

This is the collection of poems sent to the judges for the *Mixed Moss* poetry competition (without the poets' names, of course). The report (and winners) can be found in *Mixed Moss 2022*.

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Section 1 Short Structured Poems

01 'Winter Horses' by Esme Blue

Skewbald heavy rains,
dark chestnut mares, warm colours
winter horses drink.

02 A limerick on George Owdon by John Fletcher [also for Section 2]

George Owdon was flushed with success,
He'd brought off Tom Dudgeon's distress;
But Dot held her nerve,
Her resolve did not swerve;
Her efforts dropped George in the cess!

03 'Crow Haikus' by Martha Blue

still state, rainy days,
shadows of summer, silver
twilit moon-ravens
waltz;
snowdrop snow-clocks count
frosted days by my teardrops,
drop endless dew-drips
frozen
silhouette-hewn trees,
midwinter skeletons, hide
black clots of bleak crows
sniggering
whose explorations
set shaded rainbows deep in
winter's faint starlight
searching
for red fox, spill of
slinking rust of slipped mishap,
blur of furred form
-furtive-
this spool of black crows
uncoils in black feathered thread,
hoar-frost-fringed white-scapes
watch
still-breaths cloud me,
as crimson-bleed sunsets quit
skies, leaving brown frowns,
peace
explodes cluttered crows,
winter's silhouette recedes,
Earth's backbone stretches

04 'On First Looking into Ransome's Stories' by Colin Pritchard [Also submitted for Section 2]

(with apologies to John Keats)

Much have I travell'd in the land of lakes,
Looming hills, moorland fells and tumbling becks.
Observed intrepid walkers on their treks,
With compass, maps and Kendal's minty cake,
While I in Ransome's footsteps undertake
To match the real with what his map suggests
Would be the land if, by earthquake wrecked,
'Twere shaped afresh by tectonic plates.

It is the stage on which his tale is set,
On which the story's told of where and when.
Revealed, the captain and his young quartet,
An isle discovered beyond their ken,
Looking at each other, their minds afret,
Silent, upon a peak in Darien.

05 'a splash of Ransome' by Aurora Blue

dribbles of water
splashing through mineral clouds
now a full ocean

a nook and cranny
are cracks in a crumbling wall
seasons fall away

springtime overfills
daffodils on windowsills
warms away old chills

winter wanderings
trampling through white chilling snow
everlasting hope

06 'The Ladies' Limericks' by Naomi Kaye Honora

A tribute in verse to the female Swallows & Amazons original crew members

There was a young captain called Nancy,
and adventuring suited her fancy
The other galoots
Simply quaked in their boots
at the Amazon goddess called Nancy.

There was a great mate and 'twas Susan,
Without her, there'd nary be cruisin'.
Organizational skills
for our stalwart were thrills,
That indomitable force- Walker, Susan.

There was a small lass dubbed Titty,
strong protector of Sinbad the kitty.
She'd seek out fresh water
like a true Gaia's daughter,
our talented artist named Titty.

There once was a gal, Peggy Blackett,
who could quell a rebellious racket.
She could sail seven seas,
take the tiller with ease,
the oft-overlooked Peggy Blackett.

07 'John's Hidden Depths (Or, Hard to Swallow)' by Bob Cuming

Though thought and reason had given way
While John had ideas that went astray
The last thing on the Swallows' mind
A sinking for their ship to lay

A cry for help a collective roar
Two red capped girls by the shore
Never too late to sink or swim
All hands on deck and to the fore

Salvage salvage save our ship
At least some sense to near fatal dip
What you see is what you get
A red faced courage now the flip

A lesson learnt claims Captain Flint
Yet in his eyes a mindful glint
Pride is saved a new mast shaved
More careful now mother's helpful hint

08 'Autumn Steal' by Martha Blue

yellow moon fox spills
through misted forest shelter
rain pelts, silence drips

10 'Taiyo Tori' by Esme Blue

TAIYO TORI (SUN BIRD) 太陽鳥

Shadows never lost
without the sun are fleeting,
leaves blow, birds flutter

11 'Arthur's phone call to Bank Ground Farm' by Bob Cuming

Crackle ... crackle ... it's Bank Ground here
Down the phone neither loud nor clear
Crackle ... crackle ... Bank Ground, is that you
Listening intently for a clue

It's me, it's Arthur can't you tell
Yes it was the man they knew so well
The telephone that new fangled thing
Was the cause of all the havoc it could bring

I have a book in early state
A guidance I would appreciate
Your thoughts here on my vision
Red slippers prompt a quick decision

Children with no sails have gone East
This book I write for them at least
Some place suggestions would fill the gap
Your Bank Ground name perhaps I could tap.

A local setting with your blessing
Matching pirate boats and youngsters messing
Parrot Polly near Bank Ground Farm
Perched on houseboat that's the yarn

Crackle ... crackle ... what's that you say
Have my words all gone astray
Crackle ... crackle ... no Arthur all our help a Polly vow
And that's how Bank Ground Farm became Holly Howe

09 Haiku (on GAs and Nieces) by John Fletcher [also for Section 2]

Great Aunts have their way;
Defeat is unknown.
Great nieces are much the same.

Note. Poems 22 and 29 were submitted as 'structured poems', but I don't recognise the structure.

Section 2 Humorous Poems

12 'Columbus Would've Fairly Hogged It' by Naomi Kaye Honova

The modest bean that plays a part
(well, a large one) in R. Walker's heart,
The cocoa bean, transformed to glory
An integral part of young Roger's story.
How else would Titty know so well
her brother had been in that dell?
The giveaway wrapper, but of course,
the sweet brown milky telltale source.
And when the Porter cried his name
(dear me, that man was most to blame!)
our small young hero swallowed whole
that bit of chocolate (stings the soul).
And what of chocolate in a shape,
say, circles, or a knight in cape?
False, false, my friends, for Rog declares
that chocolate MUST be eaten in squares.
Pemmican? Meh. Cooked rabbit? Nay.
Give Roger chocolate: ensure a good day!

13 'S not' by Julian Blue

My snot!
What's it got
to do with you?
Don't be so nosey -
's not like it's dripping on your shoe -
's not holding you like poo to the loo -
's not floating down your street -
's not sticking you tight to your seat -
's not for you - it's all mine
and that's fine - just the way I like it!
Haven't you seen? - your nostrils need a clean -
one's yellow and one is green, it really is obscene -
or am I being too mean?
I mean, everybody knows, if you don't clean your nose,
you just can't tell if you (or I) smell,
and, well, just think of it -
what you could do with a bit of crows!
So, I pick it roll it squeeze and then ...
pick it roll it squeeze and then
pick it roll it squeeze and then
find somewhere to stick it
and do it again!

14 'Butterflies in a Crowd' by Esme Blue

Oh and did you know that while I was watching the bog-
frogs and tadpoles a woman came and stood next
to me, such a painted lady she was, red admiral lipstick and summer
blue dress with brimstone yellow shoes
and, yes – would you believe it – adonis-blue hair!
Well, later on, whilst I stood studying the jaguars,
I noticed a meadow-brown smudge on one of their ears –
but nobody else I asked could make it out at all!

At Tropical Fishland there was a swallowtail-like
specimen and a grayling pecking at the glass wall –
and that's not all – that painted lady reminded me
not to forget the small white that was sat right on
the top of my hat! – Really? I asked.
Really, she answered, adding that the tortoiseshell-patterned
jacket I was wearing made me stand out in the crowd.
Well, I never!

Note that Poems 02, 04 and 09 were also entered in this category

Section 3 Open Section

15 'A Writer's Eyes and Ears' by Aurora Blue

A gentle patter of watery sound begins;
tears of an onset of raindrops drip on icy waters
awakening my half-conscious soul.

Drowning itself in a lake of blackbirds' choke,
it turns to fill my emptied thoughts with recollections
of falling heavily, of pressing down petals of a snowdrop.

It raises me, comforts me with its complications of drop-falls;
subtle sounds dripping . . . echoes . . . stripped bare,
something there mutates, heaves my head, nips a bud of birds,
and shakes like petals of a snowdrop.

A torrent of awakesness floods
as ferns fold down,
feeling for water,
and goldfinches call, stripping petals of a snowdrop.

An A# wetness wets all, and worms toil in sogged soil,
and a chuckle of trickles, in C# minor, chirrup into flowers,
light-fingeredly, as if petals of a snowdrop
fall, soft-pressed, as ivory piano keys.

Raggedly, in curving flight, a shadow of mist forms
from a smoke of ravens,
clawing at my dark thoughts,
whose wingbeats call,
crushing down the petals of a snowdrop.

Bowing to the ground, this last petal holds out.
Its sodden tip, heaving with melancholy drip,
eases a harmless tune, echoes
a procession of monks chanting funereal matins,
that treads down the petal of a snowdrop.

16 'Sea Shanty' by Jacki Snowman

Now listen here, ye sailor boys, pay heed to this I say
In foreign ports be careful what you do;
For the local girls is willing and the whisky costs a shilling
But the worst of all is getting a tattoo.

So when you docks in Rio, Napoli or Panama
In South Americkee or Ecuador
They draw real nice, by jingo, but can't understand our lingo
And you gets a scene you never bargained for.

Chorus: Let's put to sea, me hearties, leave our sweethearts on the shore
It's salty pork and biscuits for a hundred days or more....

When I asks for 'I love Mum' in Argentina
I leaves his shop still trying to stay calm
With 'Te amo Pepita, Dolores e Conchita'
And a serpent done in green around each arm.

So if you steps ashore in Maracaibo,
Remember that you'll find on your return
That the shops in Venezuela see you coming, British sailor
And cover you with pictures stem to stern.

I asks a Greek tattooist in Piraeus
For some pretty flowers twined round 'Seaman Jack'
Lying on my belly, with thoughts of darling Nelly
I don't know what he drew upon my back.

BUT heaving on a rope before the mainmast
And stripped down from my middle to my neck
Suddenly, God blind me, the sailor boys behind me
Was helpless and was rollin' on the deck.

So now there ain't a place to fit a farthing,
I'm happy as I looks upon my skin;
Sailing on the briny from Arabia to Chiny,
There ain't a space to fit another in.

SO let's put to sea me hearties, leave our sweethearts on the shore
It's salty pork and biscuits for a hundred days or more!

17 'Hare' by Julian Blue

whose shadow swarms these moors?
runner
leaper
darter
bounder
weaver
whose friends are
shadows
waters
winds
airs?
who shadows
you? or what?
whose stare sees far
and clear as near?
who stares?
whose stare escapes all – fox!
But you move as a blur of bared earth.
moorland winds let loose to wage war
against each other,
warring winds gather
together to guard you.
darter
leaper
bounder
weaver
runner
- never all four paws on the ground at once,
fleet-foot,
whose hours never meet ours
whose shadow rises before the sun and sets long after?
who comes from the moor,
appears from nowhere
like the water
there,
then disappears just as fleet?
leaper
darter
weaver
bounder
runner
who can prey upon you?
only who moves as one with the wind

18 'I'll have as much as you give me, and more' by Aurora

towards evening
light
air dreams
with a sudden darkening throb
of cloud, wind, bird, rain,
something
now out of favour – a tidal game
until thunder follows,
or the pain,
the pain that grows and grows
like the new-blackened clouds,
and a greying blanket of doubt draws
across this pillow of whispers
as cloud drops fall, roaring onto rocks,
or rushing into streams
heavily, stealthily, stalking me
and
the rain fills imaginary buckets causing
a hammering din like a shot of poundage
loosed from the cannon of my inner ear
to explode into springs newly arisen within
like a ghost of pictured presence,
where wretchedness
sinks more deeply,
howling – and gongs strike;

I lean to against straw–stalk-like structures of thin pines,
collecting details that then evaporate
in an unpleasant perspiration;
an otter swims
by oddly,
choked of breath it seems,
hail battered; it crawls onto a mud–bank
into a deserted peace,
which closes directly onto its own void,
finished
as rain slaps it hard and cold;
slithering
the otter crawls, with the call of an uninvited visitor,
whose tongue is difficult to grasp,
and with a visually unappealing walk
as though dead, lost, airless,
it hangs onto its body as water battens it down,
causing a deep sleep: peace is complete.

'Esperance' by John Fletcher

Walk – don't run!
 You're fifty seven, not seven.
 "Please ask permission." Oh, I will ask permission.
 It's quiet – they'll have to say yes.

It's yes! Walk – don't run!
 Back to the jetty, back to that floating legend
 where I pause... savouring the moment,
 heart brimming with emotions.

One foot on the gunwale, she lists,
 more than I expected,
 and I'm aboard.

Inside, I take stock:
 a soft toy Polly in a cage; a typewriter; a trunk;
 green feathers in a pot.

I take a seat.

He sat here.
 And as he sat, he filled it with mementoes,
 souvenirs of a nomadic life:
 with pirates and explorers;
 with cannon smoke, feasting and shanties;
 rock samples, scales and chemistry;
 books and stories and laughter;
 an empty larder with empty cans awaiting the thaw;
 fierce dusters and grim disapproval wielded by
 The Ultimate Antipirate.

It's actually quite bare in here
 but my mind's eye has it cluttered.
 Holy ground? Not quite, but special, so special.
 A tall Dutchman skates into view.
 Dick? Dick! It's time to make ourselves scarce.

20 'The Root is Us' by Julian Blue

If I had a choice, I would choose a voice
inapprehensive of forgetfulness;
for I have faltered at every distraction,
away from the moors, uttering nothing
but silence to others.
All is change and disturbance;
what a marvel to forget such marvellous sights
that have met my blue-grey eyes,
for I have treated them with less
than contempt in keeping this paradise to myself.
Often, I've pushed aside those access gates that
creaked on rusting hinges with the noise of a long,
drawn-out honk of an old goose
fending off an intruder, where
before me, grasses galore, grasslands of
gooseberry- and grasshopper-greens – tormentils, heath milkworts
were the common bent;
where sedges with several-spikeleted flowerets met tussocks
of hare's tails and tufts of cottons; where masses of mosses
in darker hues and other uncultivated greens in
the freshening early lights awakened darkened depths of ancient
waters, refreshing near-stilled airs, there,
all centripetal and inward-drawing,
below purple-pinked heathers, honey-scented,
short-lived, sources of food
for nectar collectors, degenerating between
ever-greening leaves,
as here, the blues above were
drawn into sulphur-yellows of bog asphodels.
All of this moor: this wet-nurse.
Nothing desolate nor drab here,
nothing forsaken nor barren, not bleak,
not dead, not lone nor bare, but vibrant in
haloes of greens and yellows –
in flowers of sunrise-brilliance,
crucifers and celandines, broom and buttercup,
hottest, seething yolks of dazzling intensities –
molten-bright – all pulse here:
an overflowing, centrifugal explosion of
glittering first- and last-lights;
an oasis; a manna to the weary, to the dreary and to the dreamy both.
And on a rumour of wind, Kirkos, circus-bird, sky-dancer,
whose piercing eyes improvise its own demise,
circles above the moor, hungry, untroubled,
unlike I.

21 'The Swallows' by Maida Follini

John:

To sail with a fair wind,
The water bubbling under the forefoot,
The wind on your cheek,
Telling you which way to move the tiller;
A splash of spray from time to time,
Just to assure you, you're really on the water —
Sailing *Swallow*¹ with a bone in her teeth,
Letting her go where the wind takes you,
Close-hauled, wide abeam, or wing and wing;
Gulls swooping above, ducks scuttling to safety,
The shore racing past as the vessel makes way,
That's voyaging, on lake, river or sea.
That's being free.

Susan:

I like a chart. I like to know where I am going.
Seeing ahead, you can make a plan.
Have your supplies ready. Crew
Prepared - each one helping with a task.
My job is to look after the young ones.
Secretly, I enjoy telling them what to do.
I have everything down in my mind
So all will go smoothly - (more or less).
There are a few accidents -Roger falling in,
Getting wet — Eggs dropped and broken —
Nothing to make a fuss about.
I see the fire is lit, I light the lantern
And put them out when it's time to sleep.
If everything goes right, I can have a good rest.

¹ Note: I know Swallow was a small boat like a cat boat with only one sail; but she could rig wing and wing, if a secondary spar was put up on the mast, with a secondary sail, spread out opposite the mains'l.

Titty:

To sail is to enter a new world -
A magic place where anything can happen.
New lands with wild beasts and foreign people
With new languages and strange customs.

The wind blows on my tent.
Friendly savages inhabit the hill,
And buried treasure hides underground.
I hope for tidal waves, pirates, and desert islands.

Our trusty crew enters strange lands,
Like Theseus entered the Labyrinth
With Ariadne's thread to find his way back.
We mark our chart with new names for this magic world.

Roger:

I have my own look-out place before the mast.
I see things first, and all is new.
I am seven now, and am learning to swim.
I can dive for pearls, and sleep in a tent,
And brush my teeth in a lake!
I caught a large shark!
I can row, and am learning to steer the ship.
I saw a poisonous snake at the savages' camp,
And I helped Titty find buried treasure!

Every summer I am going camping
And someday I will be captain of a boat of my own.

22 'The Heart of Light' by Esme Blue

A nick of wick
ticks light,
makes me see clearly
the sun of God that quickens shapes;
a flicker in the damp, dark depths
licks distant hills.

Sharp, soft shadows
shudder in a kick of air.

23 'The Price of Tea in China' by Naomi Kaye

Will you have
a cup of tea
with me
and
Missee Lee?
I've heard
the word
is that
the marmalade
is Oxford,
see?
There may be
one
or three
Latin verbs
(nothing too
absurd)
A serenade-
be lured
by dragons,
free,
in the glade.
(The tea is oolong,
strong).
Stirred,
with milk
and sugar
If
by the Brits
preferred.
(But to go
without
can be endured.)

24 'Painting in Words' by Martha Blue

Painting in Words
mottled is my appearance,
split-licked my form
of dry-cracked wooden pointer finger,
my handle ending in a ferrule,
a band of unreal silver
tipped with bristling bird-tail fans
of stained threads
filled brimming with a
split sunbeam of brightest colours
that I have traced along monochromatic papers.

my scratch-lined skin like
crease marks on an
exhausted forehead
has been
gripped in the line-wrinkled fingertips of many
people,
their brows furrowed and weathered like
walnut shells or
waved sand that has been covered by ebbing
tides as though since ancient times,
their hands having guided my vision into
discoloured maps of true originals.
I, having made people laugh and cry
and think and sigh through the poetries
that my fingers have painted, am now flecked with dust
between walls that have claimed lines
from my hands.
I have tried to recover
lake-blue waters tinted and emblazoned
with wet paint like the canvases I taint.

25 'A Dozen of Haiku' by Jake Black, alias Peter Willis

(including a perfect 'found' one)

Island animosity,
Alliance, lost chest.
And then comes the feast

Mary Swainson, churning
her white magic in the
cool of the dairy

Counting lights 'like chickens'
"Begging your pardon sir,
The first thing's the ship"

'Softly at first, as
though it hardly meant it, the
snow began to fall'

The punt under water,
the Outlaw in the reeds.
A face at the glass

Hazel twig and hedgehog
Chemistry and bellows
Fire and flight

Knight on Sailing is
hauled from the flooded cabin
And the ship steadies

Mud, shining mud and
twisting rivulets keeping
the water's secrets

Tooth, shackles, bicycle
tyre. Camera flash,
the plot develops

Golden flash of new varnish
Skinning the rabbit
'No Go' in the grass

Hic liber meus
Hockeystick and marmalade
Then, Taicoons. 'Chop heads'

'Special birds' ... and two
alone in the boat in the
centre of the lake

26 'Kestrel' by Martha Blue

Like a fluttering leaf,
its floating, flapping, flitting wings
hovering above itself, a palest dove flies
across leaden skies,
showing no surprise
as down drops the kestrel,
as unseen
as feathers drop too
from these two,
then all movement rises,
held tight within a gripping mouth,
an ale-brown, grey-white blur, this ancient hunter
dances in the heaving clouds,
hovers, hovering,
held by an invisible world,
held high, held in an airy stillness,
and disappears.

27 'A Pipe with Arthur Ransome' by John Lanyon

You strike a match
play it over the Navy Cut
draw in the sweet mixture
as you steer *Racundra* through the dark
as you wait for a bite
as your pen hovers over the pages' waves

Great Aunt Maria does not approve

You bend lines one to the next
your fingers are cold
but you know better than to cut the rope

Rain is pouring down your oilskins

You splice the loose ends together
the tale grows
the float goes under

Susan brings you tea, marmalade, bunloaf

You make fast to a bollard

The page flaps its wings and flies.

28 'Wood Cut' by Aurora Blue

A cold wind slices through the red, iced gloved layer,
as though slowly peeling away the skin above from the flesh beneath,
the wood cutter's hand grasping a cut block of oak;
his frozen hair is swept back
as he trudges home, back through the cutting,
having collected enough specimens for his next design,
with white-green lichen and wet, dark green moss clinging on to the oak:
he sees a lone gathering of snowdrops;
he stoops to finger the white, snowlike petals;
he has his idea, a thought of a wooden meeting of snowdrops.
Wind-shaken, he muffles his nose with a thick sleeve,
protecting breaths from a cold sharpness which cuts into his face then,
chipping onwards, the woodman, arms filled,
tugs on his hood-cover and pulls it onto his chilled head,
shivers, shaking powdered snow from his overcoat
falling into small piles of snowdropped petals;
a short choke reddens his pale cheeks where
he stops to gasp and grasp the wood: he feels its age,
its wet darkness, its contours
like the winds that rise, driving him on, in spite of himself.
At dusk in his work shop he lights a beeswax candle,
sparkling a sun yet unborn into a flicker of light,
reflecting shadows and twisting silhouettes
onto shape-shifting walls which turn in complicated, delirious forms,
of ever-growing snowdrops,

momentary yet everlasting to a mind full of God.
The face of the woodcutter slips into these grey complications,
silently watching the drips that drop into the new-cut mould:
branches stop swinging in the outside world where
it is near-night as the wind drops: it is done with.
Inside his workshop the wood carver smiles:
“Never should these winds be silenced.” are his last thoughts.

29 'BE(E)' by Julian Blue

I see a bee.
It intoxicates me;
it, too, is intoxicated,
not by me but from having sucked
of fairest-chosen flowers
in unwearied toil.
Freely it is organised,
and organising, it organises.
Unfree, it is doomed to endure its noble, elegant fate -
the way of all masses – to be what it is.
Were it not that it has wings
and a song that thrums
and a talent for distillation of sweetest delicacies,
we would savour no drink of immortality,
no honey-sweetened mead would pass our lips,
no flashing glitter of solar-golden colours
would drip drops of honeyed yellows in flight,
no cathedral-darkness could truly be lit by
warmest wax of candles
and there would be no sting in the tale.