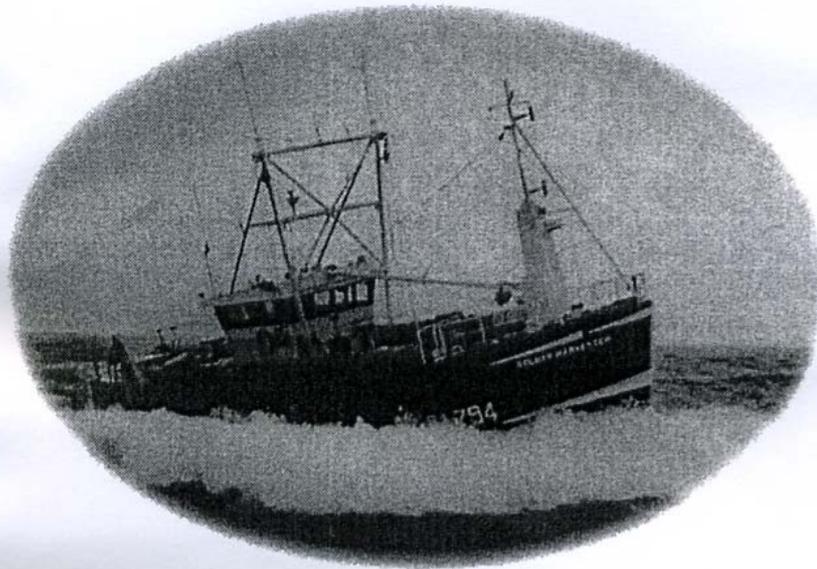


MORE POEMS ON WATER

To supplement Vol.42 No.1, here are some more poems on this theme, starting with **David Betteridge's** moving sea-elegy, *Found* which was written while the tragedy was unfolding. Betteridge actually knew some of the fishing crew who died, so was very involved in the writing of the elegy.

F O U N D



An
ELEGY
for the crew of the
SOLWAY HARVESTER

Drowned at Sea
off the Isle of Man

11 January 2000

*Many waters cannot quench love,
Neither can the floods drown it...
Song of Solomon*

The Seven

Seven had joined the sum of the sea's drowned.
Out of a storm's rage, at a stroke,
a cold death came,
sending its catch of young lives down,
folding them deep in their fishing ground.

Harvesting and harvesting,
the sea gives, the sea takes.
What rises, falls;
what builds, breaks.

Seven deaths have torn their families wide,
beyond the work of words or years' repair.
Their ever-present absences will serve
as beacons, showing grief a way to fare.

Seven names extend the roll
Of a many-nationed company.
Recalled, these lost men gain a second life,
safe in the love of their left ones' memory:
Craig and Robin and David Mills –
they will face no further seas or dying;
Martin Milligan, John Murphy, David Lyons,
Wesley Jolly –
they are free of cares and crying.

What might the seven wish to say,
from the harbour of their rest,
to share with us who throw a line to them
across time's gap of death?

What falls may rise.
Love holds; love stands.
Stronger than seas, it does not crack;
longer than grief, it wins life back,
and never dies.

Foundering

It was the month of a new millennium
and the moon's eclipse.
Jupiter rode high, trailed by Saturn.

The *Solway Harvester* put out, a night sailing.
Out from Kirkcudbright, her course was south,
south to the scallop beds of Man.
Two days should see the job done.
One of the crew had plans to marry.
Two were brothers, fathers both,
one of a child unborn.
Three were hardly out of school.
For one, it was his maiden voyage,
maiden and final.

Across the Solway (Sun's Way), hard
they battered, the boat safe,
well-skipped, and well-found.

It was the month of the new millennium
and the moon's eclipse.
Gorse, in flower early, yellowed headlands.
Wind chased rain.
The seven worked, and won,
and winched aboard their sea-bed crop.

It was the month, and soon the day and moment
of the sinking of the *Harvester*, a safe boat.
It was January, the evening of the eleventh day,
a storm blowing.

*The weather here is screaming;
We're coming home.
(The skipper's final message home.)*

At six it happened:
the sea engulfed the boat and the crew,
put a stop at once to seven futures
in their growing.

Finding

*No, no, it cannot be.
She is purpose-built...
can cope with whatever the Irish Sea can do...
has weathered worse...
has run to shelter to some other port...
we'll see her lights come round the headland soon...*

Night.
The place: the Isle of Whithorn,
on the Solway's Scottish shore.
On the quayside, keeping vigil,

looking south,
a knot of loved ones strain
and fear.

*What?
What facts – what hope –
can the search team bring?*

Found first:
the beacon that began the search,
that radioed distress/location/time.
Found next:
an unused life-raft from the *Harvester*.
Found then, as morning breaks,
the second of the life-rafts' pair.
Found last, and worst:
eleven miles off the coast of Man,
the vessel's wreck,
at nearly twenty fathoms down,

*How and why?
Was it a collision or some hidden fault?
Was she swamped by a giant wave?
Not knowing is too hard to bear.*

Unchilded, unfathered, unhusbanded,
the grieving enter now a purgatory of pain,
their lives for ever sea-changed.
Three weeks and more, they wait
until at last all seven crew are fetched
by divers from sleeping quarters
or the deck, where cold and murk
enclosed them, drowned.

Three weeks and more, and then –
another night, another vigil.
The place: a quayside on the Isle of Man.
A piper plays the dead ashore.
Lifted gently, lowered gently
under Manx and Scottish flags, the men,
now homeward-bound, are brought
in love, by love to welcome ground.

The Inquest

Martin Milligan;
Craig Mills;
John Murphy...

The date of birth,
the date and circumstance of each man's end
the coroner confirms.
The list proceeds
in order of the bodies being found:

David Lyons;
David Mills;
Robin Mills;
Wesley Jolly.

Told also:
the articles of clothing each had on
by which identity was known.
These hammerings of facts
the crowded court must hear,
but dreads to hear.

The inquest is adjourned, to be resumed
until calm seas permit the raising
of the sunk boat's wreck.

Grief weeps.

*We'll take you home.
You'll rest in peace.*

Coming Home

Catkins shook in the frequent wind.
Crocuses stood proud.

It was a day of funerals,
a month on from the sinking,
a hard, slow month of squalls and gales
and, in between, a low sun
blinking.

It was a day when an era ended.
From Douglas, north, by air,
and then to their villages by hearse,
the seven made their journey back,
a world removed from their journey out
when they drove the seaward furrow
south.

It was a day of funerals.
Whithorn and the Isle of Whithorn filled with folk.
Flowers, stacked high, garlanded the coffins.
Cards spelled out their senders' pain.

A many-numbered love attended there,
mourning, caring.
Goodbyes were said and prayers and praise
in friendship's sharing.

It was a day when an era started
when lives in hurt began their futures
in the leeway of the dead departed.

Catkins shook in the frequent wind.
Crocuses stood proud.
New growth freshened the pastures.

The Many

Who can tell the sum of the sea's drowned?
A lifetime's tallying of names
Could not contain them.
So many gone, sunk into history or oblivion!
Yet all were once as now our seven are:
known, missed, remembered, and particular.
And who can tell the greater number
of the world's bereaved?

The seven's harrowing of lives
let love break through from far and near,
a love abounding; so
with every other one gone down,
defying counting.

From out the silences
to which the living – striving – reach,
wave on wave,
the dead, in our own voices,
speak:

*We, your lost, your past,
we seek a home and name in you:
but carry us lightly
lest we weary you.*

*On what courses are you set?
We would be with you
in your good years yet.*

*Carry us lightly.
Let us gladden you.
Sustained and sustaining,
We have lasting life in you.*

Countervailing

Time gives; time takes.
It builds, it uses, it wastes.

Against unmaking
and the rule of rise and fall,
love stands, a constant,
countervailing all.

Stronger than seas, love does not crack.
Longer than grief, it wins life back.

Seven have joined the sum of the sea's drowned,
were lost, were looked for
and were found.



Catherine McIntosh, 31, is half Irish and half Swedish. She studied Art and Art History at Edinburgh University. She lives with her husband and children in Nelson, British Columbia. Another painting of hers is featured in **Broadsheet 5**.

Mark Leech

Lucia Martinez

(from the Spanish by Federico Garcia Lorca)

Lucia Martinez, red silk shadow
your thighs like twilight
shade into darkness. Streaks of jet
 dance veils on your magnolia.

Here I am, Lucia Martinez,
to feast on your mouth,
 bind you in your hair
 in the seashell dawn,

because I want to.
Because I can,
 silk-bodied shadow.

Weaving the nets

(from the Spanish by Andres Sabella)

This is the rough northern sea pressing up to
the empty deserts.

Weavers of nets bend beside it,
feet like rails in the sand.

Their hands raise a dry sound, rattling wood.

As if with deadly fever, the nets tremble;
the men talk to their nets,

the points of the needles insist they listen
as though they could hear.

But the nets remember the sea.

Julian Farmer

Untitled

(translation of Anna Akhmatova)

So, here is the shore of a northerly sea;
here is the boundary of our troubles and glories –
I shall not comprehend, whether you are weeping
from happiness or grief, having fallen at my feet.
I have no more need of the doomed –
of prisoners, hostages, slaves;
only with my darling, who is unbending,
will I be sharing both bread and blood.

Nigel McLoughlin

The Dignity of Sorrow

(from the Irish of Máirtín Ó Díreáin)

Sorrow's great dignity?
I was shown it once,
when a pair of women
dressed for a funeral
emerged from a crowd
bearing a dignified silence
out of the throng.

The ferry boat had landed
from the liner out at sea
and amid the bustle,
the jostle and the shouts,
the pair were silent,
walking together,
set apart.

And I saw dignity,
in widow's weeds.

The Last Leaving Gabhla

Back and back the headlands arrow
to drink at the sea, grey in to the horizon.
Stones lie like scattered cannonballs buried
up to hemisphere deep in sand and couch grass.
On a dark day in winter the sky broods the waters
to life in a frenzy of black and white. Behind me
the grey ruin points two grey fingers
to the slate of the sky and the thunder cracks
over the square of its roofless space. Nearby,
and to one side, a wall of sea stones separates
the territories of these twin emptinesses;
the cove and the cabin. Here, when the tide turns
and the thunder ceases and I leave,
this wall will keep apart their silences
and Toraigh will lie like a dead man,
in the distance, in the gap.

Sand

the closer I grip toes around it
the more it slithers through the gaps
quick as a word slips
like meaning slips
like a tongue's ooze
around the footings
below my sole making me list
a hundred ways at once
trying to keep my balance
and make the shift between
the ebb and flux
leave nothing but the gap
in the neap movement
of my understanding.

Davina Prince

After the storm

If you stand inland, if you only look
from reassuring tarmac, from the promenade,
through the leaky rust of the balustrade,
everything will seem the same.

The shingle dipping to the sea, its scuffed
indifference, its grey familiar sense
of always being a buffer, buffeted:
you recognise all this.

After the loud discordance of the night –
the horizon repairing its ragged edges,
the sky wiping away some last torn clouds -
there is nothing to remark. Unless,

unless you stumble seawards, and look back
to find the stones crazed, reassembled, ridged;
a storm-beach piled in angry repetition,
its crest steep-faced and scraped and new.

Sean Elliott

Kinder

Knowing you will not know: the children play
all morning with a ball and others watch
silent beyond a tricky game of catch;
those villages were emptied in a day.

Wide rivers where a single boatman sings
and only willows rise above the marsh,
stirring like gratitude. Somewhere a harsh
siren begins. Should we forget these things?

Recall instead the ancient festivals,
The hopeful girls in white, the crude red wine,
The drunken cardgames where the gentry lose

And do not mind. The talking animals
Saw mercy stalking on the borderline;
Sometimes the dead would mend their children's shoes.

A Dare

The right day, coming home from school
along the beach, a sudden wave
would surge across the level sand,
four yards or more to strike the wall -
our game only for the brave.
A well-timed sprint along the strand.

meant dryness when you reached the stone
stairs to the town; to get it wrong
ensured a drenching and the pull
of thigh-high water; you were thrown
off balance, then you squelched along
the cold street home, a dripping fool.

Today, inland, I avoid
such dares, dislike the blinding thrash
and scramble back to safety. Pride
too makes me cautious. Chance destroyed
my home one time. I save my cash,
walk slow, respect the waiting tide.

Graham Burchell

Porthole 1

Soon, after waking I arose to the smell of the boat in my nose.
I could see through the salt-fogged porthole – dolphin sky,
endless acres of molten greyness, and then,
just coming into view, the skeletal bow of a dead vessel
growing out of nature's lop and swirl, impervious,
huge, much bigger than the real Noah's ark;
big enough to hold all the creatures
in a belly long since dissolved by the salts of time,
but the ribs, glabrous beams of oak, spawned from a hidden spine
were kissed, slapped, licked by the surface brine.

We passed very close, humbled by the immensity
of each ligneous bone that slipped silently by
giving us the finger or somehow looking down
with sad disdain –

*The animals marched in two by two
But now you keep them in a zoo, globally warmed,
Is that the best you can do?*

As we slid beyond the final spur,
I heard the faint watery clang of a sea bell,
warning ships or mourning the waste.
I twisted to see a large bird, feathers the colour of tide.
From its perch it fixed me with its stare,
raised its head and screamed a dismal fish-breath cry.
I realised at once, the *word* it had called
was a bitter, long drawn – 'why?'

Byron Beynon

Seaweed

Feathery ceranium, sea grass, oarweeds,
a family of names holdfast
on rocks and in pools
washed clean listening
to fragile songs echoing
from the drowned;
hypnotic, light movers, weeds of red,
green and brown, sea lettuce,
the channelled, serrated, knotted,
bladder wracks, cladophora,
choudras, rhodymenia, laverweed, corallina,
black hair of the ocean, touch of softened
fronds, a tender sway and natural swell,
a symphony of leathery fashion
with the brackish sound of words
beneath the slanted soft rain.

Joseph Horgan

White Clouds

There was no river in my youth
No horse thief or chicken-killing fox
But in our city backyard
My father and I would sit
At the lapping edge of the sea.

Immigrants lose their minds in crossing
Misplace them behind the draughty door
Of the damp place they leave.
When luggage is eventually sent on
It is never unpacked
For fear of what is broken.

My sister said his father is from Mayo and his uncle had a stroke.
My father studied horses and hunches.
My mother came ashore again below white clouds
Trailing curled hair and a childhood
And she halted there, where the train was waiting.

Coat

My sister wears my father's coat.
She halts and smells him.
She rubs the scent of him between her fingers.
He is flowing between the rings on her hands.
She is recalling.
The clasp of his immigrant palm.
She wears my father whatever the weather.

Catherine Mazodier

hands walking on the chalk of skin
ambling
hanging off cliffs of rib and spine
dangling
tearing at shrouds of lips and lids
threadbare
stitches undone
cut and run
treading water in your stockinged feet
trading grapes for wine
pearls for swine
stringing purple blood on a nylon hair
stripped to the bone
drip dry
sundrenched
straining ropes of nerves and veins
ripcord wrenched
wringing skeins of neck and limb
unclenched
hands walking on the chalk of skin



Photograph by **Patrick Sutton**, 37, married, lives in London with 2 children where he divides his time between photography and running his own small design and advertising business. He studied Art History at St. Andrews. He recently spent some time in the North Atlantic on a container ship, and completed a photographic project combining the sea and the biggest maritime project of WW2: the Battle of the Atlantic..