

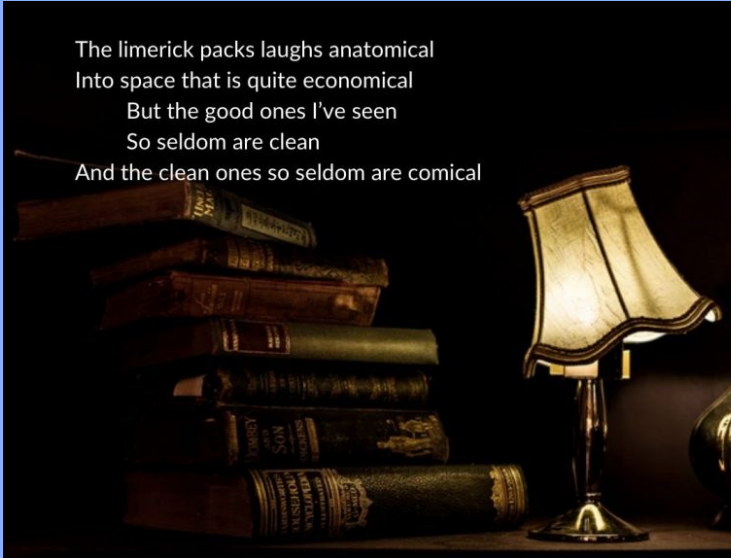
Meeting held on 10th September

Sonnets and Limericks

This was the first meeting of the new session 2024/25

We began with a good selection of Limericks among which were some excellent home-grown verses

The limerick packs laughs anatomical  
Into space that is quite economical  
But the good ones I've seen  
So seldom are clean  
And the clean ones so seldom are comical

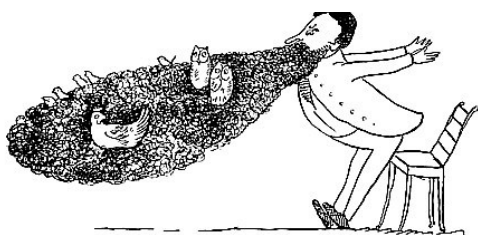


Well, the above is untrue for a start.  
We had these from Edward Lear

There was an old man on a hill  
Who seldom, if ever, stood still.  
He ran up and down  
In his grandmother's gown  
Which adorned that old man on a hill.

There was an old man of Peru,  
Who watched his wife making a stew.  
But once by mistake  
In a stove she did bake  
That unfortunate man of Peru.

There was an Old Man with a beard,  
Who said, 'It is just as I feared!  
Two Owls and a Hen,  
Four Larks and a Wren,  
Have all built their nests in my beard!'



**Isobel** read two of her own

There was a young lady from Ruskie  
Whose favourite tippie was whisky.  
This caused her to stumble  
Her tummy to rumble  
And her whole dainty frame to be frisky.



There once was an eminent bishop  
Who resided next door to a fishop.  
Coming back from a party  
A trifle too hearty  
He didn't know whishop was fishop.

**Irene** read three  
of hers



There was a wee lass called Maisie  
Whose best friend was Daredevil Daisy  
They danced along the street  
In their bare feet  
And everyone thought they were crazy.

There was an old lady called Kerry  
Who enjoyed a tippie of sherry  
She went to a pub  
Then on to a club  
And got thrown out for being too merry.



There once was a woman called Betty  
Who smelled and was really sweaty.  
One day she had a wash  
And her family said "Oh Gosh!"  
For she did look awfully pretty

Three more interesting Limericks also read

God's plan made a hopeful beginning.  
But Man spoiled his chances by sinning.  
We trust that the story  
Will end in God's glory,  
But at present the other side's winning.  
Oliver Wendell Holmes

**Linna** wrote about past summers  
Honey a memory holds  
Of summers just hazily gold:  
By heather and burn  
Made sleepy by sun  
We thought we would never grow old.



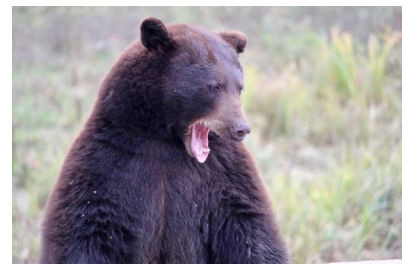
King Lear  
The fortunes of families they fall and they rise.  
A king driven mad and a dad with no eyes  
So last shall be first  
And the best gets the worst  
Now who is the foolish and which one's the wise?  
Anon

A dozen, a gross and a score  
Plus three times the square root of four  
Divided by seven  
Plus five times eleven  
Is nine squared and not a bit more.  
Leigh Mercer  
(Mathematician)



Last two from **Fiona**

Big Donald was a proud clan chief  
Who strutted his stuff at the games in Crieff  
But he was the talk of the town  
When his kilt fell down  
And he covered his shame with a sycamore leaf.



An intrepid young lady called Sue  
One day went to visit the zoo  
She ignored the hard stares  
As she squatted by the bears  
Saying, "Sorry but I couldn't find the loo!"

**Sonnet** - A lyric poem that consists of 14 lines which usually have one or more conventional rhyme schemes.

Two from me

Edna St. Vincent Millay (1892-1950)

I being born a woman and distressed  
By all the needs and notions of my kind,  
Am urged by your propinquity to find  
Your person fair, and feel a certain zest  
To bear your body's weight upon my breast:  
So subtly is the fume of life designed,  
To clarify the pulse and cloud the mind,  
And leave me once again undone, possessed.  
Think not for this, however, the poor treason  
Of my stout blood against my staggering brain,  
I shall remember you with love, or season  
My scorn with pity, —let me make it plain:  
I find this frenzy insufficient reason  
For conversation when we meet again.

Shakespeare Sonnet 17

Who will believe my verse in time to come,  
If it were filled with your most high deserts?  
Though yet heaven knows it is but as a tomb  
Which hides your life, and shows not half your parts.  
If I could write the beauty of your eyes,  
And in fresh numbers number all your graces,  
The age to come would say 'This poet lies;  
Such heavenly touches ne'er touched earthly faces.'  
So should my papers, yellowed with their age,  
Be scorned, like old men of less truth than tongue,  
And your true rights be termed a poet's rage  
And stretched metre of an antique song:  
But were some child of yours alive that time,  
You should live twice, in it, and in my rhyme.

Two from **Anne**

Upon Westminster Bridge

by William Wordsworth

Earth has not anything to show more fair:  
Dull would he be of soul who could pass by  
A sight so touching in its majesty:  
This City now doth, like a garment, wear  
The beauty of the morning: silent, bare,  
Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples lie  
Open unto the fields, and to the sky;  
All bright and glittering in the smokeless air.  
Never did sun more beautifully steep  
In his first splendour, valley, rock, or hill;  
Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep!  
The river glideth at his own sweet will:  
Dear God! the very houses seem asleep;  
And all that mighty heart is lying still!

Ozymandias by Percy Bysshe Shelley

I met a traveller from an antique land  
Who said: "Two vast and trunkless legs of stone  
Stand in the desert . . . Near them, on the sand,  
Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown,  
And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,  
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read  
Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,  
The hand that mocked them, and the heart that fed:  
And on the pedestal these words appear:  
'My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:  
Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!  
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay  
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare  
The lone and level sands stretch far away."

**Sonnet by William Wordsworth from**

**'Sonnets dedicated to Liberty and Order'**

Blest Statesman He, whose Mind's unselfish will  
Leaves him at ease among grand thoughts: whose eye  
Sees that, apart from magnanimity,  
Wisdom exists not; nor the humbler skill  
Of Prudence, disentangling good and ill  
With patient care. What tho' assaults run high,  
They daunt not him who holds his ministry,  
Resolute, at all hazards, to fulfil  
Its duties; prompt to move, but firm to wait,  
Knowing, things rashly sought are rarely found;  
That, for the functions of an ancient State  
Strong by her charters, free because imbound,  
Servant of Providence, not slave of Fate  
Perilous is sweeping change, all chance unsound.

Wordsworth's sonnets of 1802-3 offer an insight into the poet's heightened political commitments during the short-lived Peace of Amiens and the subsequent resumption of hostilities with Napoleonic France.

**Barbara's choices**

**Mowing by Robert Frost**

There was never a sound beside the wood but one,  
And that was my long scythe whispering to the  
ground.  
What was it it whispered? I knew not well myself;  
Perhaps it was something about the heat of the sun,  
Something, perhaps, about the lack of sound—  
And that was why it whispered and did not speak.  
It was no dream of the gift of idle hours,  
Or easy gold at the hand of fay or elf:  
Anything more than the truth would have seemed too  
weak  
To the earnest love that laid the swale in rows,  
Not without feeble-pointed spikes of flowers  
(Pale orchises), and scared a bright green snake.  
The fact is the sweetest dream that labour knows.  
My long scythe whispered and left the hay to make.

**Gill's choices**

**From Clearances by Seamus Heaney No.3**

When all the others were away at Mass  
I was all hers as we peeled potatoes.  
They broke the silence, let fall one by one  
Like solder weeping off the soldering iron:  
Cold comforts set between us, things to share  
Gleaming in a bucket of clean water.  
And again let fall. Little pleasant splashes  
From each other's work would bring us to our senses.  
  
So while the parish priest at her bedside  
Went hammer and tongs at the prayers for the dying  
And some were responding and some crying  
I remembered her head bent towards my head,  
Her breath in mine, our fluent dipping knives--  
Never closer the whole rest of our lives.

**Sonnet 43**

**By Elizabeth Barratt Browning**

How do I love thee? Let me count the ways!  
I love thee to the depth and breadth and height  
My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight  
For the ends of Being and Ideal Grace.  
I love thee to the level of every day's  
Most quiet need, by sun and candle-light.  
I love thee freely, as men strive for Right.  
I love thee purely, as they turn from Praise.  
I love thee with the passion put to use  
In my old griefs, and with my childhood's faith.  
I love thee with a love I seemed to lose  
With my lost saints. -I love thee with the breath,  
Smiles, tears, of all my life; and, if God choose,  
I shall but love thee better after death.

**Isobel** read these two

**Shakespeare's Sonnet 116**

Let me not to the marriage of true minds  
Admit impediments. Love is not love  
Which alters when it alteration finds,  
Or bends with the remover to remove:  
O no; it is an ever-fixed mark,  
That looks on tempests, and is never shaken;  
It is the star to every wandering bark,  
Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken.  
Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks  
Within his bending sickle's compass come;  
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,  
But bears it out even to the edge of doom.  
If this be error and upon me proved,  
I never writ, nor no man ever loved.

**September Song by Geoffrey Hill (1932-2016)**

An elegy for a child victim of the Holocaust  
Undesirable you may have been, untouchable  
you were not. Not forgotten  
or passed over at the proper time.

As estimated, you died. Things marched,  
sufficient, to that end.  
Just so much Zyklon and leather, patented  
terror, so many routine cries.

(I have made  
an elegy for myself it  
is true)

September fattens on vines. Roses  
flake from the wall. The smoke  
of harmless fires drifts to my eyes.

This is plenty. This is more than enough.

**Dervla** chose these two

**A First Alzheimer's Sonnet by Marilyn Nelson**  
(Born 1946-Cleveland, Ohio.  
Connecticut Poet Laureate 2001-2006)

A wave enters the membrane labyrinth,  
and something mushrooms from nothing to now.  
Unacted on, thought disappears from sense  
like the vapor trail of a skeptic's awe:  
Look up, no trace remains. The road to hell  
is paved with good intentions once conceived  
of, twice forgotten in a micromill-  
isecond, cumulus lost on a breeze.  
What if for a brief moment the flame burns  
higher, as a thought forms of you, my dear,  
then passes back into oblivion?  
Each cloud is a face of the atmosphere,  
as each wave is an aspect of the sea.  
Forget you? Never. Not while I am me.

**Sonnet 55 by William Shakespeare**

Not marble, nor the gilded monuments  
Of princes, shall outlive this powerful rhyme;  
But you shall shine more bright in these contents  
Than unswept stone, besmear'd with sluttish time.  
When wasteful war shall statues overturn,  
And broils root out the work of masonry,  
Nor Mars his sword nor war's quick fire shall burn  
The living record of your memory.  
'Gainst death and all-oblivious enmity  
Shall you pace forth; your praise shall still find room  
Even in the eyes of all posterity  
That wear this world out to the ending doom.  
So, till the judgment that yourself arise,  
You live in this, and dwell in lovers' eyes.

These were the two read by Liz

A Teenager's Sonnet

Lost in the maze of time  
Buried under the debris of worry  
Waiting for hope's sunshine  
To shine brightly upon me.  
Burnt by the fire of jealousy  
Searching for life's right track  
Even though hate's load is heavy  
I can't get it off my back.  
Entering the castle of doubt  
Drowning in the sea of guilt  
Wanting to find a way out  
But my destiny hasn't yet been built.  
But somewhere, somehow, I'll survive  
And be the reason for a million's pride.

The Downpour by John Clare

The maiden ran away to fetch the clothes,  
And threw her apron o'er her cap and bows,  
But the shower caught her ere she hurried in,  
And beat and almost drowned her to the skin;  
The ruts ran brooks as they would ne'er be dry,  
And the boy waded as he hurried by,  
The half drowned ploughman waded to the knees,  
And birds were almost drowned upon the trees,  
The streets ran rivers till they floated o'er,  
And women screamed to meet it at the door;  
Labour fled home and rivers hurried by,  
And still it fell as it would never stop,  
E'en the old stone trough deep as house is high  
Was brimming o'er and floated o'er the top.

Irene's choices

Easter Day by Oscar Wilde

The silver trumpets rang across the Dome:  
The people knelt upon the ground with awe:  
And borne upon the necks of men I saw,  
Like some great God, the Holy Lord of Rome.  
  
Priest-like, he wore a robe more white than foam,  
And, king-like, swathed himself in royal red,  
Three crowns of gold rose high upon his head:  
In splendour and in light the Pope passed home.  
  
My heart stole back across wide wastes of years  
To One who wandered by a lonely sea,  
And sought in vain for any place of rest:  
'Foxes have holes, and every bird its nest,  
I, only I, must wander wearily,  
And bruise my feet, and drink wine salt with tears.'

Green Rain by Mary Webb

Into the scented woods we'll go  
And see the blackthorn swim in snow.  
High above, in the budding leaves,  
A brooding dove awakes and grieves;  
The glades with mingled music stir,  
And wildly laughs the woodpecker.  
When blackthorn petals pearl the breeze,  
There are the twisted hawthorn trees  
Thick-set with buds, as clear and pale  
As golden water or green hail -  
As if a storm of rain had stood  
Enchanted in the thorny wood,  
And, hearing fairy voices call,  
Hung poised, forgetting how to fall.

Linna chose these two

The Skylight by Seamus Heaney

You were the one for skylights, I opposed  
Cutting into the seasoned tongue-and-groove  
Of pitch pine. I liked it low and closed,  
Its claustrophobic, nest-up-in-the-roof  
Effect. I liked the snuff-dry feeling,  
The perfect, trunk-lid fit of the old ceiling.  
Under there, it was all hutch and hatch.  
The blue slates kept the heat like midnight thatch.

But when the slates came off, extravagant  
Sky entered and held surprise wide open.  
For days I felt like an inhabitant  
Of that house where the man sick of the palsy  
Was lowered through the roof, had his sins forgiven,  
Was healed, took up his bed and walked away.

Back from Australia by John Betjeman

Cocooned in Time, at this inhuman height,  
The packaged food tastes neutrally of clay,  
We never seem to catch the running day  
But travel on in everlasting night  
With all the chic accoutrements of flight:  
Lotions and essences in neat array  
And yet another plastic cup and tray.  
"Thank you so much. Oh no, I'm quite all right".

At home in Cornwall hurrying autumn skies  
Leave Bray Hill barren, Stepper jutting bare,  
And hold the moon above the sea-wet sand.  
The very last of late September dies  
In frosty silence and the hills declare  
How vast the sky is, looked at from the land.

And Thelma read these

Do not stand at my grave and weep by  
Mary Elizabeth Frye

Do not stand at my grave and weep  
I am not there. I do not sleep.  
I am a thousand winds that blow.  
I am the diamond glints on snow.  
I am the sunlight on ripened grain.  
I am the gentle autumn rain.  
When you awaken in the morning's hush  
I am the swift uplifting rush  
Of quiet birds in circled flight.  
I am the soft stars that shine at night.  
Do not stand at my grave and cry;  
I am not there. I did not die.

An Irish Airman foresees his Death  
by W B Yeats

I know that I shall meet my fate  
Somewhere among the clouds above;  
Those that I fight I do not hate,  
Those that I guard I do not love;  
My county is Kiltartan Cross,  
My countrymen Kiltartan's poor,  
No likely end could bring them loss  
Or leave them happier than before.  
Nor law, nor duty bade me fight,  
Nor public men, nor cheering crowds,  
A lonely impulse of delight  
Drove to this tumult in the clouds;  
I balanced all, brought all to mind,  
The years to come seemed waste of breath,  
A waste of breath the years behind  
In balance with this life, this death.

My Glass Can't Quite Persuade Me  
I Am Old by Wendy Cope

My glass can't quite persuade me I am old—  
In that respect my ageing eyes are kind—  
But when I see a photograph, I'm told  
The dismal truth: I've left my youth behind.  
And when I try to get up from a chair  
My knees remind me they are past their best.  
The burden they have carried everywhere  
I heavier now. No wonder they protest.  
Arthritic fingers, problematic neck,  
Sometimes causing mild to moderate pain,  
Could well persuade me I'm an ancient wreck  
But here's what helps me to feel young again.  
My love, who fell for me so long ago,  
Still loves me just as much, and tells me so.

Poem was inspired by Shakespeare's Sonnet 22

*My glass shall not persuade me I am old  
So long as youth and thou are of one date;  
But when in thee time's furrows I behold,  
Then look I death my days should expiate.*

Sunday Morning by Louis MacNeice

Down the road someone is practising scales,  
The notes like little fishes vanish with a wink of tails,  
Man's heart expands to tinker with his car  
For this is Sunday morning, Fate's great bazaar;  
Regard these means as ends, concentrate on this Now,  
  
And you may grow to music or drive beyond Hindhead anyhow,  
Take corners on two wheels until you go so fast  
That you can clutch a fringe or two of the windy past,  
That you can abstract this day and make it to the week of time  
A small eternity, a sonnet self-contained in rhyme.

But listen, up the road, something gulps, the church spire  
Opens its eight bells out, skulls' mouths which will not tire  
To tell how there is no music or movement which secures  
Escape from the weekday time. Which deadens and endures.

**Valerie** read two sonnets but the second sonnet  
by R D Laing is absent. I am sorry but I was unable  
to find it online

Absent by Sophie Jewett (American 1861-1909)

My friend, I need thee in good days or ill,  
I need the counsel of thy larger thought;  
And I would question all the year has brought —  
What spoil of books, what victories of will;  
But most I long for the old wordless thrill,  
When on the shore, like children picture-taught,  
We watched each miracle the sweet day wrought,  
While the tide ebb'd, and every wind was still.  
Dear, let it be again as if we mused,  
We two, with never need of spoken word  
(While the sea's fingers twined among the dulse,  
And gulls dipped near), our spirits seeming fused  
In the great Life that quickens wave and bird,  
Our hearts in happy rhythm with the world-pulse.

