

## AN ARBORETUM OF POEMS

Ten members of the U3A poetry group met at Chris' house 12th July to share poems about trees  
We had selected a wide range of poems which gave rise to some key themes:

Childhood memories of playing on trees  
Trees used as a metaphor -a journey to the woods as the journey of life  
Winter and the apparent death of trees  
Trees as the centre of systems of interconnectedness and mutual assistance  
-the Wood Wide Web  
They are a symbol of strength but are also a target for destruction  
They seem eternal and everlasting  
They watch and wait, take their time, and progress almost imperceptibly, whilst man hurtles  
headlong

Excerpts from three poems illustrate contrasting moods and are drawn from different landscapes:

The trees -Philip Larkin

The trees are coming into leaf  
Like something almost being said;  
The recent buds relax and spread,  
Their greenness is a kind of grief.

Is it that they are born again,  
And we grow old?  
No; they die too  
The yearly task of looking new is written down in rings of grain

Hope -Dinah Hawken

It is to do with trees  
Being amongst trees  
It is to do with tree ferns:  
Mamaku, ponga, wheki..  
Shelter under here  
Is so easily understood.  
You can see that trees  
know how it is  
To be bound into the earth  
And how it is to rise defiantly  
into the sky.

It is to do with death:  
The great slip in the valley:  
When there is nothing left  
But to postpone all travel  
and wait  
In the low gut of the gully  
For water, wind and seeds.

Sabbaths -Wendell Barry

What is the way to the woods, how do you go there?  
By climbing up through the six days' field,  
kept in all the body's  
sorrow, weariness and joy. By passing through  
the narrow gate on the far side of that field  
where the pasture grass of the body's life gives way  
to the high, original standing of the trees  
By coming into the shadow, the shadow  
of the grace of the straight way's ending,  
the shadow of the mercy of light.

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Robert Alabaster

(Next meeting: Animals 09August)