

Comin' Up The Auld Mill? by Davey Payne

We first went up the auld mill as bairns.  
Well.... not bairns but more boys rather than men,  
a man as Burns was when he trod down by Cluden side.  
We went inexorably innately and intrepidly  
yet as obedient as the throbbing, swelling,  
tribal capillary of Cluden Water.

What was it that divined us there? What is it's turgid influence on the Nith?

Garnered by centuries of faithfulness  
we blindly showboated off the rope swing  
before the shock of the Rapids tickled and froze  
us like trout  
snuffing out our faux valour as naturally  
as the sultry summer slew drove its illicit cargo of feral fauna.

The whispered violence, the flora  
and fermented fervour ferried by the wind  
ower bank, nook and crag  
where future old scores were forged with  
newfound adversaries faintly recognised from  
Beavers, Cubs, inside the enclosure at Palmy.

The Heathers and Hazels blossomed  
yet unheeded as both naive and vainglorious  
real blows awaited us downstream,  
right throughout our short but precious time,  
the kind of slaps, cracks and thwocks from The Dandy  
that we had just.... outgrown.

Some washed out, some floundered,  
some spewed out away beyond  
even estuary, out to sea.  
It was all there in these frolics  
up Cluden Water  
when we were already all  
the men that we would all ever be....

Davey Payne submitted the winning entry in this years 'Burns Reimagined' writing competition organised by Stuart A Paterson. His very first submission at age 39. He was subsequently invited to perform at Big Burns Supper in his native Dumfries and published in Lumpen Journal Issue 004.

Favourite Poem : Sweet Afton by Robert Burns