every style of wildlife photograph, every social comment, every portrait. But I do not believe this is true. Quite apart from the banal argument that no portrait of me today could have been taken yesterday, there is always a stamp of the individual in every photographer's work, at least that work undertaken with the intent of doing more than merely recording the scene. The key is in the intent. The same idea can be applied to painting, sculpture, writing or indeed any form of artistic effort.

At every point in art history there have been people saying that the current art is the pinnacle of achievement and that nothing more can be said, then along comes a Dürer or a Picasso who shows quite the opposite. In landscape photography, Eadweard Muybridge produced suburb photographs of the Yosemite valley, then along came Ansel Adams. The topography of Yosemite had not changed but something else had, the intent and the skill of the artist. Both had commercial aspirations, both had skill at photography yet they made different images, even disregarding the changes in the technology they used. One cannot necessarily tell if one or two individual photographs are the work of a particular person, but seen as a set of works, their artistry becomes apparent.

That is not to say that every photographer is an artist or that everyone is of such high calibre, but it does illustrate the general point, everyone has something to say even if others have expressed similar ideas before. You could label this as self expression, but this somewhat over used term comes nowhere close to saying what I mean, every act of every human is not merely self expression and can never be. We are an amalgamation of our past and our biology and cannot therefore be purely self. Our behaviour and therefore work, contains elements of others, but only elements, there is a core of self that can be made more apparent with application. As Max Ehrmann wrote in 1927 in his famous work, *Desiderata* (Things Desired), "*If you compare yourself with others, you may become vain or bitter, for always there will be greater and lesser persons than yourself. Enjoy your achievements as well as your plans.*" Writing in a world replete with literature and poetry of the highest calibre, he may well have kept his thoughts to himself, but he also wrote "*I should like, if I could, to leave a humble gift -- a bit of chaste prose that had caught up some noble moods.*" He succeeded, as can anyone else.

Another reason cited on the subject is commercial success, why try to match the work of the famous? Those who achieve such success or become famous are seen as leaders in the field, trend setters, icons of what is right or wrong in their field. This is not a sensible way to view such people, they may have become famous for one image, one event, or because they are associated with other famous people, they may have simply been chosen by the fickle finger of fashion. Having achieved fame, it is sadly the way of society that many others will ascribe to these individuals the attributes of quality, often without any other thought than fame equals ability. Others who are genuinely gifted may well never achieve fame, possibly to be recognised after their death, possibly not. Fame and commercial success are not reliable measures of ability in any field. Some famous photographers are genuinely mediocre, some wonderful photographers have vanished into obscurity.

There are those who find satisfaction by manipulating the work of others. Take for example the judges in a competition to find the "Top Chef". The winner will be the one whose work best pleases the judges. If the advice is taken from these individuals on how to improve, the result will be the convergence of output rather than individuality. The same is true of any competition that uses the likes and dislikes of judges rather than verifiable measurement, a race is fundamentally different from a beauty contest. That is not to say that the criticism of those more experienced should not be considered, quite the opposite, but that experience should be on how to produce rather than what to produce, how to see not what to see.

Rudyard Kipling wrote, "*The individual has always had to struggle to keep from being overwhelmed by the tribe. To be your own man is a hard business. If you try it, you will be lonely often, and sometimes frightened. But no price is too high to pay for the privilege of owning yourself.*" Bravo.

## **Howard Anderson**

*Although we are unable to publish everything we receive, poetry, prose and fiction submissions for the next edition are invited. Ownership of copyright remains with the author. Please do not send original manuscripts, only copies. Manuscripts may be retained for inclusion at a later date. Typed manuscripts, with name, address and telephone number should be sent to: The Editor, The Hedgerow, c/o 67, Derby Road, South Woodford, London, E18 2PY*

## Overgrown Gardens

Once when this place was wild,  
They would leave me as a child;  
There to spend my daylight hours,  
Wandering amongst the flowers.

Walked as far I could see,  
Rough grass scratching at my knee.  
Waded to my favourite spot-  
A cloud of blue forget-me-nots.

Here I was quite out of view.  
Wondered now what I would do.  
The path was hid and over grown,  
With buttercups and poppies sown.

On went I with my rambles,  
Skirting past the thorny brambles;  
Underneath an ancient wood,  
To where a broken green-house stood.

Out of the blue there fell a splash  
Upon my arm, so with a dash  
To this forgotten place ran I,  
Hoping to keep warm and dry.

Door still hanging from the frame,  
It promised shelter from the rain.  
With a shiver I stepped inside,  
And stopped, for there to my surprise...

A pair of pale blue eyes did glitter-  
A small black cat sat with her litter  
Of kittens, mewling in a box,  
Bedded in with broken crocks.

This feral beast without a name,  
Vanishes through an empty frame,  
Abandoning her hungry brood,  
Still crying out for their food.

Soft I left them to their fate,  
Praying it was not too late,  
To undo what I had done.  
Back down the garden path I run.

Once this place was overgrown-  
A flowery mead, a secret home.  
Now beans grow where the green-house stood  
And plums replace the ancient wood.

## Emma Liebeskind

*Many thanks to readers for donations received.  
Contributions welcomed to help finance future  
editions of this free publication. Contact the Editor.  
The Hedgerow Contents © Copyright the individual  
contributors, 2011  
The Hedgerow has grown from a Writers' Circle,  
established through the Friends of South Woodford  
Library.  
Editor: Penny Freeston*

## Invading Tides

The sea rolls in at Weston Super Mare  
Crimping the sand into a wavy perm  
Highlighting it with pink and blue seashells.  
Twice a day the sand saturated waves  
Are funnelled up the Bristol Channel,  
Eroding rocky headlands to spread  
Like the largesse of millionaires  
Their wealth of muddy sand to be moulded  
Into moated castles and beflagged forts.  
We eat our fish paste sandwiches and jam tarts  
And note the barrage balloons and barbed wire,  
There to keep out enemy invaders.  
In Alfred's time the sea made islands  
Of Glastonbury and Athelney where  
Saxons hid from the marauding Danes.  
The sea still seeks to flood its way back  
Across the Somerset Levels like men,  
Yearning for the ideals of Arthur's court  
And the mystic teachings of Joseph of Arimathea

## Marilyn Hawes

### Vincent

He was lost within himself  
He had talent to captivate beauty  
To show insensitive people was his duty  
He needed love like flowers need rain  
He found someone  
But only ended in pain  
Scorned him like a hand on a flame  
Took to his painting again  
With canvas paint and brushes  
Inspirations through his mind rushes  
Frustrations tore him to pieces  
He wanted fame and fortune  
From his torment wanted relief  
In desperation he inflicted  
On being mad he was convicted  
People taunted and jeered  
Like a storm on windows beating  
His raging mind and body defeating  
In a field of golden yellow  
Blackness fell with raven's wing  
A shot ran out then nothing  
His life slipped away with a tear  
Like wax melting from a candle  
Not ever knowing his suffering  
And death was not in vain  
His paintings are now sold bearing his name

### Margaret Saunders

### Midsummer Foxgloves

Standing tall, trailing between the ivied trees,  
Each foxglove awaits the magic of Midsummer.  
Gossamer wings flutter by shady ferns  
And sunlight filters through the damp earth.  
Grey stems give life to pale green leaves,  
Finely striped and veined:  
Cabbage coloured.  
Emerging darker, deep below,  
Buds like apple blossom swell  
And trumpets of pink, purple or paler faded bells  
Reveal hollow tunnels:  
Foxed speckled or spotted,  
To attract bees or fairies  
Through the drowsy afternoon.

### Penny Freeston

### **Cley Heron** (pronounced as in 'eye') by **Judy Studd**

First I spot it turning with the ebbing tide  
effortlessly coasting over alluvial salt-marshes,  
          sedges swaying in wind  
grey wings lazily flap across leas green with underwater prey  
          as fish hold their breath  
Like a grey arrow it drops dramatic in flight.

I stand still as it settles, dark as slate against a backdrop  
          Of the ever-rolling grey swelling sea.  
Deep pathos calls to outer depths  
Thin-shank as sedges, yet terrestrially alone  
Grimly brooding over the waters.  
          Motionless it towers towards willows....

Raw fish shyly slide elusively in-and-out of bulrushes  
Gulls soar by in a mew of flecked dove-grey  
          and a charcoal sky threatens rain and danger looms  
brooding. Without warning it moves, feathering the currents,  
          its insatiable hunger thwarted.  
At last it leaves, calling twice - this time madly deceived.

We watch him go.  
          Next time he will be lucky.  
          Its cunning prevails  
                  and Cley goes back to sleep.

### **Flourish** by **Jean Medcalf**

While clearing out my shed  
Some weeks ago I found some bulbs  
Stunted, forgotten, past their "plant by" date  
Every gardener knows what I mean.  
I held them in my hands, weighing, cogitating  
Were they worth the trouble of planting?  
Would knife straight stems grow from curvy shoots?  
I considered ...

Give us a chance, the crocuses seemed to plead,  
So I did, planted them into pots,  
And let the sun do its work.

Some weeks later I found that sunlight and earth  
makes plants grow straight.

Give everything another chance to see the light  
Yourself included.

---

### **Olympics: 1948**

The 2012 Olympics will be the third time our nation has staged this great festival of sport since their re-launch in the modern era of 1896. The first occasion was in 1908 and then in 1948 which means they could, just about, be in the living memory of anyone around today, in their seventies.

In 1948 our nation astonished many by stepping forward to fill the shoes of a reluctant Finland, the nation that agreed to stage the 1940 Olympiad cancelled by war.

Although Great Britain was a nation of much influence within the Olympic movement, we had been centrally involved in that horrendous war, that had ended only three years before.

We were now bankrupt and reeling to adjust to a new order of affairs. There was a struggle to re-adjust to peace after six years of war and to repair and rebuild the ravages left in London and many other cities of our land.

Yet the powers that be, with government approval, took it on. They thought it would lift the moral of the nation - and so it proved to be. It was a challenge to the British genius for improvisation. Homes had to be found for thousands of overseas visitors, not to mention some 6,000 athletes from 59 nations.

The great test was taken; and the organisation rose gloriously to the supreme challenge. There were no new buildings, for the athletes were housed, fed and made at home in refurbished camps that had served the military needs of only a few years before. And from Wembley to Torquay, from Aldershot to Sandhurst, it was existing facilities that were adapted, cleaned up and used.

Never again would the Games be staged on such a modest budget and with utility facilities. Yet in every way it was a triumph and received the warm congratulations of all concerned. For a nation struggling after a terrible war it was a tonic.

The Gold Medals were hard to come by for the Brits. Only two and both on water - Rowing and Yachting. However, on an unofficial table ranked on finalists, Great Britain was placed 6th out of 59 nations. There were five bronze and fourteen silver medals won in nine of the eighteen sports. One of the silver medallists was a local Woodford Green girl. Twenty-one- year-old Dorothy Manley, who had emerged from St. Barnabas Secondary Modern School indicated considerable promise - but as a high jumper. Fortunately a national coach believed she had more sprinting potential - and so it proved to be. Dorothy won her heat, semi-final and on a wet cinder track chased home the great Fanny Blankers-Koen of the Netherlands in the 100 metre final before 80,000 screaming spectators.

### **John Hayward**

## Doctor Livingstone, We Presume? by John Juchau

A recent Ongar ramble dedicated to the explorer David Livingstone had to go ahead without the presence of the great man. However, an e-mail ('e', of course, standing for ethereal) was received during the walk and this was read out to those assembled:

*My Dear Friends,*

*I am sorry I can't be with you today as I am somewhat indisposed at the moment. Perhaps the following might interest those on the walk this glorious sunny morn.*

*As the history books attest I was born in 1813 at Blantyre, near Glasgow, and eventually became a missionary and explorer. In 1833 I joined the London Missionary Society and was sent to Ongar as part of my training. I fondly remember my 15 months in the town staying in lodgings along the high street, before returning to London to complete my medical studies.*

*It was in Ongar that I met a young woman named Catherine and I believed for a short while I was truly in love. Unfortunately my amorous intentions were not returned and she found the company of a fellow student, Thomas, more cordial than mine. Like yourselves I greatly enjoyed walking and spent most of my spare time in Ongar's bonny countryside. At one stage I deputised for the minister at the Independent Chapel in Stanford Rivers. This required me to walk over from Ongar and back. I believe the Chapel was burnt down in 1927. Obviously I got to know the area well and no doubt you are following many of the same paths and lanes on your route today.*

*I also recall walking to London in order to visit a dear sick relative. It was a bleak, foggy November day and on the way back I lost myself at Stanford Rivers. I had to climb a direction post to see my way forward. I finally reached Ongar at the mid- night hour in a truly exhausted state.*

*After my time in Ongar and London I went on to explore parts of Africa, including the Zambezi River and the discovery of the Victoria Falls. All very different from Ongar you might think. However, I did write in a letter from Africa that "at Algoa Bay the village is like Ongar in Essex as regards two places can be ..."*

*Once again, I am sorry about not being there today as unfortunately, I can't engage myself in your activity any more. But, believe me my dear friends, the views are heavenly from where I am now. Please be assured my kindred spirit will be with you all day. Yours, David.*

David Livingstone died in Africa in 1873. His body was interred at Westminster Abbey, but his heart was buried in Africa.

---

## Random Harvest

"Gruntled of Wanstead" decides to spend August Bank Holiday week-end transforming Nature's bounty in the garden (organic apples and pears) by following Sandra's Mum's traditional recipe for chutney, handed down for generations. She will make apple jelly and chutney to share among neighbours.

Plans week-end like military operation - Sunday to sensible daughter to chop 20lb of Bramleys (from neighbour's overhanging tree) into suitable chunks for straining through jelly bag by following Granny's traditional recipe for clear and beautiful apple jelly, handed down for generations.

Spends a small fortune buying onions, pickling spices, brown sugar, huge bottle of vinegar etc. Rises early next morning to begin chopping for manufacture of said pear chutney. Pears are less than perfect owing to inroads made by wildlife encouraged into garden, such as foxes, blackbirds and rats. Chops and minces accompanied by Radio 2. Goes happily into garage to fetch carefully hoarded small precious jars lined up neatly on window sill. Shock! Horror! Window sill empty - where jars gone?

Gruntled remembers that son has been renovating ancient banger, left on front lawn for five years, and has already appropriated special Bonne Maman jars, complete with colourful red check lids, for nefarious purposes of paint storage. Screams down phone - "Where special jars gone?" Answer comes quietly "I only used fifteen!" Son appears swiftly with contents of own fridge, sticky half empty jars. Attempts to make reparation by knocking down pears from tall trees with clothes prop. Prop now unfit for normal use. Previously absent wasps now invade rotting pears in kitchen. Dog is terrorized and disappears. Kitchen vacated.

Gruntled now phones sensible daughter to enquire progress of carefully prepared apples, expecting task to be transformed into clear and bright jars of apple jelly. "Jelly bag wouldn't take the weight of all the apples, leaked all over floor, made another one out of old pillow case, same thing happened again..." Daughter now not so sensible but upset and sticky. What happened to ecologically correct daughter?

By comparison, more pragmatic but less ecologically correct daughter simply jumped into car, drove to village fete and purchased several jars of organic jam made by someone else's traditional family recipe. We know what we'll do come next harvest... **Gruntled of Wanstead**