

Mac Tire©

By Nicola Ison for Gylden Fellowship, December 2022

Foreword

Five Candles for a Winter Night

Solstice Lights

Stormy Weather

The Yearning

Lore of Attraction

Out-Foxed

Lament of the Seer

Peaceful Winter Morning

A Lighter Note (1): Balloons

A Lighter Note (2): Witterings

The Leaf-blower Recalled

Fruit for Thought

A Lighter Note (3): The Please Bear

A Lighter Note (4): For Clement

Albatross

The Fuse

A Dandelion Clock

Untitled

On Beauty

Epilogue

Mac Tire - foreword

Mac Tire (mack-cheera) is Irish Celtic for wolf and has a secondary meaning of **son of the countryside**. It's also an Irish word for werewolf – in Ireland, a werewolf can be helpful or dangerous, often being a guardian spirit to children, the lost or the wounded.

This collection of poems follows on from my earlier set: **Gra, Dhraiocht ná Cairdeas** (also free to download from www.gyldenfellowship.co.uk). The meaning of that title is **love, enchantment and friendship**. I chose **Mac Tire** for this collection, not only because many of the poems relate to Nature, but they can be interpreted on several levels. Just like the werewolf, a poem can be read on its surface words, but the reader may find that there are hidden depths within.

One of my closest friends said that she liked much of my poetry and she could see that it was inspired by my love for special people. Well, she sees more than most and I believe that's right – what are we without love? Here's a quote from somewhere else (as I get older, I forget all the sources!), "Love is taking a few steps backward, maybe even more - to give way to the happiness of the person you love".

A word or two about Nature, which is all around us. We are all sons and daughters of the countryside. Sometimes, we forget it, but Gaia has a way of reminding us that we should look after the environment and all living things. In my world, that includes everything in the three realms – in druid speak, that's Earth, Sea and Sky. And so, I dedicate this second collection of verses to my lovely friend, **Riobhca**, and to wolf-lovers everywhere!

Many blessings

Nicola Ison



Five candles for a winter's night

It's Yuletide again, a time for remembrance.

One candle for the Winter Solstice,
To mark the turning of the wheel, increasing light,
And looking forward to the Feast of Oimelc.

One candle to pray for peace and goodwill -
A cessation of war, violence and greed.
A prayer for kindness to win over avarice.

One candle for the anniversaries of departed souls,
Close relatives who remain in our hearts forever.

My late mother always loved Christmas -
Carols, the Queen's message, decorations and games,
Presents for children, food and Christmas cards aplenty,
The scents of spiced oranges and fir cones.
It was her birthday at the end of each December,
So there were theatre or cinema visits for her too,
All these memories of my mother are recalled,
Via a single candle for her place in my heart.

And one final candle for all those close to me,
To give thanks for their presence in my life,
To send blessings to their families in hard times,
And to give my love for their health and happiness.



Solstice lights

Alban Arthan is the light of winter,
As the Holly King retreats,
And the Oak King triumphs,
As the sunshine starts to return.

Alban Arthan is the fire of winter,
Bonfires in the night,
Candles glowing in windows,
Dancing flames in fireplaces.

Alban Arthan is the promise of winter,
That Imbolc is not far away,
That snowdrops and crocuses will appear,
That lambs will play in fields.

Alban Arthan is the spark of winter,
Joyful family meetings,
Glad singing at stone circles,
Blessing of the new dawn.

Alban Arthan is the memory of winter,
Past snows and icy days,
When we hugged each other for comfort,
And shared companionship, always.



Stormy weather

Rain drumming on the windows,
Trees twisting in the gales,
Dark clouds in the heavens,
The wind howls and wails.

Unstoppable force of nature,
Thunder, lightning and hail,
O storm, your power and majesty,
Serves only to make us quail.

How can we try to flee a storm?
Better to admire its might,
Crashing waves on the shoreline,
Lightning forks so bright.

Thunder growls in the distance,
The wind is dying back,
The storm has passed us by for now,
Lessened its attack.

Some of us, we love a storm,
Short-lived though it be,
All the glory of its power,
It will return – that's guaranteed.



The Yearning

I sit here and remember the beach,
The touch of sand in fingers and toes,
And the crying of seagulls above.
Also, the kiss of sea air on my cheek,
And soothing rhythms of endless waves.
Nobody else shared my solitude and,
Even the sun is setting over the land.
But I wait and, shortly, more light appears,
As silvery moonrise conquers dusk.
Behind me, the sand dunes whisper,
And a rill of sand greets my fingers.
I love this place and its serenity,
But there's far more in the three realms –
The azure sea yearns to cover more land,
With eroding cliffs and higher tides.
The land yearns to reclaim lost tracts,
As sand dunes march in the wind.
The sky renews itself each night without us;
We are transient beings at best and yet,
Even we yearn to return to the beach evermore.

I awake, but the memories persist in my heart.

Lore of attraction

I look at her and can't help myself –
I love you beyond even my own life,
Her beauty leaves me ever speechless.
In reply, I feel her soft breath on my face,
Warm to my senses and always delicate.
She caresses my fingers and bare feet,
Bringing both peace and joy to my heart.
And I love you too, Earthkeeper,
She whispers in my ears and to my eye.
This is how we meet – I slow down,
Until I can find her on another plane –
The one where I see plants growing,
Hear birds singing and watch streams flow.
I'm not going inside myself, oh no –
More likely going outside and aligning,
With her consciousness and protection.
Gaia, you have my love and loyalty,
From long before until forever after,
And still, she smiles down on me.

Out-Foxed!

Outside the village pub,
The local hunt is here,
Horses and their riders,
Many voices, oh so clear.

Not just the milling horses,
But also packs of hounds,
Much barking and the neighing:
A cacophony of sounds.

Then they're off and running,
The dogs, they scent a fox,
Seeming just like athletes,
Sprinting from their blocks.

There's a fox off down the path,
You can see the brownish tail,
Streaking swiftly through the field,
But always leaving a trail.

And onwards come the hunters,
Blood-lust in their eyes,
Jumping hedges and the ditches,
With horns and shrieking cries.

The fox, it finds a garden,
And carries onward through,
But the owner stays there still,
Daring the hunters to pursue.

The hunters, they ignore her,
And jump the very last ditch,
Too late it is for the huntsmen,
As this is the house of a witch.

First, the hounds disappear,
Then, all the hunters too,
Scarlet coats and gleaming horns,
Vanished from view.

The witch saved the fox today,
But the hunters are not dead,
Her magick only sent them back,
To the original pub instead.

Lament of the seer

Always the same, every time,
I ask myself this question repeatedly –
I see every emotion and feeling,
From those all around me,
With an eagle's focus and vision.

Couples holding hands, both young and old,
And yet, even in a crowd,
My sentience is like a wall of glass –
Observing life, but unable to fit in.
My love is unconditional, knowing no bounds,
But gender-free: another glass wall.

The seer watches and foresees events,
Understanding even hidden feelings,
But set apart from others,
In loneliness and isolation.

Is this why the darkness comes,
Enveloping my spirit most nights?
The lure of the medicine cupboard,
Holds hands with the darkness –
I struggle every day against them both,
And wonder why I should stay.

I ask the eagle on my shoulder,
And it tells me to heal as many as I can,
In the time left to me in this life.
That is a hard truth to hear, but
Acceptance and reconciliation are all.

Tomorrow is a new day, for me to take up,
My bag of medicines and potions,
And trudge away into the distance.



Peaceful winter morning

Sunshine and blue skies disguise,
A chilly breeze when walking,
But still pleasant zephyrs to the cheek.
Loads and loads of winter flowers –
An array of blues, yellows, pinks and whites.
I sit here with Celtic harp notes in my ear,
Watching dancing flames in my fire,
The taste of hot coffee in my mouth,
And the serene sound of wood chimes,
Ringing in the wind currents.
This morning involved lots of tasks,
Later today, more tasks beckon,
But for now, this is a pleasant interlude,
To write out my feelings in poems and,
To reflect on people precious to me,
Sending my blessings to them, one and all.

A lighter note (1): Balloons

It's late on a summer afternoon, and
I watch balloons floating over the valley.
All are bright and large with tiny baskets below.
They drift gracefully in the warm air,
Going on their ways and fading to dots
On some far horizon.

Later, I'm in the pub with friends,
Talking and listening in sociable chat,
Yet some of our group are really balloons –
Loud voices and loud clothes with bright logos.
Drifting not-so-gracefully, but full of hot air.
Why can't they find some far horizon?

A lighter note (2): Witterings

George was a pagan and druid,
Whose sense of direction was...fluid.
He set off from Penge
To go to Stonehenge
And ended up somewhere in Clywd.

Note from Nicola – I was challenged to write a limerick that rhymed with druid!!

The Leaf-Blower recalled

RIP Lynwood Newman



Goodbye, old friend – so there we were,
Harsh realities gave a chance to reflect,
On days (and evenings) of love and laughter.

Memories came thick and fast when asked,
Lida stirring her home-made parsnip soup,
A comfortable meal at the Trooper,
Captain Insulin at many charity events,
All those Caltrop Christmas parties.

A storm of acronyms that evoked,
Clouds of friends and moments in time –
IPSA, SITO, SSAIB, NACOSS and the rest.
You made a difference to all of them,
With smiles, easy manners and air force pedigree,
Earning natural respect across the security spectrum.

From the editor's chair, I should say,
You were such a diligent and reliable author,
Concise, clear articles – always full of humour –
I'll remember the Leaf-blower one always.

And here we are – all different leaves,
You and I were blown together and then apart,
Then together again, but the memories continued between.

Fruit for thought

At home, at work or just on the street,
Thinking on the muesli of people I meet.

Nectarine girls, all colourful in tone,
Smooth-skinned, true, but with hearts of stone.

And there goes an apple man, round and proud,
Wealthy self-importance, standing out in a crowd.

Banana people are easy to spot,
Yellow or green and hang together a lot.

I like citrus folk, if only for their zest,
Lime, lemon and orange: such colours are the best.

And now, here's a thing for us all to decide,
Fruit in the bowl sit together side by side.

A lighter note (3): The Please bear

When you're lost and confused,
Feeling ever so down,
Don't cry or be worried –
The Please Bear's back in town.

Full of comfort and kindness,
The Please Bear's there for you,
Supportive and nurturing –
He'll always see you through.

Sitting alone in the hospital,
Just waiting amid all the fuss,
Plenty of doctors and nurses, and,
A sign saying Please Bear with us.

A lighter note (4): For Clement

'Twas the night before Yuletide.
And all through the house.
Hardly any were stirring
And, of course, not the mouse.

The carpet was covered,
With bills, bills and bills,
Papers strewn everywhere,
Proof of strong fiscal ills.

And there on the table,
Was that really a statement?
Can it be true though?
Proof of a payment.

It's bed-time already,
For the gaming to stop,
World of Warcraft to finish,
And Facebook to drop.

So, I'll drink my coffee,
Wait for the family to sleep,
Offer a prayer to the Goddess,
For my night's safety to keep.

Then, we'll start a new day
Yule, true, but the morrow
Is sure to bring more bills
Just increasing our sorrow.

Albatross

Paper, paper everywhere,
And not a sheet to shred,
Until it's all been scrutinised,
Sorted and thoroughly read.
Files of statements multiply,
Letters and bills abound,
They've been here a long time now,
Just left lying around.

Now's the day for filing them,
Putting away the reams,
Into new files and more boxes –
Only in your dreams.
We'll get there one day, I console,
The house will be totally neat,
No papers on the floor at all,
We'll be old, but the task complete!

The Fuse

The herbwitch – that’s what I was called,
Long ago in the springtime of my craft.
I remember using so many lovely,
Flowers, leaves, herbs and gems,
To create soothing teabags against,
Stress, headaches and stomach pains.

Or creams, salves and massage oils,
For the relief of broken bones, torn muscles,
Arthritis and sprained tendons.
I made quintessence from spring water,
Sunshine and sparkling crystals.

Ah well, thinks the Crone, I could still help –
The knowledge never really goes away,
But lingers like fallen leaves on the ground.
What did someone say? Oh yes,
They said I was hard-wired to heal and,
That too, never really goes away.

It’s both a blessing and a curse really.
I see someone in need and feel compelled,
To offer compassion, kind words or some type,
Of practical help, perhaps a syrup for a cough.

Others offer healing for hard cash, but I always,
Believed in using Nature’s gifts to heal everyone,
That I could, in the time available, for free.

Others seek self-healing or self-love first –
Before they offer help to others.
I’ve known some such people who spend,
Their whole lives seeking personal redemption.
For me, I did as I was instructed by the eagle –
Heal as many as you can in the time left to you.

Today, the Crone thinks, was a better day –
Last week, the fuse in my wiring melted and,
I attempted to become unplugged, but others,
Healed me with wise words and compassion.
I feel grateful to them for their love and care,
And check my wiring to resume the task given.

A Dandelion clock

Wandering along a path in spring,
I see a bright splash of yellow –
Not daffodils these, but dandelions,
Resplendent in spring sunshine.
So good for tea and wine,
Among other medicines and, then,

I spot a dandelion clock,
Full of seeds in a light breeze.
Carefully plucking the stem, and not
Dropping any of the seeds early,
Should I blow the clock for the time?
Or, perhaps, to make a wish –
I remember that if one blows all the seeds
In one go, it means your love is returned.

I opt for the wish and it is about my love.
No names or details to reveal here –
We love each other as friends - that is good enough.
But there is something more –
Who can say what happens to love,
Particularly amid turbulent times?

A cruel, strong wind sends the seeds away,
And all your memories too, forever.
Springtime is for dandelions –
Seek your own clocks now and opt for wishes,
Sending love to those precious to you,
In advance of the cruel winds of life.



Untitled

The harp stands alone in the corner,
But where is the harpist?
Blank canvas and brushes await,
But where is the painter?
A home is missing its heart,
With no clue for its return.
And my heart is missing a piece,
Awaiting you to mend it.
When you've flown, O so far away,
Leaving memories of shared love.
Sorrow is my daily friend,
And hope just a distant mirage.

On Beauty

Eye of the beholder, so they say,
But I say, it is what it is –
Beauty surrounds us, if we slow down,
And appreciate its presence.
The colours of flowers and plants,
Jewelled wings of a dragonfly,
A shimmer of rainbows in a crystal,
And the fine marbling of an old book.

Amazing hues in sunrises and sunsets,
Mirrored in endless waves or lakes,
But nothing compares to intrinsic beauty.
And that is you, my love, in my life –
I'm not deranged, really not, because your
Inner beauty shines out, covering all,
Like a lighthouse beacon on a dark night,
Saves me from the rocks in the shadows.

And your love changed my very existence –
There are so many adjectives I could use,
But I think of you and beautiful serves just fine.




Epilogue

Clearing her house, slowly, but surely –
Old clothes, glassware and china,
Packed off to innumerable charity shops.
Broken or chipped items are sent,
Unceremoniously to the local waste site.
Pieces of a life once lived, now gone.

The clearing process seems like,
Dismantling a jigsaw in bits – remove a bit,
And then the next, gradually creating spaces,
Where once there was a whole picture.

A chessboard sits in the corner - across the board,
The pieces stand, each on their squares,
Except for one, where the white queen has now,
Been removed permanently from the game.

Today is almost the end of the old year, and
It would have been her birthday, 95 years young,
Had not her heart intervened and given up,
During her last breaths of midsummer.
Rest you now, Mum, I remember you in my heart,
Though my mind tells me otherwise,
And I return to clearing the evidence of your life.



"Goodbyes are only for those who love
with their eyes. Because for those who
love with heart and soul there is no
such thing as separation."

R U M I