



Yellow Days

by the
Harbour Poets

Thank you to Poet Grace Wilentz and Senior Occupational Therapist Catherine Keogh for facilitating the Harbour Poets. Thank you also to poet Eilín de Paor for helping to curate and edit this pamphlet. Special thank you to all the Harbour Poets for sharing their poetry.

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The Memory Harbour is part of a national network of Memory Technology Resource Rooms (MTRRs). These are assistive technology and memory enablement demonstration sites where people with memory concerns or dementia and their families, when referred, can meet with an Occupational Therapist for a consultation.

During the consultation, the Occupational Therapist can

- provide advice and information on ways to help your memory and maximise your brain health;
- display equipment, assistive technology and items that can be helpful when living at home;
- assess, as appropriate, for cognitive therapeutic groups that are delivered by Occupational Therapists;
- signpost to social activities in the community that can support your brain health and well-being.

For more information about a Memory Technology Resource Room in your area, visit www.understandtogether.ie/get-support/memory-technology-resource-rooms

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Introduction

Yellow Days was a collaboration between the Memory Harbour and Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council Arts Office. What began as a conversation about creativity and brain health, grew into a 4-week funded programme, where friendships were made, poems were written, stories were shared, and brain health was promoted. In short, magic happened. We could feel it in the room, and we are delighted to share that magic with you now, through these pages.

Each member of the Harbour Poets had been seen individually in the Memory Harbour and invited to join the poetry group to promote their brain health. Each member still had the brain health challenge of planning and organising their time, getting to the group, beginning a new routine, meeting new people and learning names, as well as challenging their language skills to reflect and write.

We know that changes in memory impacts hugely on confidence and how a person navigates the world. Together, Poet Grace Wilentz and I created a programme that would take us out of the factual world, where changes in our brain are most challenged, to a world of feeling, opinion, reflection and creativity. And most importantly, hope.

Grace guided us through a close reading of a poem each week and created a quiet, calm, safe space for us to reflect on our feelings of the poem. From this reflective space, we wrote poems none of us thought we could write, which allowed us to see ourselves in a new way.

And therein lies the magic. That a diagnosis should never define how we see ourselves and what we believe we are capable of. We are more than that. We are people who have lived lives and embodied our stories. We can draw on our long-term memories and emotional memories to create poems. Our hearts and souls are intact and in this safe place every week, we poured them out and shared them with each other.

Changes in our brain does not limit a person from being creative, trying new things, making new friends and challenging ourselves. What does limit the person from achieving these things is not having access to skilled facilitators and a supportive environment.

The poems in this pamphlet show how with the right supports, the right space, trust and collaboration, our full selves, even the parts that are challenging us, can find their way onto the page and be celebrated.

Catherine Keogh, Senior Occupational Therapist
The Memory Harbour

Not many words will rhyme with white

Not many words will rhyme with white
and some of them are not polite
so they're the ones I didn't write.

(David)

A beautiful ball of yellow and gold

A beautiful ball of yellow and gold
rising up from the sea.
Nobody else seemed to notice,
it was only me.
Every commuter absorbed by their phones
as the Dart travelled along the way.
The beautiful yellow glow lit up the carriage.
Oh what a magnificent day.
I was sad that nobody noticed
the beautiful yellow orb
rising up from the ocean,
they were all so absorbed.
They had not a notion of the amazing show
that mother nature had put on display.
I often remember that mellow, yellow, day.

(Harriet)

Bring home the blackberries

Bring home the blackberries,
she said, to make a shortcrust pie.
And here I sit on the ground,
my body in whir
just about to cry.
Of course I had to climb the cliff
to pick the huge ones at the top.
Now here I am,
blackberries strewn around,
landing with a big plop,
hearing my mother's voice say
A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.

(Harriet)

Her hands are warm and welcoming

Her hands are warm and welcoming,
nails bitten as normal.
She carefully spreads the cream and jam
on her favourite fruit scone...
Sitting in her flower filled garden
inhaling their perfume
whilst listening to the Busy Bees at work
Shall I pour the tea?
I'm too busy enjoying
my cream and jam scone
to drink tea.

(Majella)

I lay in my garden

I lay in my garden
making pictures from clouds.
Remembering my mother
who had died in a shroud,
when out of nowhere flew
a green and white feather
to remind me of summer time
lying in heather.
Then I licked my fingers
from juicy black berry,
a voice saying you're so greedy,
go off to North Kerry.

(Nicky)

A cloud

A cloud
aloud with thunder
sparkling in the gloom.
And I, scared child of five years old
prayed it would end soon!

(David)

A Green Garden

I live near a garden so very green,
go out with my children to play,
what a scene.

Some dressed in bright colours,
others in green,
all blending together,
what a beautiful scene.

Green is the colour
that makes me feel calm,
enough even to sing the Lord's Psalm.
I'll end this ditty
and go cut my green grass,
so no one can say
I'm a bit of an ass.

(Nicky)

Hands old and worn

Hands old and worn
but musical in movement,
playing the organ for a service.
She is a constant in this gallery.
How can she live like this for so long?
There is no problem, it is her way.

(Anne)



Your small warm hands around my neck

Your small warm hands around my neck
awaiting to be caressed
lying on a golden sofa
sunshine hot on her arms.
Does this feel like Spain last week?
She said 'I love you Grandad'.

(Roger)

Soft, a heartbeat in his fingertips

Soft, a heartbeat in his fingertips,
smoothing the worry and laughter lines
with tenderness.

Peering through my soul's window,
like a bird watcher.

Can you feel that empathy in and for yourself?
Yes, but caged hard nuts and blue flashes
come with a pecking beak.

(Catherine)



Who gave me Covid?

Who gave me Covid?
My son did the test and it was positive
Everyone was sorry
No visitors allowed
Radio companion
Death count read out twice a day

(Mary)

The Day JFK was Shot

It seemed so far away,
as a fifteen year old schoolboy,
from an ordinary day
mowing the lawn.
And yet my parents seemed so shocked.
I realised that politics were more than local
and world events effect local events.

(Roger)



She was an icon

She was an icon
Should have been a Queen
I often wonder how it would have been
A beautiful lady
A shining star
Shine bright Diana
Shine bright

(Harriet)

The Candle in the Window

As we walked on the beach
all we could talk about was the vote,
how different Ireland would be
with a lady at the helm.
Couldn't wait to get back
to the car and hear the news.
Yes she did it, Mary Robinson,
Ireland's first lady president.
The Arás will be welcoming a woman.
Slight in stature,
well-educated lady,
full of promise and light
and hope for our future.
The human touch of our head of state
put a candle in the window,
an inviting light to anyone passing.

(Majella)

There's Nothing Holding you Back

In the chaos of toddler fun,
redundancy and grief,
we sat with chopped fruit,
bunny and voting cards.
Later came the shimmering,
bursting,
jumping,
effervescent pride.
A yes sticker,
my girl bouncing,
his surprised embrace.
His rights, the same
as mine, enshrined.

(Catherine)

Yellow Days

Yellow

As the sun was rising over the sea
yellow turning gradually to orange
shining on the yellow sail of my boat
and reflecting yellow onto the blue sea,
I thought how lucky I was
to be able to enjoy my time sailing
my yellow boat on the blue sea!

(Roger)

dlr Arts and Health Programme

The dlr/HSE Arts and Health Partnership Programme began in 2007. The programme supports creative, social, and cultural projects with local services, care settings and other partners in line with the Council and HSE's policies. It aims to support positive ageing, mental health and decrease social isolation in our County.

For more information contact:
arts@dlrcoco.ie or phone (01) 236 2759

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