

April Poetry Group Report by Chris Golds

Leading up to the April meeting, all things were well. A broad subject area is used each month to stimulate the selection of poems and these were being forwarded to Annie. The established routine would run smoothly as normal. As the date of the meeting approached, information came through to members causing some consternation – there was to be a guest joining the meeting. But then two visitors, followed by a third...

You will be relieved to hear that the adjustments needed to accommodate all of this – the seating arrangements, delay at the start for media interview and photographs - were managed with good humour, cooperation and patience.

Our Teesdale bard, Meg Peacocke, was the invited guest. Two members of the Third Age Trust, the u3a umbrella organisation were also welcomed – Liz Thackray, currently national Chair and a representative from NE region, Jean Cubbin. Stuart Laundy was invited to record this special event for his local radio programme and the Teesdale Mercury (featured 27 April).

The theme for the meeting was **Walking**. It brought forth, as always, an interesting array of poems, some familiar, some completely new, but better understood following the group discussion which can bring responses of pleasure, sometimes confusion and occasionally delight.

Hearing Meg read her own poem **The Old Roads** with a quiet, calm, but assured voice, was something special. The closure of this short poem "...this jolt of severance where no words find a footing" might stimulate an interest in members to search out this poem. In the first stanza you can feel the Teesdale air.

An appearance of two poems by Robert Frost was not a surprise: **A Lake Walk** and **The Road Not Taken**. His solid structure and rhyme create powerful images. The mood of the poems was very much weighted to a melancholy note. Was this reflecting the mood of the members when making a selection or does the topic lend itself to that injection? No answer, of course, it could simply be the weather or certain world matters in play, and no shortage of those.

However, as a contrast, humour was brought into the room with **Excelsior: the Shades of Night** by A E Housman. Peter was certainly equipped with his personal experiences of the church to offer interesting anecdotes provoked by this parody of a Longfellow poem. A small anthology **10 Poems about Walking**, compiled by Sacha Dugdale (publisher Candlestick Press), brought three of the poems to the meeting, including Meg's **The Old Roads**.

Our next meeting is on Wednesday 12 June when the theme is **Absence**.