

Poetry Group Report by Terry Whitfield

We met on a beautiful, untypical November day to share poetry about autumn. Some of the poems reflected the sunny weather but others most definitely did not. As might have been expected, the chosen poets had widely differing approaches to writing about the season.

For Elizabeth Jennings the season evokes nostalgia - 'But I am carried back against my will into a childhood where Autumn is bonfires, marbles, smoke.' Emily Bronte, on the other hand, is looking forward to Winter:

Fall, leaves, fall; die, flowers, away;
Lengthen night and shorten day;
Every leaf speaks bliss to me
Fluttering from the autumn tree.

Seamus Heaney describes an Irish scene with swans:

In September or October, when the wind
And the light are working off each other
So that the ocean on one side is wild
With foam and glitter and inland among stones
The surface of a slate-grey lake is lit
By the earthed lightning of a flock of swans.

So does W B Yeats:

The trees are in their autumn beauty,
The woodland paths are dry,
Under the October twilight the water
Mirrors a still sky;
Upon the brimming water among the stones
Are nine-and-fifty swans.

Sylvia Plath imagines a bleak autumn as a frog!

Summer grows old, cold blooded mother.
The insects are scanty, skinny.
In these palustral homes we only
Croak and wither.

Our own Mike Catling in 'An Autumn Day in Cotherstone' paints a scene we can all recognise:

And as light begins to fade and windows light up
like surprised eyes at a birthday treat, another day
draws to a close as autumn's footfalls move on to winter.

In Sonnet 73 Shakespeare uses autumn as a way of describing himself:

That time of year thou mayst in me behold
When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang
Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,
Bare ruin'd choirs, where late the sweet birds sang.

Rainer Maria Rilke invokes a higher power:

Lord? It is time. Great summer's at an end.
Lay down your shadows on the sundials;
Across the fields unleash a cooler wind.

In Annie's lovely house, with good company, what more pleasant way to spend a morning?