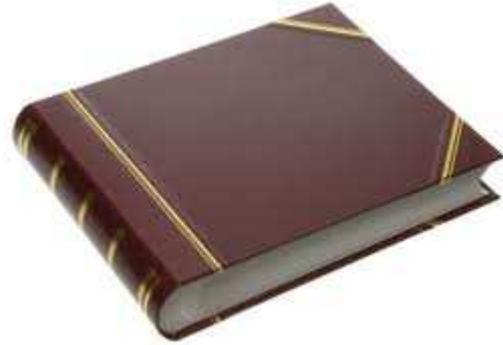


# FAMILY ALBUM

A PK POETRY PROJECT



UK NATIONAL POETRY DAY PROJECT 2010

## CONTENTS

James Bell	what my daughter saw
Jim Bennett	hands
	generations
Lesley Burt	My Father's Spade
Lynn Ciesielski	The Way The Cookie Crumbles
Bob Cooper	The Prodigal Weight Of Apricots
	1 Heloise In Brittany
	2 Abelard's Last Days At St. Marcel
	3 Heloise And The Novice
	4 Astrolabe Visits The Paraclete
Waiata Dawn Davies	Family Portrait
SK Iyer	My Brother (1963)
Mick Moss	Parents
Stuart Nunn	Father, with hindsight
	My Father-in-laws leg
Barbara Phillips	Mothers I Have Known
	Telpathogram
Tammara Or Slilat	8.11.09
	mom and dad
David Supper	Missing
Contributors	

### National Poetry Day Project October 2010

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**JAMES BELL**

**what my daughter saw**

she said there was a moon  
shaped in the wax that had  
dripped from the candle  
into the saucer below  
and even had a face  
with a nose and a mouth  
in profile

it was exquisite  
she said and said she would  
keep it for its  
capriciousness  
though didn't quite say it  
that way  
neither did she say she  
believed there was a man  
in the moon who  
was made out of green cheese  
though still  
spontaneously  
saw value in scented wax  
from a burnt out candle  
that  
to the eye  
became something else  
entirely

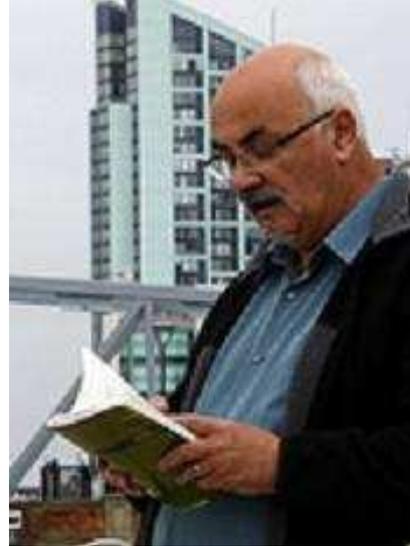
## JIM BENNETT

hands

I watched my father doing this  
lifting every leaf  
spraying them  
he used insecticide  
I use bio degradable  
natural anti bug treatment  
but some things don't change

I still use his secateurs  
to cut away the dead parts  
the wasted leaves  
deadhead the flowers  
and check the pots weed  
all the same way

even the hands slightly soiled  
the etched skin  
the size and spread of fingers  
are just as I remember them



Jim Bennett

JIM BENNETT

**generations**

my mother left me with a neighbour  
and a name to remember her  
when she went to rejoin her life  
without me somewhere else

my first name is James  
although names are often taken  
from someone in a family  
this is mine alone

my adopted parents looking for a child  
ended up with "baby James"  
without a doubt I got the better deal  
and a name to call myself

so there I was at two  
a graft on someone else's tree  
a foundling found  
to share a home and family name

my wife and children have it now  
for them it is a signature  
just like every other name  
generations in the making

LESLEY BURT

### My Father's Spade

My father would put on a cardigan,  
darned at the elbows,  
dig till the soles of his wellingtons  
were clogged with dirt;

stretch twine between sticks  
so that rows were straight and parallel;  
lean knobbly beanpoles together  
as a long arch, like folk-dancers' arms;

would lean on his spade,  
puff a flimsy roll-up,  
then sprinkle lime, so the garden  
looked as though it had woken to frost.

Scarlet runners, potatoes, marrows,  
grew in neat abundance;  
poaching jays put a stop to peas,  
and blackfly to broad beans.

His old spade rests its rusty blade  
and bleached wooden handle in my  
shed.

I use it now and again;  
share its familiarity with his hands and  
feet.



Lesley and her Father

LYNN CIESIELSKI

**The Way The Cookie Crumbles**

She fights the idea that she could  
lose her independence.  
The table where she always feeds us  
begins to creak,  
just like her knees do every time  
she bends them.  
Her family circle grows closer.  
The circles that surround it  
spread like rubber bands  
stretched too many times.  
They become too wide to hold  
their shape. Still the pain restricts  
her movements.  
Mother feels exercise might keep her  
in the loop. She stretches past  
the bounds we place.  
She doesn't rest.  
She twists her neck and points  
her chin.  
I mean, she tosses her head

defiantly

She dumps that cup of sympathy  
and makes us cookies and tea.



Lynn's mother Elizabeth

BOB COOPER

## The Prodigal Weight Of Apricots



*Go bind thou up yon dangling Apricocks  
Which, like unruly children, make their sire  
Stoop with oppression of their prodigal weight.*

RICHARD II      SHAKESPEARE

1.

### **Heloise In Brittany**

Naked, pregnant;  
feasting on apricots;  
Abelard holding a stone  
between finger and thumb.  
On the table, Lenten lilies;  
a half-empty bowl;  
pollen; more stones.

## BOB COOPER

*While lovers, Peter and Heloise had a son, Astrolabe. In their future correspondences no mention is made of him although Abelard writes, in his HISTORIA CALAMITATUM, that he was brought up by his sister, Denise, in Brittany. It is not known if his son knew of any poems written for him; or, indeed, if Abelard wrote those that survive. After Abelard's death, Heloise mentions Astrolabe in a letter, tries to get help for his future, but only in passing. However ...*

### 2.

#### **Abelard's Last Days At St. Marcel**

Many revisions. I am writing poems,  
a sequence for my son. I was  
his age, now, when he was born.  
As then, no one must see, must know.

The wood basket's brought in.  
The fire laid then lit. I thank them.  
A letter's handed over  
with a smirk. I wait,

watch the fame's yellowness,  
fascinated by the sound,  
lichen, fungi, lathed by flame;  
releasing devils, preachers,  
hidden in smoke.

Such fire can roar like a heretic  
or drift like incense;  
we can hold neither  
yet its smell hangs on clothes.

They leave. I break the seal;  
outside the Infirmary window,  
Mars, Venus, visible beyond hills;  
from Troyes, faint hammering,  
a smithy's forge;

each page loses its chill  
as light dances through parchment,  
two logs dissolve  
and I read it again, again.

They return, recite Compline,  
carry then put me to bed.  
Though old and ill I am warm,  
watching ashes' brittleness  
like bones' future fall in a coffin.

BOB COOPER

3.

### Heloise And The Novice

As rain curtains in  
we shelter under eaves,  
watch two doves raise wings,  
stretch necks, bow in turn.  
she hands me an apricot, sobs,  
says she's never known love,  
just discipline. I bite,  
want to expound *FRUCTUS AUTEM  
SPIRITUS EST: CARITAS ...  
LONGANIMITAS ... CONTINENTIA* –<sup>1</sup>  
that an apricot is sweet  
only when ripe.  
Instead I remember  
and eat.

Later we emerge,  
faces moist,  
hurry for Nones.

BOB COOPER

4.

**Astrolabe Visits The Paraclete <sup>2</sup>**

I was working as a gardener,  
Paris, when I heard the song:  
*Though his parents live, an orphan;  
the Church's bastard, he.  
Wandering lambs are now his only kin  
in the fields of Brittany.*

A Breton accent, like mine.  
“And what was the child's name?”  
“Astrolabe.”

I froze,

went to Notre Dame,  
talked with a Priest.  
He told of a secret marriage;  
my father's castration,  
my mother taking the veil.

Then showed me a prayer:  
*And Thou, Jesus, sweet Lord,  
art Thou not also a mother?  
Truly, Thou art a mother,  
the mother of all mothers,  
who tasted death  
in Thy desire  
to give life to Thy children.*  
My father's prayer.

*PATER NOSTER,  
MATER JESUS.*  
Which way to go?

I arrived at the Paraclete,  
my father's house  
my mother's home,  
explained I sought work.  
“Pruning,” the sister said.  
I began.  
Each bush thinned,  
each stem beyond the bud.

## BOB COOPER

(cont)

the Abbess walks by  
reading a letter,  
fingering a cross,  
looks up, greets me.  
“What’s your name.  
Where are you from?”

“Mother ...”  
“Reverend Mother,”  
she corrects,  
clear eyed.  
I cut, I cut;  
branches fall.

I say I’m only passing through.  
she blesses me,  
promises to pray.  
I do not recognize her smile.

1. *The quotation is from Galatians 5:22. A modern translation would read ‘The fruits of The Spirit are; love ... longsuffering ... patience.*
2. *The Paraclete was a Monastery founded by Peter Abelard. Paraclete is Greek for one who pleads. Later it became a Nunnery with Heloise appointed as the Abbess.*

The poem was a prizewinner in the 1997 PHRAZ competition for Long Poems and it has also appeared in *All We Know Is All We See*, Arrowhead, 2002. See:  
<http://www.arrowheadpress.co.uk/books/allwe.html> for details.

## WAIATA DAWN DAVIES

### FAMILY PORTRAIT

Lurking in the shadows of history  
the knight who built warehouses in Leith  
whose descendants fled to Ireland  
after lending money to a king;  
the younger son who migrated  
from Clandeboye to Kiwiland  
and married a parson's daughter;  
his two sisters became barmaids  
on the West Coast goldfields;  
the Australian engineer, reputed  
to be an earl's son on remittance,  
who married and deserted  
the Irish lacemaker;  
the printer, the nurse,  
my red headed sisters  
and me standing beside  
the Welsh sailor who brings  
his own retinue of shadows;  
the musician who played  
at a king's wedding,  
the poets, the miners and  
around us our sons.  
strong handsome and clever  
with beautiful wives and  
their children who hold  
the future in eager hands.

S K IYER

**My brother (1963)**

I enter, none talks, but I listen,  
mother's feeble weeping from the corner  
where light is prohibited from entering,  
the doorway and the window are covered  
by people outside and except for mother's  
weeping, silence fills the room,  
fear fills my little mind.  
Father comes near, hugs me, closer to his chest  
and murmurs into my right ear: 'He's gone.....'  
A few seconds of dumbness collects strength  
to burst out - now the room is filled  
with sounds - of mother, father, brothers  
and sisters - an entire family's outburst  
on a life's departure.  
Only he does not cry;  
he lies, his eyes closed,  
awaiting his last journey.



S K Iyer

## MICK MOSS

### Parents

I really don't know who they were  
those people who bequeathed my genes  
their memories are just a blur  
returning only in my dreams  
two faces in a photograph  
two strangers I have never known  
lie deep beneath their epitaph  
two names etched into silent stone

as long suppressed emotions stir  
my thoughts are driven to extremes  
I offer up for him and her  
these wayward words and rhyming  
schemes  
on their behalf through many drafts  
these two imperfect paragraphs



Mick and Beard

## STUART NUNN

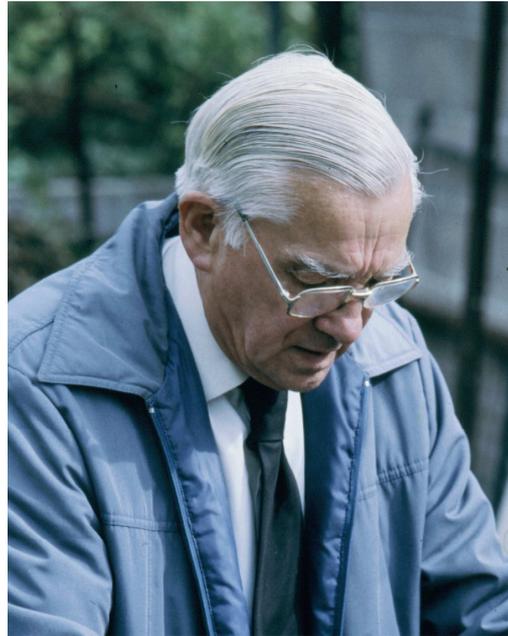
### Father, with hindsight

He spent his early years  
driving plants down into the ground  
by tacking on to them whole heaps  
of fruit and veg.

Beans he glued on shrinking vines;  
carrots hammered into the soil;  
currant bushes and raspberry canes  
he sprinkled with beads of black and red.  
They duly dropped their leaves  
as summer turned to spring.

Carefully he extracted seeds  
and sealed them up in labelled bags,  
then excavated dung from every furrow,  
setting it free on its quest to find  
the only right particular beast.

Any bare land he covered  
assiduously with weeds. This  
was his part in evolution's  
long march on to nothingness.

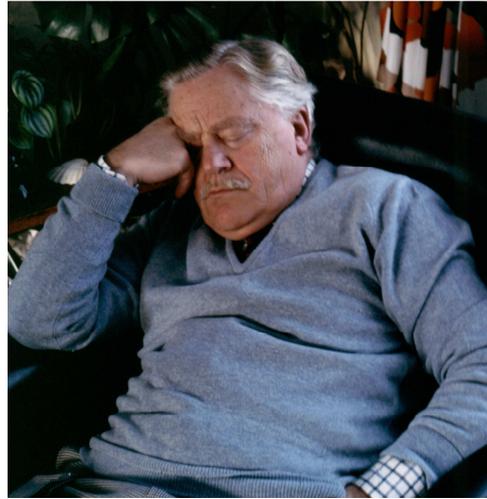


Stuart's father

## STUART NUNN

### **My father-in-law's leg**

... stood in the corner by the wardrobe  
from where he had to hop.  
Even when he wore it,  
it lurked in corners of our minds,  
as though his trouser leg  
was never camouflage enough.  
At first, just a casualty of war,  
it grew and colonised the man,  
until he was all leg,  
stamping through the house  
and all our loves and arguments,  
reminding us that he himself  
was left on that Italian beach,  
had sent out this replacement  
to goose-step through what life remained.



Stuart's father-in-law

BARBARA PHILIPS

### Mothers I Have Known

women in my life were people to be paid attention to  
when I was too young to wear lipstick or know  
how to comb my hair so it did not look like a hay stack  
their voices spoke commands and certainty and right  
words appropriate to all situations demanding responses  
they knew what to say when one of them was sick or happy  
or had given birth or lost someone or fell into sorrows so  
black, speech could not bring back light or free the tongue

they greeted each other with hugs, kisses, gifts, or baked  
offerings covered with tea towels freshly laundered, pressed  
and folded so they somehow did not slip away on the walk  
over to the house of the one being comforted or reassured  
or just visited because it was time for talk at kitchen tables  
over cups of tea or coffee served in ceremonies requiring  
china cups gilded and flowered, ripe for special moments  
while they met children played just far enough away not  
to disturb but close enough to appear when summoned  
when suspicions about about noise called for interventions

they met on afternoons or even mornings when men were  
away at work and if the men were home they were included  
in conversations with notes missing, as if the conductor's pages  
had blown off into a wind along with memories of keys in  
which

the music was to be played so melodies became impressions  
like masses of gold throated narcissi among birches in soils  
wet and leaf heavy beneath dense cloud dressed skies  
on such occasions the women smiled and laughed for  
men who leaned back into their chairs, like cats fed on warm  
milk

while the women became voluptuously exotic flowers  
as they moved around their kitchens tending kettles and filling  
cups to the brim and I understood they were keeping wounds  
hidden deep beneath starched aprons for times when  
only women with children came together to be mothers  
sculptors and guardians of all our worlds



Leaves by Barbara Phillips

BARBARA PHILIPS

**Telepathogram**

I look for truth in photographs  
they are faded, cracked, yellow  
there is no black or white  
in spaces near neat borders

I want to push those borders  
into panoramas set in times  
when you stood as you stand  
in my hand in this field

I cannot decipher the look  
in your eyes as you gaze into  
the camera held by someone unknown  
to me as I was then unknown to you

the lens drew in your story  
let the imprint find this fragment  
my fingers trace your face  
but the space you fill escapes me

we exchange looks  
you speak to me across the years  
your voice is an apparition  
but I cannot make out the words

love is all I feel  
the words need not be heard  
I turn myself into a telepathogram  
and send myself to you



Barbara

## TAMMARA OR SLILAT

8.11.09

It's my son's birthday. He should have been  
22 today, but his braces fixed smile  
will forever be 15, embarrassed, a cynical  
twist at the corner of his mouth.

My friend in school is telling me about her 25 year old son  
who is going to move in with his girlfriend and I want to scream.

My youngest daughter goes to the graveyard twice this year: first with her dad  
(they've planted cyclamen bulbs, smell the soft, wet earth),  
then with me. We light a candle (comforting small light in the fast falling dusk)  
sing to him, wish him  
everlasting happiness  
wherever he is. I cry.  
Deep, guttural sobs.  
We pin the organ donor medal to his tombstone,  
the only medal he's ever got  
in his short life, his long death.  
He must be proud.

Later, at night, my mother  
calls. She's in a hurry, going out to the Bridge club, doesn't have time to  
talk to me. Don't you know  
what day it is? Sure, ask your dad how sad  
I was today, it's very hard for me, you know.  
So why won't you talk to me?  
What for? You're hurt, I'm hurt, what's more  
to be said? Nothing, mom,  
you're right, not a thing  
is left to be said.

## TAMMARA OR SLILAT

### **mom and dad**

Mom nags dad not to wear 'that ridiculous hat'. 60 years together and her self esteem is still welded to his appearance in the eyes of their friends.



Tammara

## DAVID SUPPER

### Missing

On my family tree  
are two names I have not heard before,  
they were never mentioned, or whispered,  
no breath for them, no life at all.  
My mother's brothers Sam and Davey,  
their existence hidden, excised,  
instead of honoured and remembered.

Sam, a tailor, sewing ladies garments,  
thin and bent from crouching low,  
a wife and children, maybe three?  
My first cousins I'd have liked to know,  
to have met them when I was young,  
what fun we might have had, playing games  
or climbing trees, a gang of feral boys.

Davey, perhaps a bold adventurer,  
he wasn't one to stay at home  
he'd have sailed around the world,  
then told me stories from far-off lands,  
of ships and natives wearing beads,  
of animals with stripes and tails,  
and all the dangers he had faced.

The truth, when told, is not so colourful:  
for deep amongst the census records  
I found the entry for little Davey,  
but of Sam there was no trace -  
in Plashet cemetery lies the family grave,  
un-named, unkempt long forgotten,  
their final resting place.



## CONTRIBUTORS

### **James Bell**

James Bell - has published two collections to date. "the just vanished place" (2008) and "fishing for beginners" (2010) both from tall-lighthouse in London. Scottish by birth he has lived for many years in Devon.

### **Jim Bennett**

Jim Bennett lives near Liverpool in the UK and is the author of 63 books, including books for children, books of poetry and many technical titles on transport and examinations.

His poetry collections include;

Drums at New Brighton (Lifestyle 1999)

Down in Liverpool (CD) (Long Neck 2001)

The Man Who Tried to Hug Clouds (Bluechrome 2004 reprinted 2006)

Larkhill (Searle Publishing 2009)

He has won many awards for his writing and performance including 3 DADAFest awards. He is also managing editor of [www.poetrykit.org](http://www.poetrykit.org) one of the worlds most successful internet sites for poets.

Jim taught Creative Writing at the University of Liverpool and now tours throughout the year giving readings and performances of his work.

### **Lesley Burt**

I am from Christchurch, Dorset and, with the exception of a few years in Germany and Hampshire between 1966 and 1974, have lived here ever since. I have two children that, to my astonishment and theirs, are now approaching middle age.

I wrote poetry as a child, and at grammar school was one of the rare kids who loved poetry, all things Shakespearean, Jane Austen and Dickens.

My qualifications are in teaching and social work. During the last ten or so years of work, I did a couple of *Open College of the Arts* courses, began to write again and had some poems published in various magazines. Since then, I developed my skills further through a couple of Jim Bennett's online courses.

My poems have appeared in various magazines such as *Tears in the Fence*, *Poetry Nottingham*, *The Interpreter's House*, *Roundyhouse* etc. and online through Poetry Kit. I have also edited Poetry Kit's *Transparent Words* and *The Helen Lawson Paintings Project*.

I retired in January 2009 from a post at Southampton Solent University where I was a lecturer in social work. I have missed my brilliant colleagues and the students; however, this gave me time to compile my first collection, *Framed and Juxtaposed*,

published by Searle Publishing <http://www.searlepublishing.com/>. I have also set up a small poetry group in Christchurch, and we have read at local events and on an international community radio station. I was very happy to receive first prize in the 2009 Christchurch Writers Competition; there is something special about recognition on home ground!

I am currently working towards another collection, and enjoying another year of organising sessions with my group of Christchurch poets.

### **Lynn Ciesielski**

Lynn Ciesielski resides in Buffalo, New York USA with her new husband. Her family is very important to her. Her mother lives alone about three miles away. She speaks to her most days even if only to inquire about her health. Lynn taught Special Education in the city schools for eighteen years and retired a little under two years ago. Now she devotes most of her time to her husband and other family members and to her poetry.

### **Bob Cooper**

Bob Cooper lives in Birmingham, UK. He is currently working on his 7th. Collection.

### **Waiata Dawn Davies**

Waiata Dawn Davies, a retired teacher, lives at the mouth of the Waitaki River in the South Island of New Zealand. Her last public appearance was at Wordstorm Literary Festival, Darwin Australia in May 2010.

### **S K Iyer**

Is from India, presently put up in Pune. A commerce graduate, presently leading a retired but a busy life and poetry for him is a hobby.

### **Mick Moss**

Mick Moss is a 57 year old art school drop out and music industry graduate. Originally from London, he has lived in Liverpool for 25 years.

### **Stuart Nunn**

Stuart Nunn is a retired English teacher living in South Gloucestershire. He is an examiner/moderator for A Level English Language and is currently re-planting his garden.

### **Barbara Phillips**

Barbara Phillips has written the following poetry collections: *Tympanic Mysteries: Love Is a Tympanic Mystery; Shadows In the Echoes; Blue Sails Haiku and Not; Confessions of a Sybaritic Puritan; Goldfish Sings Cherry Blossom Songs; By Flim Flam Fandango I Dance Love With You*. Her poems have appeared in various anthologies such as *Oval Victory: The Best of Canadian Poetry*, and *No Love Lost EOA and West London Poems Part Two*, and others, as well as literary journals such as *Ygdrasil A Journal of the Poetic Arts*, *Bywords Quarterly Journal*, *Quills Canadian Poetry Magazine*, *Ottawa Arts Review*, *Transparent Words*, and *Poetry Super Highway*.

### **Tammara Or Slilat**

Tammara Or Slilat, poet and painter, born 1960, lives in Arbel, Israel. Published two books of poems in Hebrew, many poems in magazines and e-zines, currently in the last stage of her MA in English Literature and Creative Writing in Bar Ilan University, Tel Aviv.

### **David Supper**

David Supper was born in Surrey and apart from brief sojourns abroad, he lived and worked in Reading until 2007 when he moved to Nottingham. David taught art in a large comprehensive school in Berkshire and started writing poetry in 1999. He directs plays and designs sets in his local theatre and still paints when he finds the time. David founded *Serpent's Tooth*, a poetry writers group, in West Bridgford, where he now lives."