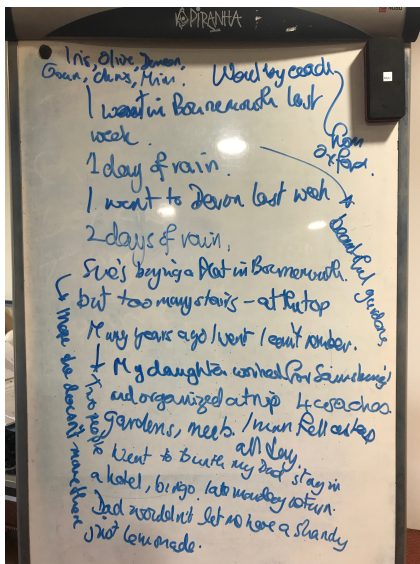
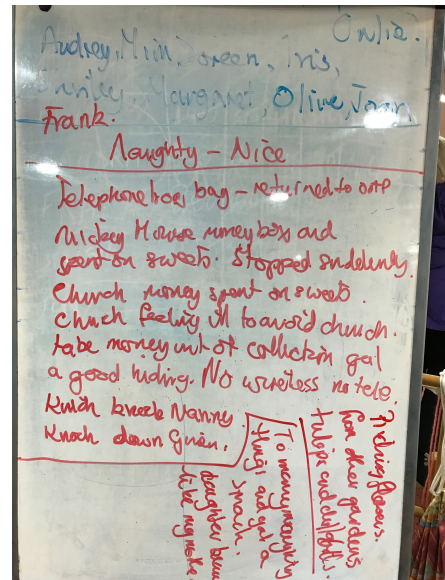


Oxford Poetry Group



These poems have been written by a group of elderly people. We met every three weeks and chatted about a topic. As we talked our sentences were written on a whiteboard and then, with a little artistic licence, arranged into a poem.

Sometimes our chatter resulted in nothing more than an hour well spent; other times a verse emerged. Our aim was to spend time swapping stories and remembering – if a poem emerged it was a bonus.

We Talk And Write About Life
This group ran from August 2015 to
September 2017

Garden on a Summer Day (August 2015)

A summer scent of grass clippings,
The earthy smell of freshly turned soil,
Lavender clippings in a vase.
The sounds of birds and bees rustling in the trees,
Little blue butterflies gliding through the air – buddleia bound.
The daffodils of spring are gone,
Now the summer has arrived- full of colour and fragrant roses
The garden is tranquil;
We are relaxing in the shade on the soft green grass,
Yellow flowers against the clear blue sky,
Chrysanthemums, asters, dahlias, geraniums, snapdragons and daisies
Tall lilies and gladioli-waving in the breeze
But all things must pass so a sad goodbye to a beautiful summer,
And a warm hello to a fruitful autumn.

Autumn Rap (September 2015)

You can't put your washing out to dry
You can't put your washing
You can't put your washing
You can't put your washing out to dry

Guess that I will have to bake a pie
Damsons, pears, elderflower wine
Crab apple jelly, chutney's fine
Polish the conkers, make them shine

Days getting darker, clocks going back
"Please put a penny in the old man's hat"
Smoke curls up from the chimney stack
Bats in the bonfire- how about that!

Sparklers, Catherine wheels, rockets fly
Don't forget to dress the guy
Trousers, waistcoat, shirt and tie
Now the fireworks light up the sky

Back to the house for food and wine
Back to the house –
Back to the house –
Back to the house for food and wine!

Winter Memories (October 2015)

Wool on wool on wool.

Mittens made from my father's socks; holes cut out for thumbs.
Pixie hats made from old jumpers- so so embarrassing!
Scarves tightly wound round neck and waist,
Everything we wore was wool, and so so itchy.

Cold on cold on cold.

Frost on the windows behind thick curtains,
Waiting for pictures to be made.
Coats over blankets and eiderdowns abound.
Hot rag- wrapped bricks to take to bed- anything to keep us warm!

Fire on fire on fire.

Cleaning the grate and laying the fire- jobs to be done that we hate,
But stoking and poking the fire makes the flames come up,
Toasting our bread and our knees
Huddle and cuddle round the fire, hot drinks in our hands

Cocoa is all we desire.

Christmas Memories (January 2016)

What candour, what wit, what knowledge – the bookgroup and I
Together with Helen, the memories fly.

Christmas is coming and reminiscences abound – from here to Barbados they all come around.
From Salvationists singing and the midnight mass – to Christmas kisses for a boy and his lass.
Creeping with parcels to children, but please – don't make a noise, don't even sneeze.

When we wake in the morning the turkey is cooking.
The smell is mouth-watering, but our presents are calling – so bacon and eggs, for now, will suffice.

My stocking is full – of chocolates and spice and so many other things that are all quite nice.
Now to church to gaze at the crib in its scene – while others have taken a bus to new places.
But we all return in time for the Queen.

First was the feast and our bellies are bursting – and while we doze we remember our blessings
We didn't have much money, but whatever we did – there was laughter and smiles each evening
Our day had been lovely, but for many, maybe these memories are mixed.
Forget the bad ones – the good ones are fixed.
So, can I say "thank you" and wish you the best, perhaps next year we can all be blessed.

January Sales (February 2016)

A cheque for Christmas – I am now prepared!
The price will be right, the price correct.
4:00 am and the queue has started.
My sturdy 50cc steed has delivered me safely.
Oxford Street you are mine.

Marks and Spencer; C & A;
Webbers, Capes, Elliston and Cavell;
Sainsburys; Littlewoods; BHS;
Dorothy Perkins, Harrods and ETAMS
YES Everything To Attract Men

It's true!

I have you all in my sights,
You are all on my list
I will take each of you in turn
And turn you around,
I am strong only buying what I need

Underwear, stockings, sheets and blankets.
I think "How boring"
I can be persuaded to change my mind

Seduce me.

Present Sense (April 2016)

I give money for presents – so that they can buy what they want.
Please don't buy me – handkerchiefs, socks or aftershave.
I would like a slide rule – I want something that will last,
I don't like smelly things – I want Armani perfume, not something that smells like fly spray.
Club together and buy me what I want – a coat or something useful.
I don't want ornaments – I would just like a telephone call.

Uses and Excuses (April 2016)

I go to book group because I can,
I look after Arnold because I want to and can,
I look after myself because I want to and can,
I eat vegetarian food because I want to.
I got up because I had to and went to the hospital because I needed to.
I visit the day centre because I want to and can,
I read books because I want to and can,
I like eating chocolate, I'm not supposed to, but I can.

I Remember It Well (June 2016)

I remember it well, but then Dearie, you are so much older than me.
I still love you and you are getting ugly, but I remember you well.
So many partners, I don't remember them all, except you – I remember you so well.
Montego Bay, I remember it well. The car trip, the journey – so long.
My joy at finding you're queer. I remember it well
No, I am not sleeping or dreaming, I was there and I remember it well.
I travelled for love, a love which remains. Oh, how I love you – I remember you well.

I would not dare to give you advice (July 2016)

But....
Get to know your friends,
you get back the love you give.
Look after people,
you can only do this if you look after yourself,
Make sure your hearing aid works (even if you have a sore ear), get the doctor on to it.
You can't start something then walk away:
Don't "but" just do.
Even if you are not always on the same wavelength it does not matter,
Listen to what they say.
Be lucky.
Do your homework and don't go to bed in a temper.
Remember-
One thing always leads to another.

Backbeat to my Life (July 2016)

There was no music on a Sunday,
Believe me, the day it dragged –
just like the torn-up newspaper, hanging in the loo.

Silence was never golden.
With music, we are not alone.
We did not need a “ghetto blaster”
Just a wireless and a gramophone.
Louis Armstrong, Joe Loss and Alfie Bowllly
carried us, our lives, our hopes,
our dreams and all our loves along. We enjoyed a live performance.
Goodness me, the Town Hall rocked
But now: I love Daniel O’Donnell
He gives my heart a shock. So thank you!
All you artists – you provide a backbeat to my life
Shirley Bassey, you are gorgeous.
I wish you were my wife.

Blind Man’s Bluff (Sept. 2016)

Rounders, cricket, tic-tac-toe.
Children on the street!
Whipping top and blind man’s bluff.
Hand-me-down clothes always too big.
Holes in my trousers, shoes and hats,
I looked like Granny Green.
Conkers, marbles, running free.
Front doors open, tea and cakes.
Knock-down ginger, rolling in the grass.
Happy then, but not so now!
Apple scrumping, playing until dark.
Policemen on the street, if we were naughty,
God help you.

Autumn Memories (October 2016)

Autumn now brings earlier nights and colder days.
Leaves are falling,
but as the heating system starts to rumble, my mind turns to earlier ways.

Mr Irons selling candles and paraffin from his cart.
And if he was missed then off to the shop –
the blue or pink smelly liquid decanted into a can. Trimming the wick was an art.

Anthracite, compressed coal Ovites, logs and coke all provided me with warmth,
and my room with a glow.
First footing and Tom the pie-eyed milkman at Christmas time. Memories that make me smile as I
turn up my central heating dial.

Christmas Past (Nov 2016)

The Present Past

A china-faced doll with moving eyes,
A second-hand bike blocks on the pedals so I could reach.
A new watch strap, comic books, Desperate Dan, Huckleberry Fin
But all I wanted was a teddy bear – I make up for it now.

The Games Past

Card games – crib, patience and snap.
Bored with board games
After dinner losing at draughts, Ludo and snakes and ladders
I sit under the table sulking.
How I long for blind man's bluff and kiss chase.

Pass the Past Food

Plucking chickens, skinning rabbits and making Christmas pud.
Stir and make a wish, throw in a Joey – a thruppeny bit.
I hope I find it later.
Early December Mother makes the cake covered with marzipan.
Later mince pies, sausage rolls and trifle while I am tasting nothing more than glue.
As I make the paper chains.

Christmas Past

Iffley Village – picking holly and ivy and looking for mistletoe to hang over the picture frames,
Coal fires making the living room live with colour and warmth.
Waking up in the middle of the night.
Sleep or Father Christmas will not come.
In the morning, has he been?
Yes, looking in my stocking it was not a dream.
An orange, an apple, a tangerine tell me so.
But where are those golden chocolate coins?

Food (December 2016)

Some people like some things others do not.
Children hate Brussel Sprouts but love fast food.
I hate them, not children, but their choice of nutrition.
I love trout or lemon sole. Toad-in-the-hole goes down well,
but peaches and cream that is my dream.
Grow your own, or pick your own fruit is my queen.
Blackberries, mangos, raspberries and dates.
Bring me a satsuma, a pineapple or grape,
But figs I will leave alone on my plate.
But before the fruit, there comes the meat course.
With lamb cooked in water, or rib-eyed steak.
Pork chops with crackling, but beef dripping is best,
so bring me a cow. I'll do the rest.

Resolution Rant (January 2106)

Not to eat so much **chocolate** (so many at Christmas),
but lose **weight**. (Whisky keeps me **slim**)
Can't just eat one chocolate the second is so much better.
Stopped my **medication** but I got told off – it's so boring, **but I will start**.
Don't like whisky but love **brandy, port and milk stout**.
Pregnancy – not sure why.
Do things not done before. – yoga, quiz.
I enjoy walking – **don't get lost**.
I think that I should give up driving
I am a recycled teenager.
There is no can't do – **just do!**

Holidays Extraordinaire (March 2017)

Oh! I do like to be beside the seaside,
as long as it is not Weston-super-Mare.
One found Malta as his favourite,
but Thatcher destroyed that idyll.
Others found Portsmouth soothing,
Or was it just the sailor or was it a marine.
So long ago, but memories bring back the smiles.

Blow all that romantic bilge,
Give me a good honest cruise
In 1988 P&O were at their peak.
I don't need the Navy,
They can take me anytime.

Mind you – do beware of roundabouts in Paris,
Of lost wheelchairs and frames.
It is important not to pack the trousers
That you were about to wear.
But let me steal some shoes –
the French, they will not care.

Holidays – what do I care when Palma
was my home for longer than I dare.
So, travel long and travel free
we all have done our share
and now we will bring our memories
to each other, if we care.

Dogs Just Win (March 2017)

Dogs just won the favourite vote and I wonder why?
We had cats because of the mice,
How they would play and tease them before their death.
So cruel.
Perhaps that is why dogs won.
We had a black retriever, it ran away.
He went to Reg's café for a treat and left us.
It broke my heart and I cried for a week.
So sad.
Perhaps that is why the dog won.
I lost my child. My husband and I were frantic
Where could he be, we shouted and called
He was in the kennel, the dog outside.
So still.
Perhaps that is why dogs won.
Guarding children, guarding prams, part of the family
Leading the way, in their own way.
Remember Laika one of the first animals in space.
So alone.
Perhaps that is why dogs won.

But I had a tortoise called Sparky, we drilled a hole on his shell!

Early Memories (April 2017)

My claim to fame was – as a bridesmaid,
Such a day, such a dress, such style.
A big wedding, a big ballroom
and I was the youngest by a mile,
There I was in blue and turquoise.
I did dress up – so lovely.
One man's back was my opportunity,
It was the one thing that I wanted to do.
I felt fantastic. I took his place.
Thank goodness for his bad back.
I had no sorrow or sympathy there.
I entered stage left – so proud.
I love fruit and I love toffee,
So, toffee apples were my desire.
Ruby and I, we both went scrumping,
but Ruby was caught and locked in a shed.
I tripped him up and Ruby got out.
We ran so fast – so scared.
During the war, my mother made toffee apples
Where did you live?
Donnington! So did I. I used to buy toffee apples from the lady a few streets away
I wonder?
And we all wondered how wonderful it would be
if two children had met again – so sweet.

Naughty But Nice (May 2017)

A bag was found in a telephone box – a temptation, but it was returned.
Not so lucky was the Mickey Mouse money box my friend used to raid.
The sweets were delicious and all the more tasty, until she was caught and it stopped.
The Church – a source of wealth, by not giving the money I should.
Even worse was the reverse– I got a good hiding for that!
And so I played ill to avoid the temptation of going to that blasted church!!!
No television, no radio, but out on the street playing “Knock Down Nanny” or was it “Knock Down Ginger”?
Picking daffodils and tulips from gardens for Mother’s Day.
Pulling my brother out from the pond, brushing off frog spawn and taking him home.
But too many naughty things led to a smack – I was too much like my mother.
A really mixed up family, but wonderful when it worked.
My worst – I was evacuated at 10 and last to be picked.

Boredom (June 2107)

At home, there is always something to do.
No-one to talk to. But I have never been bored.
No-one says good morning or even hello. Wartime everyone helped.
Listening to people moaning. I read – I love autobiographies.
Hearing from others about aches and pains. I make things – sewing clothes
I’ve never been bored.

Bournemouth Memories (July 2017)

I went to Bournemouth last week,
(by coach from Oxford).
Beautiful gardens – right down to the sea,
(It rained all day).
I think that, at some time, we have all been there,
(so long ago I can’t remember).
My Sue is buying a flat in Bournemouth,
(I am worried she will move there).
So many steps to climb to see her – at the top,
(I hope she doesn’t go).
My daughter worked for Sainsbury’s and arranged a trip,
(four coaches it took).
We had a very good time and such great food,
(one man slept through – what a waste).
I went to Bournemouth with my Dad and stayed in an hotel,
(I wasn’t allowed a shandy only lemonade).
Still the bingo was good and we stayed in all the time,
(home late on Monday)
Yes, Bournemouth has many memories.