

Thursday 8 April Pass on a Poem
Magdalen Chapel, Holloway, 7.30 for 8pm.

Before the Wellsway was built, The Holloway – now a quiet backwater - was the main route into Bath from the south. On a recent walk, a group of us learnt that this poem used to hang above the horse trough that is built into the wall opposite Magdalen Chapel:

A man of kindness to his beast is kind,
But brutal actions show a brutal mind.
Remember! He who made thee, made the brute.
Who gave thee speech and reason formed him mute.
He can't complain – but God's all-seeing eye
Beholds thy cruelty and hears his cry.
He was designed thy servant, not thy drudge.
Remember! His Creator is thy judge.

So far I have seen the following suggestions about the poem's author: Crabbe, Cowper and Bloomfield. I have muddied these waters by suggesting it was a Shaker called Robert White in the 1840s. However, my research has since led me to a version in a book of 1813. I have also learnt that the poem was popular in religious and in animal welfare writings throughout the nineteenth century. Please report any earlier sightings!

Thanks to the enthusiastic Miles Barnes of B&NES Property Services, an etched zinc panel of the poem has been ordered, and B&NES has funded an additional explanatory panel. The Widcombe Association has said it will raise money for the Poem panel itself –

£840 – and is in the meanwhile underwriting the cost. Some large donations have been indicated, and a private donation fund will be launched in the March Widcombe Association newsletter.

At the Pass on a Poem evening in the Magdalen Chapel we hope you will enjoy a convivial evening sharing or simply listening to poetry that particularly appeals to you. Especially welcome would be poetry that evokes a part of the city or region. Maybe there is a place where you would like to see a local poem on display for people to read?

‘Pass on a Poem’ meetings are held from time to time in people’s homes in Bath. The rules are that the poem can be by any poet – but not you! The poem must be sent, preferably by email, to the organisers beforehand, so that they may devise a running order, which you will be given on arrival. A few words to introduce your poem and to explain why you chose it would be appreciated. Refreshments will be served before and at a break in the proceedings. **Reading is not a requirement – you are also welcome to come along just to listen.**

The evening is free, but there will be an opportunity to donate towards the horse trough panel and the refreshments. Please advise whether you will be coming, and if you would like to read, please send your poem to tessa.strickland@barefootbooks.co.uk by Wednesday 31 March.

Sarah Lewis, Widcombe Association

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