

## Meeting held on 13th February 2024 All Things Fishy

There were only five members at the meeting and we found as many poems as we could by including sea creatures, not necessarily Fishy

The first two poems were chosen by Irene

### Seal by William Jay Smith American poet (1918-2015)

See how he dives  
From the rocks with a zoom!  
See how he darts  
Through his watery room  
Past crabs and eels  
And green seaweed,  
Past fluffs of sandy  
Minnow feed!  
See how he swims  
With a swerve and a twist,  
A flip of the flipper,  
A flick of the wrist!  
Quicksilver-quick,  
Softer than spray,  
Down he plunges  
And sweeps away;  
Before you can think,  
Before you can utter  
Words like "Dill pickle"  
Or "Apple butter,"  
Back up he swims  
Past Sting Ray and Shark,  
Out with a zoom,  
A whoop, a bark;  
Before you can say  
Whatever you wish,  
He plops at your side  
With a mouthful of fish!



### The Pike by Amy Lowell American poet (1874-1925)

In the brown water,  
Thick and silver-sheened in the sunshine,  
Liquid and cool in the shade of the reeds,  
A pike dozed.  
Lost among the shadows of stems  
He lay unnoticed.  
Suddenly he flicked his tail,  
And a green-and-copper brightness  
Ran under the water.  
Out from under the reeds  
Came the olive-green light,  
And orange flashed up  
Through the sun-thickened water.  
So the fish passed across the pool,  
Green and copper,  
A darkness and a gleam,  
And the blurred reflections of the willows on the  
opposite bank  
Received it.

Another poem read by **Irene**

### The Fisherman by George Bruce

As he comes from one of those small houses  
Set within the curve of the low cliff  
For a moment he pauses  
Foot on step at the low lintel  
Before fronting wind and sun.  
He carries out from within something of the dark  
Concealed by heavy curtain,  
Or held within the ship under hatches.

Yet with what assurance  
The compact body moves,  
Head pressed to wind,  
His being at an angle  
As to anticipate the lurch of earth.

Who is he to contain night  
And still walk stubborn  
Holding the ground with light feet  
And with a careless gait?  
Perhaps a cataract of light floods,  
Perhaps the apostolic flame.

Whatever it may be  
The road takes him from us.  
Now the pier is his, now the tide.



**Irene** also read 'Trout Fishers' by George Mackay Brown, but sadly I couldn't find it online. Not to forget the trout, we have the translation from German into English of the words of 'Die Forelle' by Christian Schubart, on which Franz Schubert based the music for his Trout Quintet. This was sent in by **Fiona**, who was too busy to join the meeting, being on duty for Pancake Day.



### The Trout

In a limpid brook  
the capricious trout  
in joyous haste  
darted by like an arrow.  
I stood on the bank  
in blissful peace, watching  
the lively fish swim  
in the clear brook.

An angler with his rod  
stood on the bank  
cold-bloodedly watching  
the fish's contortions.  
As long as the water  
is clear, I thought,  
he won't catch the trout  
with his rod.

But at length the thief  
grew impatient. Cunningly  
he made the brook cloudy,  
and in an instant  
his rod quivered,  
and the fish struggled on it.  
And I, my blood boiling,  
looked on at the cheated creature.

My selection of fishy subjects.

A young fisherman berthed in Penzance  
Went ashore one fine night to a dance  
He woke up on his boat  
With a mermaid afloat  
The First prize in a card game of chance



So was spawned a cross genus romance  
Though the neighbours regarded askance  
They got married next day  
In a church by the bay  
And went off to a fish farm in France

### Salmon and Bear

salmon swimming home  
to spawning grounds in springtime  
brown bear awaits them



Salmon braves  
surging waters,  
exchanging liquid  
danger for that  
found in a feral paw.

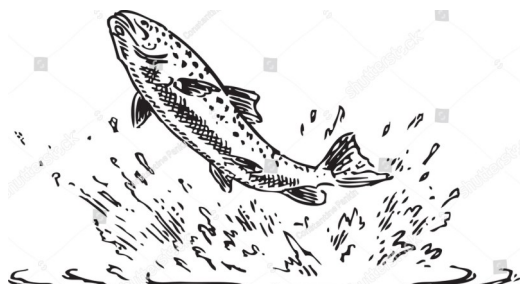
### The Fisherman's Prayer

I pray that I may live to fish until my dying day,  
And when it comes to my last cast,  
I then most humbly pray,  
When in The Lord's great landing net  
And peacefully asleep,  
That in His mercy I may be judged  
'Big enough to keep.'

### The Silver Fish by Shel Silverstein (1930 – 1999)

who was an American writer, poet, cartoonist,  
singer-songwriter, musician, and playwright.

While fishing in the blue lagoon  
I caught a lovely silver fish,  
And he spoke to me. "My boy," quoth he,  
"Please set me free and I'll grant your wish...  
A kingdom of wisdom? A palace of gold?  
Or all the goodies your fancies can hold?"  
So I said, "OK," and I threw him free,  
And he swam away and he laughed at me  
Whispering my foolish wish  
Into a silent sea.  
Today I caught that fish again,  
That lovely prince of fishes,  
And once again he offered me—  
If I would only set him free—  
Any one of a number of wonderful wishes...  
He was delicious!



**Barbara** chose these next two poems

### Heaven by Rupert Brooke

FISH (fly-replete, in depth of June,  
Dawdling away their wat'ry noon)  
Ponder deep wisdom, dark or clear,  
Each secret fishy hope or fear.  
Fish say, they have their Stream and Pond;  
But is there anything Beyond?  
This life cannot be All, they swear,  
For how unpleasant, if it were!  
One may not doubt that, somehow, Good  
Shall come of Water and of Mud;  
And, sure, the reverent eye must see  
A Purpose in Liquidity.  
We darkly know, by Faith we cry,  
The future is not Wholly Dry.  
Mud unto mud! -- Death eddies near --  
Not here the appointed End, not here!  
But somewhere, beyond Space and Time.  
Is wetter water, slimier slime!  
And there (they trust) there swimmeth One  
Who swam ere rivers were begun,  
Immense, of fishy form and mind,  
Squamous, omnipotent, and kind;  
And under that Almighty Fin,  
The littlest fish may enter in.  
Oh! never fly conceals a hook,  
Fish say, in the Eternal Brook,  
But more than mundane weeds are there,  
And mud, celestially fair;  
Fat caterpillars drift around,  
And Paradisal grubs are found;  
Unfading moths, immortal flies,  
And the worm that never dies.  
And in that Heaven of all their wish,  
There shall be no more land, say fish.



### My Old Fishing Boat by Isaac McLellan

My old boat rests on the shore,  
By the river's sedgy brink,  
Where the meadow grass bends o'er,  
And the cattle come to drink;  
'Tis a rusty, batter'd boat,  
Boat without master sail,  
And it never again may float,  
In dead calm or in gale;  
For its timbers and ribs are rent,  
Shiver'd and crack'd and bent,  
And the paint has faded away,  
From its sides this many a-day;  
Sides gaping in every seam,  
Wide open to the stream.

And yet a brave boat wast thou!  
When I launch'd you long ago,  
When thy shapely, sharpen'd prow,  
Cleaved the waters like a plow;  
Gay then each painted side,  
With umber and green and white,  
My triumph and my pride,  
My glory, my heart's delight!  
Was ever a joy in the past,  
Like mine when first arose,  
The flag at the head of the mast,  
A pennon of purple and rose;  
When first thy snowy sail,  
I gave to the riotous breeze,  
And steer'd from this river-vale,  
Straight out to the open seas!

Ah, many the splendid school  
Of fish, in these river-deeps,  
That haunt each darksome pool,  
Or flash where the current sweeps;  
Have I follow'd where e'er they float,  
And gather'd into this boat;  
And along the salty tides  
Of the sea, I have track'd their way,  
Till their glittering, scaly sides,  
In my little shallop lay.

### The Small Giant

The otter is ninety percent water  
Ten percent God.

This is a mastery  
We have not fathomed in a million years.

I saw one once, off the teeth of western Scotland,  
Playing games with the Atlantic -

Three feet of gymnastics  
Taking on an ocean.



### Sea Urchins

At the luminous edges of the Hebrides  
Where silk water harps the shore  
And the beaches are huge boomerangs  
Necklaced with seaweed - they appear  
sometimes,

Curved things

Sharp as hedgehogs, their plates rose  
And gold, or even the same green  
As Venus at first light. Often  
Crusts of waves crack them to pieces  
Leave them in jewelled brooches  
Up high beside grass and larks.  
But each boy dreams of the morning  
He looks down on the beach and catches  
There at the lips of the water  
One unbroken ball rolled  
Out of the hand of the sea.



### The Kingfisher

One early May we went there on foot,  
Through the ghostly cobwebs of the morning.  
Hearing the curlews rising in hauntings across the  
fields.

The land was muddy, a guttural rushing of  
syllables

After long spring rain, so our boots were sucked  
and glutted

By a swilling of mire. We struggled through  
screens of trees,

Nets of rain meshing our faces, till we broke out  
By that little trickle of stream -

Nothing more than a slither of thick water  
Rippling away in different shades of ink.

Then, from nowhere, that blue bolt came  
Bright as a dragonfly, a bit of summer sky,  
Low as some skiffed stone, threading the reeds  
To catch a branch, to lock  
Into the sapphire thrill of kingfisher.  
We stood amazed, gazing, ages,  
Unable to believe the piece of luck we'd stumbled  
on.

We have kept that blue ever since  
Somewhere in the winter attics of our world -  
A priceless place, a whole kingdom.





### Pike by Ted Hughes

Pike, three inches long, perfect  
Pike in all parts, green tigering the gold.  
Killers from the egg: the malevolent aged grin.  
They dance on the surface among the flies.

Or move, stunned by their own grandeur,  
Over a bed of emerald, silhouette  
Of submarine delicacy and horror.  
A hundred feet long in their world.

In ponds, under the heat-struck lily pads-  
Gloom of their stillness:  
Logged on last year's black leaves, watching upwards.  
Or hung in an amber cavern of weeds

The jaws' hooked clamp and fangs  
Not to be changed at this date:  
A life subdued to its instrument;  
The gills kneading quietly, and the pectorals.

Three we kept behind glass,  
Jungled in weed: three inches, four,  
And four and a half: fed fry to them-  
Suddenly there were two. Finally one

With a sag belly and the grin it was born with.  
And indeed they spare nobody.  
Two, six pounds each, over two feet long  
High and dry and dead in the willow-herb-

One jammed past its gills down the other's gullet:  
The outside eye stared: as a vice locks-  
The same iron in this eye  
Though its film shrank in death.

A pond I fished, fifty yards across,  
Whose lilies and muscular tench  
Had outlasted every visible stone  
Of the monastery that planted them-

### Stilled legendary depth:

It was as deep as England. It held  
Pike too immense to stir, so immense and old  
That past nightfall I dared not cast

But silently cast and fished  
With the hair frozen on my head  
For what might move, for what eye might  
move.

The still splashes on the dark pond,

Owls hushing the floating woods  
Frail on my ear against the dream  
Darkness beneath night's darkness had freed,  
That rose slowly toward me, watching.



### When the Boat Comes In Folk Song from Northumberland (We attempted to sing this)

Now come here me little Jackie  
Now I've smoked me baccy;  
Let's have some cracky  
'Til the boat comes in.

And you shall have a fishy  
on a little dishy,  
You shall have a fishy  
when the boat comes in.

And dance to your daddy, sing to your mammy,  
Dance to your daddy, to your mammy sing,

Two more poems found and read by **Mary**

**With the Herring Fishers**

by Hugh MacDiarmid

'I see herrin.' – I hear the glad cry  
And gainst the moon I see ilka blue jowl  
In turn as the fishermen haul on the nets  
And sing: 'Come, shove in your heids and growl.'

'Soom on, bonnie herrin, soom on,' they shout,  
Or, 'Come in, O come in, and see me,'  
'Come gie the auld man something to dae.  
It'll be a braw change frae the sea.'

O it's ane o' the bonniest sights in the warld  
To watch the herrin' come walking on board  
In the wee sma' 'oors o' a simmer's mornin'  
As if o' their ain accord.

For this is the way that God sees life,  
The haill jing-bang o's appearin'  
Up owre frae the edge o' naethingness - I  
t's his happy cries I'm hearin'.

'Left, right – O come in and see me,'  
Reid and yellow and black and white  
Toddlin' up into Heaven thegither  
At peep o' day frae the endless night.

'I see herrin',' I hear his glad cry,  
And 'gainst the moon see his muckle blue jowl,  
As he handles buoy-tow and bush-raip  
Singin': 'Come, shove in your heids and growl!'

- buoy-tow = buoy rope
- bush-raip = rope attached to the net

**Gold Fish by Hilda Conkling**

Like a shot of gold  
Or an arrow darting  
With thin gold wings  
He swims....  
Now around...then straight  
Then a swish of tail...  
Then zigzag all along  
With a kind of stiff smile...  
In ponds or bowls  
He swims and stares  
Out of big popping eyes  
Of ebony.



Shetland fishing boat - similar to that in which  
Hugh MacDiarmid sailed when he composed his poem.

In complete contrast Mary then led us  
in the children's rhyme .....

One, two, three, four, five  
Once I caught a fish alive  
Six, seven, eight, nine ten,  
Then I let it go again,  
    Why did you let it go?  
    Because it bit my finger so,  
    Which finger did it bite?  
    This little finger on the right.

An extra little ditty discovered by **Barbara**

**Out Fishing by Robert Pettit**

I figured something was up when you called in sick today.  
The telephone in your house kept ringing; you went away.  
After you called, you decided to roam.  
No answer on your telephone meant you were not home.  
Your old trusty fishing pole was what you would take.  
There I saw you with your line in the lake.  
I hope you caught something big for your sake.  
You may lose your job if there are more call-ins that are fake.