

Words of wisdom

A collection of poems by residents
of the Abbeyfield Society

2020

Introduction

David McCullough

Abbeyfield CEO



This book showcases the poetic works of Abbeyfield residents in the UK. The Abbeyfield Society provides housing and care for older people and aims to enhance their quality of life by creating a warm, welcoming environment offering friendship, opportunity and stimulation in later life.

Poetry allows one to use his or her imagination, to be creative and to write on paper what they would not necessarily be able to encapsulate in prose or a conversation. The Abbeyfield Poetry Competition was held to encourage Abbeyfield residents to express themselves in this way and to be recognised for their talent.

The quality and quantity of entries for the competition far surpassed our expectations. The judging panel - ably led by Foster Murphy, a published poet and former Abbeyfield Chief Executive - made some difficult choices to select nine winners. This book celebrates our residents' amazing efforts. We hope the poems inspire you, move you, and provide an insight into the thoughts and minds of older people living in the UK today.

Foreword

By Foster Murphy

Published poet and former Abbeyfield CEO (1992-2002)



No one needs to persuade me that Abbeyfield is a great organisation. During my time as CEO in the 1990s, I was fortunate enough to visit hundreds of our houses and see for myself the creative talents that many older people possess.

The idea of celebrating the talents of our residents through a poetry competition is brilliant and I was honoured to be invited back to Abbeyfield as a judge. It has been a great pleasure to read all the poems and I would like to offer my congratulations to every author.

Poetry means a lot to me. I read a variety of poems in my 20s, but then stopped. Fifty years later I found myself writing poems for my wife while she was dying in hospital. Now I am a member of a local group and the National Poetry Library, and I enjoy attending events at the London Poetry Café. Quiet excitement, horizon broadening and new friendships have all followed and my brain keeps popping up with new ideas, which I nurture into poems.

This is exactly what Abbeyfield tries to encourage for its residents: pleasure, discovery, companionship and both physical and mental activity. From experience, I know that putting thoughts onto paper is something they will have truly savoured.

This is a trailblazing publication and one that I hope will be the first edition of many. I hope you enjoy it.

Valley of the Moon

By Robert Brunning

The Abbeyfield House, Hadleigh



Down the lane we'd meet by the horses,
in the valley of the moon.

There I lost my heart, by the roses,
in the valley of the moon.

There we said goodbye, she cried and so did I,
that is why I feel lonely.

But we will meet again, by the roses,
in the valley of the moon.

Winner of the Foster Murphy Special Recognition Award

Care Home Blues

By Peter Driscoll

Victoria House, Ken



Away in a care home
I am strapped to my bed
I am not very happy,
And I wish I were dead!

The food is quite awful
The cooking, a joke,
It should be unlawful
To feed this to folk.

The cleaning is sloppy,
The hygiene is vague,
So there's a high chance
We'll all get the plague!

Because of our position,
And as the scheme takes shape
We're all digging a tunnel,
To make our ESCAPE!

I Think of You These Long Lonely Days

By Philip Gibson

The Old Bakehouse, Chadlington



I think of you these long
lonely days.

Remember your smile and sweet,
gentle ways.

Although you have gone a part of
you stays

Just the same.

I think of you as I walk up
the hill

To pause at the spot where we
once stood quite still

To promise each other we
would fulfil

Love's strange game.

I think of you as I stand on
the shore

Of the lake where we stood side by
side once before

While the wind in the trees softly
whispers once more

Your dear name.

I think of you now that the loving
is done,

The longing all over, the heartache
all gone.

I think of you and ask why I
am the one

Alone down the lane.

My Doggerel

By Joy Tupling

Abbeyfield House, Beccles



The gas man has gone and done
it again and charged me twice
as much.

I'll never understand this ten page
bill, it's all in Double-Dutch.

The office here has long since
gone, so can't go there to moan.

That's easy, though, I'll do it all
quite as easily on the phone.

Half an hour of ringing, my
patience wearing thin,

I keep hoping for an answer while
I take it on the chin.

Here come the Four Seasons, so
I'm off to a very poor start,

Note by note I've heard them, I
know them off by heart.

“Your call is so important it
will be recorded and put in our
deep vault.”

Huh, I think they will retrieve it to
prove it's not their fault.

Four Seasons nearly over, I'm
advancing in the queue,

My thoughts have really wandered,
'Have I time to make a brew?'

But here, at last, a person, just what
is required –

Although their command of
English leaves a lot to be desired.

“Sorry to keep you waiting, we
really appreciate your call.

This is the wrong department, I
can't tell you anything at all.

My Doggerel

(Continued)



I will put you through to a
colleague if you'll hold on just
a minute.

OK? OK?" If this was a test of
patience I would surely win it.

"Of course that's OK with me,
I'll hold on for another spell,
I've nothing better to do today
I'm sure that you can tell."

"Sorry to keep you waiting, how
can I help today?" I go into
details just once more,

"It's about this wad of paper you
shoved through my front door."

"I understand you completely
and give you morning greeting,

The person you really need to
speak to is actually in a meeting.

They will answer shortly, of that
you can be assured."

Another dose of Vivaldi to stop
me getting bored.

"No, no, ask them to call me
back as quickly as they can.

I've got another complaint to
make about an Amazon delivery
man."

"Just before you go, on a scale
of one to ten, how do you think
we fared?"

"I don't know, but I think I'll go
to WWW dot and get it done by
Go Compare!"

My Son

By Muriel Bradley

Girton Green , Cambridge



I often see you in the hall
Making for the door.
You turn and wave, as you have done
So many times before.
And then I look to where you were
Your room, your desk, your chair.
At all the things that meant so much
To you when you are there.
Although I see you in the hall
You don't go through the door,
You turn and slowly fade away
A wraith that is no more.

Nettles are Forever

By Berenice Shellard

Westall House, Horsted Keynes



Move over a little, you're
cramping my spread.

Hutch up, there's a dear, or we'll
all end up dead.

I'll just get my roots down,
and twined into yours

Then we'll shoot up together
with hardly a pause.

Poor momma got weed-killed
with SBK3

I'm determined no way will
that happen to me.

So cuddle up close and keep
nice and warm

We'll make hundreds of seed
heads to land on the lawn.

Then we'll wait for our moment –
an ultimate fling

To teach Gran the lesson of
the great nettle's sting.

So when the sun shines and
she comes with her spray

We'll attack her with glory and
she'll flee away.

She'll be yelling and shouting
"My legs are on fire!"

If she runs up that hill she
might even expire.

But we'll twine together with
your family,

Eat manure for breakfast and
compost for tea

Then we'll spread round the
garden and being well fed

No-one, not no-one, can make
us all dead.

Our House

By the residents, assisted by Hilary Hamilton

Abbeyfield House, Downpatrick, Abbeyfield & Wesley Society



Long ago in London town
A man named Richard bought
a piece of ground.
The start of something big
did grow
Out of love and caring hope
and sharing
Our Abbeyfield houses started
to grow.
Over the water far away
Not far from Saint Patrick
This is where we spent our days
As we watch the people not
standing still
Busy with lives as the seasons
roll by.
We watch our daffodils burst
into spring

The roses then follow along
with our filled wheelbarrow with
flowers tumbling over.
Beside we sit on our benches with
the sun on our face
As autumn will start with the
falling leaves its time to come in
With the cool of the breeze.
As we gaze out our windows we
watch with glee
Its time for Christmas and up
goes the tree
The table is set for a feast
to behold
Santa arrives with presents galore.
For everyone the year has gone by
with friends at our side
And arms opened wide.

Our House

(Continued)



Around our table we sit and decide

Now what shall we do as our year
has gone by

Its time to welcome a new year
with pride as

Abbeyfield is always there by
our side.

Shy Sleep

By Jim Nicholls

Clifton House, Isle of Wight



In the long, lonely, haunting hours,
When yearned for sleep allows
no slumber,
Hobgoblins leap from the black,
brooding
Dungeon of the imprisoning mind,
Into the magnifying stillness,
Of the enveloping, endless night;
Where, unfettered, these demons
of deep
Despair, gorge upon a fermenting,
Festering stew, brewed from life's
lost loves
And frightening, tearful fantasies.
Only dawn, with its enlightening
Rays of lucid reason, can gently
Cajole the ensuing spectre back

Within the bounds of rational
thought.
Then, at last, after all the torment
Of the dark, shy sleep can secretly
Descend to softly caress away
The tears, if only briefly, before
The unleashed dogs of day burst
'Baying!'
Upon that startled, elusive sleep!

The Song that Orpheus Sang to the Dragon

By Mary Hanscomb

Sibleys Orchard, Berkhamstead & Hemel Hempstead Society



Come, ye web-legged spinners
of dreams,
Come, gently closing night
time roses
Drowsing in the scented canopy
Of deep dark crimson –
Come O larks with slow and
silver voices,
Swallows with songs in the beat
of your wings –
Touch his scaly eyelids with the
cool breath
Of your sleepy music –
Call him with the drifting of
your feathers,
The caress of your pointed petals –
Call him to the green valley
Of your lullaby!

Come and bid the waves be still –
White created waves must rise
no more;
O, come and call him to the hills
Of your melody –
As I touch my humble strings
Watch his great snake body sink
Into the divine grace of moody
slumber,
With peace in his bold heart
And the vigilant wisdom of ages
Forgotten in the dishonest drug
Of my seductive song.

A Christian's View of Death

By Mrs Judith Dawkins

Abbeyfield House, Isle of Wight



One day on earth I met the Lord,
He drew me with His love.
He promised me, if I would give
my life to Him,
Then I would reign above.

I asked Him how He'd bought me,
I asked what did I cost?
He answered that the price
He'd paid
Was death upon the cross.

I though a while, I pondered,
I weighted the cons and pros,
And then I thought, why do I wait?
What have I got to lose?

If You could die for me, I said,
Then I must live for You,
So take my life and lead me
And show me what to do.
And so I lived my life on earth,
I tried to follow Him,
He understood my weaknesses,
And strengthened me within.

He offered me the peace I sought,
The freedom from my sin.
He gave me hope, fresh start
in life –
To live in harmony with Him.

And now my days on earth,
Are very nearly past,
And I am waiting patiently
To see my Love at last.

He said He loved me dearly,
He said He'd bought my soul.
He said if I'd surrender to His love,
Then He would make me whole.

A Christian's view of death

(Continued)



I know that I am welcome,
In the place that I shall be.
My Heavenly Father's promised
And I cannot wait to see.

For He has promised me a place
of beauty,
Where joy and peace shall reign.
And God's glory will surround me,
And all are free from pain.

There are no tears, no sorrow,
So do not grieve for me.
For I shall be with my Beloved!
It's where I've always longed to be.

A collection of untitled poems

By Betty Telford

Abbeyfield Loveday House, Wigton



1

I remember our stockings
Hanging on the chimney wall.
Santa came, we awoke at dawn,
Crept downstairs, to see what
was inside,
“What a surprise,”
We took them back to bed.
Our joy when we looked:
A sixpence in the toe, nuts
were next,
An orange and an apple,
Chocolate and sweets,
A pencil or a rubber,
Perhaps a pack of cards,
A cardboard cut out doll
with dresses,
A book in which to write
Our innermost thoughts –
What joy we had.

2

Try to understand what we do
In life is for the best.
Is that good enough?
Only God is wise.
We are poor mortals, some
who try,
And some who don't.
We must live by the rules and
With moral attitudes,
Otherwise we are lost in
A dark abyss.

A collection of untitled poems

(Continued)



3

Life is such a special gift.
Something for us to understand,
Why we wish our life away,
To be in another time or land.
Let us remember of times gone by
Of loves and memories, they
never die,
Such a lot of love to give.
I hope you understand
It's what you make of what
you have,
A smile, a word, a helping hand.

4

The wonders of nature are
all around.
A rainbow in the sky;
The stars, sun and moon.

A racehorse running

Or a bird in flight;

A baby in its mother's womb

Is such a lovely sight.

There is a God, there has to be,

Or how would these things have
come to be?

5

We awake each morning to the

sounds of the birds,

The sun shining high or the rain
falling down,

The wind howling, or just a
gentle breeze.

Flowers poking through the earth,
buds on the trees,

The earth glistening with the frost
and snow,

Each day a new beginning.

A doggerel – Why would I move into Abbeyfield?

By Eileen Chamberlain

Abbeyfield House, Beccles



Foolish old woman, still loving
her man.

Battered old woman, I've now got
a plan:

I'm taking the essence of what was
our home

And ripping it out to start again.

Soon.

One year on and it all came true –

I've found my peace and learnt
to live

As one again instead of half
of two.

This last lonely bit I will live,
not endure,

With like-minded people safe
and secure,

And that will set my birdies free
To live their lives fully like Otto
and me.

Abbeyfield Ballymena

By Margaret Hughes

Abbeyfield House, Ballymena, Abbeyfield & Wesley Society



A is for Abbeyfield

B Beautiful house and gardens

B Best of company and

E Everything we need

Y You cannot believe the

F Food served everyday

I It couldn't be better

E Everyone so friendly

L Lots of help and care

D Day and daily

Abbeyfield Ballymena

By Ethel McDonald

Abbeyfield House, Ballymena, Abbeyfield & Wesley Society



Abbeyfield is a wonderful place
There you will always meet a happy face.
We have a boss her name is Helen
When we want something done
She is always willing.
The craic is great and we all have a ball
But we have to be careful not to fall.
At dinner time we all meet to eat
At a table of food which is always a treat.

Abbeyfield House

By Christopher Hand

Abbeyfield House, Wednesfield



Abbeyfield House is the place
to be,

With a warm friendly welcome
and a cup of tea!

The meals are tasty and all
home cooked,

If this was a restaurant it would
be fully booked!

There's a relaxing garden and
beautiful pond,

And colourful flowers of which
we are fond.

Our comfortable flats are a
real retreat,

You won't find anything that's
hard to beat.

Everybody is happy, helpful
and kind,

And this all helps us to unwind.

With our entertainment nights
and afternoon teas,

We are all very happy and easy
to please.

A place of safety and where we
can rest,

It has to be said – Abbeyfield is
the best!

Abbeyfield House

By John Ellwood

Abbeyfield House, Beccles



Abbeyfield House, half past twelve
each day at the dining table we all
meet.

It is lunch time and we all look
forward to eat.

The menu board is well placed to
have a look,

To see what our excellent kitchen
staff have decided to cook.

If the menu of the day is not to
your taste,

A word with the cook, and the
meal will be replaced.

At five o'clock the above is
all repeated,

Once again we are all seated.

A quick glance at the menu to see

What lovely goodies we are having
for tea.

All credit to our most wonderful
staff

Who work so hard with dedication
on our behalf.

Abbeyfield Society House

By Linda Burgers

Abbeyfield House, Ivybridge



What's in a name?

Abbeyfield: religious thought field on which there had been a religious building.

Society: a form of club, may be religious or not.

House: a building in which people live. Once a house for a family to live. Now a society of elderly people being helped to live their last years of life as peacefully and happily as possible.

Abbeyfield Wendover

By Gladys Evans

Abbeyfield House, Wendover



There's an air of sadness around
our house today

Because two of our friends have
passed away

And the two empty chairs in our
dining room

Are hard to see every day.

Maria was simply a star in the sky

Always sparkling and floating
on high.

We remember good friends and
with just a tear

God bless from all of us here.

Gerald was a lovely man,

Bit grumpy, but gentle and kind,

Quite willing to show off his
botanical mind.

Hi tortoise? What can we say?

He enjoyed them anyway.

Another Day

By Mrs Christine Keat

Clifton House, Isle of Wight



Well, here we are, it's another day.

My knees have had it, but what can I say?

Life is still good, here we are.

It's another day.

As Time Goes By

By Joyce Hyde

Austenmead, Abbeyfield Chalfonts Society



As time goes by
I wonder why,
The time just seems to fly
Remembering the school days
Friends and party times.
Our dancing at the local hall
We really did have a ball
Now, counting days and wedding bells
And family times arrive.
The joy of having happy days
With children by our side
The time does fly and once again
The children wave goodbye
Time again, to reminisce of our golden days
So happy with the life we've had
And remembering, "how time goes by."

Autumn Poem

By the residents

Grace Muriel House, Abbeyfield St Albans Society



Autumn is the time of misty mornings
Rustling leaves underfoot
Grey skies herald the dawning
Smoking fires leaving soot.

Walking through the woods kicking leaves
Collecting conkers, wood for the fire
Trees full of colour.

Returning home with our bounty
Glowing faces, misty breath
Arms full of logs, good for our health
This is best of our county.

Early nights snuggled in bed
Goodbye to Autumn.

Beliefs

By David Phillips

Abbeyfield House, Abbeyfield York Society



Tall is better than short

Houses are better than flats

Rich is better than poor

Of course.

Church is better than Chapel

Old is better than young

Man is better than woman.

Is that so?

Oxford is better than Cambridge

English is better than French

White is better than black.

Is it?

But,

Kind is better than cruel

Good is better than bad

Even if you are a tall, white old man who goes to church, went to Oxford and speaks English.

Dawn

By Philip Seymour

Abbeyfield House, Bude



The night is peeled off at last

A golden flood of sun

Relief and recovery

Thanks God.

End to End

By Ivor Bird

Hope Bank View, Sunderland



Life is but a bowling game,
Some smite their way to power
and fame,
Others lacking skills and grit
Can never make that vital hit,
While others make a
winner's score,
Then go on and on making more.

The clever bowler propels
his wood
Making sure the line is good,
Sometimes he bowls with
cunning skills,
As he attempts to hid the pill,
At times he sends it swift
and strong,
And sometimes gently rolls along.

Across the fields and in the west
The bowlers go to take their rest
For there the great pavilion stands,
A house not made by mortal hands,
A place for each player is there
Prepared when evening says he
must declare.

The entrants sought no early fame,
They did their best and played
the game,
May we all enter unafraid
To hear our captain say,
“Well played.”

Ginger

By Margaret Lyons

Abbeyfield House, Bude



There was a cat named Ginger

Who sometimes likes to linger,

When he was good

There he stood.

The cat was called Kalinka

Who lived in a place called Lapinka.

Girl Guide Camp

By Patricia Chalklin

Abbeyfield House, Bude



We're off to camp, you know
the date.

We pitched our tents when
we arrive,

We have to do that to survive.

We fly the flag with ceremony,

We cut the turf and shake it high,

We keep it wet, it must not dry.

Afternoon is for our games,

Then in the evening we
must gather

Round a campfire all together.

We sing our songs

Then off to bed to get our rest,

To face another lovely day at camp.

The bricks are placed,

The wood is found to light to fire,

The water's on for us to wash,

The cooks are busy with the food,

We cook in army dixies,

The stoker stokes the fire.

All the patrols have done their best

To make the meal a great success.

Gone away

By Muriel Bradley

Girton Green, Cambridge



“When can we go home?” he asks.

“We are home,” you say,

Knowing that the question will
come again and again

From a mind lost, and struggling
to make sense

Of a world he now no longer
understands.

He has gone away, but past
memories come unexpectedly,
explicitly narrated,

Giving momentary elations to
those who want to cling on

To the man he was.

Great-Grandchildren

By Avril Summers

Abbeyfield House, Wednesfield



My great-grandson is called Reuben.
My great-grandson is a star!
My great-grandson is aged six months.
My great-grandson will go far!

My great-grandson has two sisters –
Number one, Talia, seven years old.
Talia loves school, enjoys every minute.
Maths is her favourite, so we are told.

Freya is Reuben's other sister.
She is five and is a thoughtful girl.
She studies friends, family and strangers.
Her long hair has lots of curls.

Talia, Freya, Reuben, great-grandchildren three,
I see them quite often, but would like to see more.
Talia, Freya, Reuben, different but delightful,
I love my three, but am assured there won't be four!

Hold Fast to Your Ideals

By Ivor Bird

Hope Bank View, Sunderland



The king won the Bannockburn battle,
And proved he was no fool,
Re-stabilising bonnie Scotland's home rule,
So you see son, when life seems too rough,
And you feel that you've had enough,
All the time feeling down in the dumps,
Remember Bruce and his spider,
Yes, you too can come up trumps.

Home from Home

By Clem Shaw

Voysey House, Abbeyfield Belfast Society



When hit by arthritis and the going got tricky,
I picked up the phone and got a nice girl called Niki.
She found me a good place called Voysey,
Which I truly enjoy because it's not noisy.
The residents all match this very nice place
And no one here has a funny face.
She put me in the best room in the house
And I haven't even seen a solitary mouse!
Another thing I found very good
Is the nice variety in all the great food.
Outside the window I see lots of trees,
The occasional butterfly and plenty of bees.
So if you need a good place your backside to deploy
You should just ring Abbeyfield and ask for Niki Molloy.

I wandered lonely as a cloud

By Denis Budgen

Westall House, Horsted Keynes



I wandered lonely as a cloud
But any more I'm not allowed
to write – or even say out loud –
because I can't think of any more
words that end in OUD...!

January Sales

By Liz Woodham

Abbeyfield House, Abbeyfield Gloucestershire Society



It's bargain time – the sales are here,
Nothing costly – nothing dear,
Let us all get down to town,
Jenny wants a wedding gown,
Auntie wants some cutlery,
Johnnie wants a DVD,
Mum wants shoes – she has bad feet,
Cousin wants a three piece suite,
Fridges, freezers, carpets too-
Dad has vanished to the loo-
Mum's found the pillow slips at last
Let us hope they're colour fast,
Duvets, sheets, oh, what a hassle,
Dad's found a hat – it's got a tassel,
Crowds all on a spending spree,
Lets all go home, and have some tea,
And put our feet up – never fear
We'll do it all again next year!

Just Keep Smiling

By Peter Henwood

Abbeyfield House, Bude



When you're feeling lonely
and blue
And you lose your loved ones
and friends
Just keep smiling.

And when you've done something
wrong in life
And some people don't forgive you
Forgive yourself
Just keep smiling.

And you will be happy
And find something new in life
And you will never be blue
Just keep smiling.

Be happy in life
And you will find someone
who cares
Life does go on
Without your loved ones
and friends
Just keep smiling.
Someone who cares about you
Always think of them
Always care for them
And you will find yourself smiling
Once again, just like me
So remember
Just keep smiling.

Just Us

By Zoe Ryle

Austenmead, Abbeyfield Chalfonts Society



The residents of Austenmead
Rarely get walkers up to speed,
But when they go across
the lounge
Deep wheel tracks are often found.

Some get fitness in the garden,
Though their will has to harden.
Others sit and watch their TV
And gather extra weight with glee.

Various amusement are
often found,
Jigsaws, games and discs abound.
A resident is computer-able
Which helps us stay informed
and stable.

We really are a friendly crew,
And welcoming to those
who're new,
We love a full house 'cause it is fun
So entertainers have a good run.

Last but not least there are
the staff.
They and their partners share
their laughs.
With bingo and chess, they are
the game
So we can enjoy a moment's fame.

Leaves

By Mary Maycock

Victoria House, Kew



Bouncing, dancing, flying leaves
Borne on the air,
Leaving tall trees black and bare,
Tell us now that winter is near.

The changing seasons bring delight,
They show us all of nature's might.

Colours and shapes of every hue,
All things forever new.

My heart is moved in equal measure,
The changing season is mine to treasure.

Life

By Michael Armstrong

Abbeyfield House, Wednesfield



When life is young and full of promise,
Much to achieve before mid-life is upon us,
When mid-life arrives there may be regrets,
And maybe at times one just forgets,
The years roll on, old age is near,
The race nearly run that brought you here,
But just think back you may recall,
That life hasn't been that bad after all.

Living Forever

By Muriel Bradley

Girton Green, Cambridge



Really?

Popping a pill or two

To hold back the process which propels us

To the grave.

Ageing begins at birth, so

Colostrum spiked with liquid immortality

Will surely be the start

Of this miraculous process.

And who will make this wondrous elixir

That gives us endless life?

It surely must be free to all, the gift of a benevolent government

Which must house, educate, protect and serve

In every possible way

The ever growing throng.

Lord High Wizard & Mistress Hampton

By Christine “The Witch” Coles

Grace Muriel House, Abbeyfield St Albans Society



Hubble bubble toil and trouble,
Fire burn and cauldron bubble,
Eye of newt and wing of bat,
Leg of frog, tasty treats like that.

Sitting by the kitchen door
Is a sleek black cat with an upwards paw.
Her mistress comes into the room
Wearing a witch’s hat and carrying a broom.

She calls the cat that is now wearing a cat sized hat of her own.
They step out into the night
To prepare for the evening’s flight.

Up they fly
Across the dark midnight sky.

If you’re out you won’t believe,
But please remember it’s All Hallows Eve!

Martins

By Graham Hampson

Girton Green, Cambridge (published posthumously)



Summers' almost gone... Black flies
 Mob the garden beans, swarms of swallows
 Swamp the sagging wires; a single pair
 Of martins, wooden-winged as fulmars
 From a cliff, flashes by the eaves:
 They burble like the kettle on the hob,
 Or twit and sputter in their budgie speak;
 And when they greet their schoolboy brood,
 Crowded still in pellet-plastered home
 Their repartee is redolent of summer
 As the rasp of insect combs.
 The parents' cries are urgent now;
 The fledglings should have flown the nest
 (An earlier, precarious one, had crashed
 To earth – a setback costing twenty
 Precious days)... Hosts of hirundines
 Are heading south (three thousand miles,
 Or fifteen million wing beats, more or less –
 Tall order for a bird just four weeks old);
 Yet presently their flitting wings will grace
 The southern skies, serving to remind us
 That heroes come in many guises...

Merville Abbeyfield

By the residents

Abbeyfield House, Newtonnabbey, Abbeyfield & Wesley Society



Merville, our home, our small community,
In our rooms, cosy and private,
Yet company and craic elsewhere at times,
Sit in the sun room and watch the world go by,
Maybe potter in the patio garden,
Relax in the lounge and watch TV,
Perhaps join in a quiz or Spot The Tune,
Whatever we choose, go out or stay in,
We can relax here and be ourselves in our home.

Moving to Abbeyfield

By Cynthia Richards

Grove House, Abbeyfield The Dales Society



Once I had a garden,
Now a balcony and pots.
Once I had two flights of stairs,
But here we use a lift.

My tummy will get used to it,
But then there is the tea.
Do I need some Gaviscon?
No, a little walk will do.

The carers are the ones in blue,
The cleaners all in pink.
Then there is the manager
And some mystery men in suits.

I fell so very lucky
To have my own nice flat,
To meet the fellow residents
And have a little chat.

We have many kindly volunteers
And a cheerful kitchen staff.
Maintenance worked hard for us
To make the house our home.

Now I'm in my nineties,
How fortunate to find
The place called Abbeyfield
On Ilkley Moor baht 'at.

We all sit down to dinner.
The soup is very good.
Main courses I find heavy –
Where to put the “sweet”?

My Garden Shed

By Mary Maycock

Victoria House, Kew



The pointed pinnacle is echoed behind
By dark green holly;
Either side blossoms, magnolia, wild pear
frame the scene.

My favourite corner, housing tools
For many happy hours
And shelter from sudden showers.

A chair in front and pots beside
Face the lawn green and wide.

All this from my armchair seen.

Neighbours

By Jerry Bleasdale

Girton Green, Cambridge



Forty odd years we lived at
number eight,
The house and garden
both immaculate.
It was a haven for me and my wife,
The happiest period of our
married life.

Over the years our neighbours
changed a lot,
Some well remembered, the others
best forgot.
First up the hill were Margaret
and Ted,
They seems to live so far ahead
Of ours, that we much envied
their success,
But later found they were in
a mess.
Just one electric plug they had
to use,

A miracle it never blew a fuse,
And Ted, too mean to fork out for
another,
An Ebenezer Scrooge – or like his
brother.

First down the hill, to add to our
delights,
A Scouser who covered all the
house in lights.
He owned a club in Liverpool –
the fool
Who dug out an enormous
swimming pool.
Thirteen feet deep it was, right near
the house,
And every creepy and crawly thing
and mouse
Eventually fell in and drowned
and sank,

Neighbours

(continued)



And leaves and rubbish all fell in
and stank.

And round all this, to show off his
prowess,

The son would ride his motorbike,
no less.

He never once fell in, so good
his luck,

You could not but admire him
for his pluck.

And only we knew what was
really there.

We never said a word –
we didn't dare.

Much later owners filled the pool
with soil,

And they were well remembered
for their toil,

For scented flowers grew there
in profusion.

A pond no longer – just a grand
illusion,

On Being A Hundred

By Jennifer Nash

Clifton House, Isle of Wight (published posthumously)



Do I feel a hundred?
 I'm not exactly sure,
 The fact age creeps up on you,
 You really can't ignore.
 Age has its limitations,
 But do I really care
 That once I took an active part,
 Now I stand and stare?

My memory is abysmal,
 There is no other word,
 I can't remember anything,
 It really is absurd.
 I still recall the names of girls,
 With whom I was at school,
 Now names escape me right
 and left,
 And I feel such a fool.

I may not be that brainy,
 At least I've kept my mind,
 To end up with Alzheimer's,
 Would be an awful bind.
 You've got to count your blessings,
 Take stock of what you've got,
 And when you come to add
 them up,
 There's really quite a lot.

My walking is not what it was,
 I lurch about and stumble,
 But mostly I remain upright,
 So who am I to grumble?
 My scooter is my pride and joy,
 It is the greatest boon,
 It means I can go where I like,
 Morning, night and noon.

On Being A Hundred

(continued)



My teeth are few and far between,
I think there's 13 flat,
But I can eat a hearty meal,
The dentist sees to that.
He stops them up, he pulls
them out,
They're in an awful state,
Eventually he hands them back,
But this time on a plate.

Of all the ills that old age brings,
Deafness is a curse,
But I can still hear music,
For me it could be worse.
But when you're hard of hearing,
You really do miss out,
I'm thankful for my hearing aid,
I couldn't do without.

Isn't sight amazing?
When you realise,
That since you're born to when
you die,
You use the same two eyes.
And when with age those eyes
grow dim,
No need to repine,
They fix you up with spectacles,
And you can see just fine.

I'd like to say I slept all night,
But that would not be true,
In and out of bed I go,
That's old age for you.
And when you reach a certain age,
I fear it must be said,
That when not feeling quite
the thing,
Your best friend is your bed.

On Being A Hundred

(continued)



Oh health is a chancy thing,
It's not the same for all,
I ring the doctor, have a chat,
And tell her not to call.
I never have been really ill,
For that I must be glad,
I've had a few mishaps of course,
But nothing really bad.

Is my life worth living?
The answer's yes, for sure,
So long as I can see, hear, sleep
and eat,
Could I ask for more?
And so you see me standing here.
My secret is revealed,
The reason I'm so fit and well:
I live at Abbeyfield.

Do I look a hundred?
Of looks I've had my share,
I know you can't turn back the
clock,
Of that I'm well aware.
But still I do my very best,
My scanty locks be curled,
A dab of make-up here and there,
And I can face the world.

On Black Hill

By Graham Hampson

Girton Green, Cambridge (published posthumously)



Bubbling like a curlew's trill, bright iron deposits
Drip slowly down their moorland hags;
Millstone pavements echo to the clacking
Of the grouse; tufts of yellow nardus vie
With blackened yellow tracts to fashion
Chessboard squares; and the landmark
Black Hill neele perforates the high blue sky...

The Pennine Way! I knew it, walked it,
Long before it came to be; a figment
Of cartography, its dotted line stretched
All the way from Derbyshire to Scotland,
From Edale to Kirk Yetholm. Hikers found it
On their maps, but not upon the ground,
And looking for it, made it! Paths appeared
Where none had walked before... and now
A hundred finger posts delineate its well-worn way.

Our summer holiday

By Erika, Louise, Hillary and Enid

Grace Muriel House, Abbeyfield St Albans Society



We looked at the brochures,
Shall we go to the seaside, shall
we go to Italy
Or shall we climb a mountain?
We took a vote and the
seaside won.

So now we can look forward to
making memories, swimming in
the sea, and eating ice-creams.
Walking along the shore barefoot,
collecting sea shells and pebbles,
looking for witch's stones.
Shall we eat our picnic in the sun
or in the shade of a dune? Parasol
up, blanket on the ground.

Open the picnic bag – sandwiches,
sausages and Corona (Pimm's for
the grown-ups) then sun hats and
sun cream on, racing down to
the sea.

Red buckets at the ready we built
a magnificent sandcastle complete
with turrets, a moat and flags.

Weary and dirty, dragging our feet
we started to make our way back to
the train station leaving a trail
of sand.

With our final look back at the sea,
sun setting, gulls shrieking
and swooping
Promising ourselves to return
tomorrow.

Peace

By Jessica Kellord

Burtons, Plymstock



I heard a blackbird singing
Where it perched upon a tree,
Its feathers black and shining,
With beak of yellow and gold,
Its singing was so lovely
As the message being told.

Whilst it sat I listened,
I felt so much at peace
To be safe in the lovely garden
At the magic time of year.

If feel so very lucky
That this is now my home.

Perceived Affronts

By Muriel Bradley

Girton Green, Cambridge



Family and tribal feuds never resolved
Give rise to bellicose actions played out
Throughout time.
“How puerile, how damaging, how sad,”
You say.
Indeed, it is all those things,
And more.
And yet, even though acknowledged,
The protagonists
Treasure the affront which they perpetuate
For evermore.

Peter: In a World of His Own

By Val Scrafton

Abbeyfield Langholm, Beverley



He sits all alone in a soft easy chair

I have come round to see him, does he know that I'm there?

I sit down beside him and hold his hand

Does he know who I am in his faraway land?

I remember when he was so handsome and strong

We would walk hand in hand and sing a love song

Those days are all gone now, my strong handsome boy

He would tell how he loved me and how I filled him with joy.

I love you forever though life's not the same

As I go home alone, do you know that I came?

Remember Abbeyfield

By David Honneyman

Voysey House, Abbeyfield Belfast Society



You remember the problem of Sylvia's old dad?
Now that his wife's gone he's alone and sad,
And being over 90 can't run things himself,
In spite of his pension and house with nice Delph.

Then Sylvia heard of Abbeyfield and got him a room.
You could tell she was delighted, in fact over the moon!
His world changed overnight, we saw in his face,
He's been happy ever since in the new embrace.

The Rose

By Val Scrafton

Abbeyfield Langholm, Beverley



Garden planting some seeds I
came across a patch all tangled
with weeds.

Right in the middle alone and
forlorn was a beautiful rose all
tangled in thorns.

I saw her perfection her soft
silken gown

So I reached out to touch her
when no-one was around.

The thorns were so sharp as they
pierced through my hand

I brushed off the petals, they fell
to the ground.

My heart felt so sad I should
have just left her there

Deep crimson rose with beauty
so rare.

Rosie

By Philip Seymour

Abbeyfield House, Bude



She scurries along
And barks and growls
Out at three every day,
Not knowing
That her sweetness is loved by all.
She lights up the greyest of days,
A little white blaze of joy.

Ruby Murray

By Harry Wordsworth

Abbeyfield House, Bude



This is a very short poem by
Ruby Murray of Surrey,
Who was always in a hurry to eat
Her curry, which was tasty.
Tasty, very tasty, if she was
Not that hasty to eat her curry.
She said to the cook,
“That was lovely and I want more.”

Soliloquy

By Frank Haley

Hope Bank View, Sunderland



Like the sea my grief
Arrives in waves
Engulfing my heavy heart
Denying the peace it craves
My soul cries out for me to die.
That together again we may lie
Then with the tide my grief recedes
To leave rock pools where my sadness feeds.
Would that I could stem the tide of life
To reach the arms of my beloved wife.

Springtime

By Louise, Daphne and Mary

Grace Muriel House, Abbeyfield St Albans Society



Longer days, shorter nights,
Spring is full of wonderful delights.
April showers and blustery winds
Walking in the woods where birds
are nesting.
A carpet of bluebells and a trail
of snails
And in the canopy above we see
a mist of green
Where leaves are unfolding.
This is the season of movement.

As I begin the season's cleaning
Watching the washing blowing
in the cold breeze
The children play outside
The wind putting colour in
their cheeks.
The garden is coming alive with
yellow daffodils
Buzzing bees, red tulips and frogs
spawning in the pond.
It is always a big surprise how life
forms before your eyes
With newly born lambs, chicks and
baby birds.
And the best bit for children is the
Easter Bunny and the Chocolate
Eggs.

Tales of Old

By Dot Webb

Ivy House, Wellington



We are a group of 'OLDIES'
Come listen to our tale
Of how we came to live here
In the flats in Corams lane.
Most of us have settled in
And live quite happily.
Some have come from miles away
To be near friends or family.

There were just a few small
cottages
With thatched roofs down
this road.
Though pretty, they were in
poor shape,
No longer fit for use.
So down they came, and in
their place,
Up went Ivy House.

This house is run by Abbeyfield
A charity of renown.
There's a church a few yards up
the road
And buses run to town.
Or if your teeth are troubling you,
A dentist near at hand.
A lovely park nearby where you
can sit
And listen to the band.
Most of us were strangers
When we moved to Ivy House
Some of us are women, so the rest
of us are men!
Some we hardly see at all
They have carers coming in.

Tales of Old

(continued)



On Mondays and on Thursdays
There is coffee in the lounge,
Where we can meet for a
friendly chat,
Or have a little grumble-
Some are very good at that!

Now, few of us are perfect,
And old age creeping on.
We find our bodies failing
Or our memories have worn.
But we do our best to help you
And think of things to do.
So if we can't recall your name
And think that is a sin-
Just throw us out on rubbish day,
When the man comes for the bin!

The Cutting

By Joan France

Heathercroft, Abbeyfield Gloucestershire Society



Approach at the cutting's highest point,
take the steps that drop sharply down the bank
but take care to hold the rail. Stop
half way down and look
how the old fence bulges with ivy
and viburnum. Tree roots push steel posts,
drunk with leaning.

One hundred years of growth hides the rails
that carried golden limestone from the quarries
on the hill to the town. Now the steep banks bloom
with brambles, cow parsley, rosebay willowherb.
Stand still and listen to the birds;
blackbird, wren, tits, and robins call
and sing in the tangled branches.
At dawn, muntjac deer slip out of sight
leaving fairy-sized footprints in the earth.

Where once iron and steam ruled the way,
this place now gives us a secret peace
nestled behind the screening houses.

The Farm

By the residents

Helene Andrews House, Abbeyfield Belfast Society



The flowers they are a-blooming,

The bees fly in the air.

The lambs are running in the fields,
and “oh they just don’t care.”

The horses jump so graceful

And the chickens run around.

A fox is hiding in the field

Hoping he won’t be found.

The farmer he is cheerful,

His wife she cleans and cooks,

Another day at ‘Windy Farm’

And it’s as pretty as it looks.

The Garden

By Kumund Taskar

Victoria House, Ken



See the birds, the fruit on trees,
The butterflies, ladybird and bees.
Children playing, running around,
Silent shoots spring forth from the ground.

The gardener digs, waters and plans,
Flower heads gently move and dance.
Beans, tomato, spinach and roses,
Scents of the earth that fill our noses.

Happy, relaxed, peaceful and calm,
I feel so safe in the creator's palm.
As I marvel at such beauty and growth,
The peace so strong, felt by both.

The Little Tern's Treat (The Sea Swallow's Supper!)

By Jim Nicholls

Clifton House, Isle of Wight



Tern trilling high or skimming down low,
Flying so fast, yet other times slow,
Quartering shallows with hungry zeal,
Seeking out shoals for the evening meal
Before dusk descends to end its day.
Hovering tern, on sighting its prey,
Dips down fleeting into the sea;
Then, with a flick the water to free,
Heads off for home with rapid wing beat,
For craving chicks their supper must eat.
As for the fish, experiences new,
Heavenly flight, eternity too!

The Sweet Williams In My Father's Garden

By Mary Walker and the residents

Fern House, Abbeyfield The Dales Society



In my father's garden the Sweet
Williams bloom,

In my father's garden the Sweet
Williams bloom.

In my Father's garden the Sweet
Williams grow,
With the vegetables in the sun
and in the snow.

In my father's garden the Sweet
Williams bloom,
In my father's garden the Sweet
Williams bloom.

The loss of William Spencer
dealt a blow,
So in memory the sweet
Williams grow,

In my father's garden the Sweet
Williams bloom,

In my father's garden the Sweet
Williams bloom.

William's tragic end in a pit,
Saw Father look to grow a
flower fit.

In my father's garden the Sweet
Williams bloom,
In my father's garden the Sweet
Williams bloom.

In the allotment my Father made
a space,
Now Uncle William's flower has
its resting place.

The Sweet Williams In My Father's Garden (Continued)



In my father's garden the Sweet Williams bloom,
In my father's garden the Sweet Williams bloom.

No more grown in Father's garden but I have not forgot,
So in my vases I keep Sweet Williams and I keep a lot,

In my father's garden the Sweet Williams bloom,
In my father's garden the Sweet Williams bloom.

For you see my heart is my garden,
I remember my father Sidney and his brother William too,
Where the Sweet William blooms anew.

The Tree

By Jessica Kelland

Burtons, Plymstock



From my window I can see you,
Majestic, tall and strong,
You really must be quite old,
Many stories you can tell,
All about right or wrong,
As the seasons change,
Your different colours will unfold,
But you are home to many,
Birds, squirrels, insects all love you,
Beneath your boughs of different sizes,
Wild flowers gather to complete the view.

The Visit

By the residents

Westall House, Horsted Keynes



On arrival at Westall it was immediately clear
“Come on in,” they said, “We’re so glad you’re here.
“Sit down, have a cuppa, then we’ll show you round.”
We were soon amazed at what we found.
The staff were like friends we’d not seen for some time.
But oddly they only spoke to us in rhyme!
“There’s a poetry competition,” they said “We’re all taking part.”
“Would you like to join in?” they asked, “and pen words from the heart?”
They’d all got together to discuss a theme.
A variety of subjects were offered it seemed;
trees, cats and dogs, sunsets of fire,
the sea, friendships and activities of which they never tire!
Trips out, a quiz, a shop open all day.
It was clear everyone had plenty to say!
We would’ve joined in, if we’d had the time,
but lunch was served, which stretched my waistline!
Care staff that care, a chef that can cook,
memories of events that would fill a book.
So much I was told when I visited that day
I can’t wait to learn more when I move in and stay!

Contributions from Denis Budgen, Tony Worthington, John Rose, Margaret Joslin, Julian Jones, Dino Giovannetti, Ron Cragg, Win Maries, Berenice Shellard and Carolyn Thomas.

There Is Nowhere Like Yorkshire

By Mary Walker and the residents

Fern House, Abbeyfield The Dales Society



There is nowhere like Yorkshire-
although I've been to Ireland and
France!

There is nowhere like Yorkshire for
how my menfolk dance!

I say there is nowhere like
Yorkshire where my dad grew up
on a farm!

I say there is nowhere like
Yorkshire to my Scots cousins'
alarm!

There is nowhere like Yorkshire-
foreigners have a lot to learn from
us here!

There you'll find the best Yorkshire
pudding, crisps, toffee and beer!

I say there is nowhere like
Yorkshire where Grandmother
Ellen baked bread for everyone!

I say there is nowhere like
Yorkshire where the work is
never done!

There is nowhere like Yorkshire
unless it is with our Lord!
If Heaven is like Yorkshire those
there will have a happy board!

This World

By Avril Summers

Abbeyfield House, Wednesfield



This world is a wonderful place,
A small part is my country –
England.

To travel the countryside here
You see a beautiful green land.

This world is a wonderful place.
My garden is full of colour.
Flowers in pots, beds and troughs,
Poppies the size of no other.

This world is a wonderful place,
But enemies line up to break it.
Plastic, wipes, fumes and more
Kill, maim, scar and clutter it.

This world is a wonderful place.
Animals, insects, amphibians
love it.

Please – do all you can, show
concern,
Stop those who aim to crush it.

This world is a wonderful place.
Please – do not be rash to
destroy it.
Decide with family and friends to
Love, care, share and enjoy it.

Water

By Graham Hampson

Girton Green, Cambridge (published posthumously, unfinished)



Water... water's everywhere
It has a thousand faces: knows how
To dance in chattering cascades,
Or swell and crash in seaside waves;
Is home to perfect rippled rings
Begot of rising salmon; can dapple
Sunken stones in mountain streams,
Reflect the cotton grass round
Moorland ponds, or shine like silk on

We Have a Young Carer Called Molly

By Denis Budgen

Westall House, Horsted Keynes



We have a young carer called Molly
Who'll go to great lengths to be jolly
She never complains when we do something strange
But must think we're all 'off our trolley'...

What Summer Means to Me

By Erika, Louise, Daphne and Edgar

Grace Muriel House, Abbeyfield St Albans Society



Going on holiday and watching the seagulls
Swooping over Southend, sand in our toes
Walking along the cliffs in our shorts and stout boots
With our rucksacks on our backs
Seeing the fishermen in their boats
With their crab and lobster pots

Meandering through the meadows
Seeing the butterflies fluttering over the flowers
Making our way to the stream
To paddle our aching feet and eat our picnic
Hoping there will not be midges or thunderstorms

Bedtime comes later in the summer
The melodic evensong of the birds calling the young
Just as we are trying to sleep
Tossing and turning in the heat
Itchy skin, guess who forgot the sun cream
