

# Colin Shaddick's Festival blog



In 2009 Colin Shaddick, poet and eccentric was the writer in residence at the Appledore Book Festival. Besides attending many of the events, Colin wrote poems and a regular blog for the North Devon Journal. Here are some extracts. You can read the full blog with more of Colin's brilliant poems on [www.thisisnorthdevon.co.uk/newsblogs.html](http://www.thisisnorthdevon.co.uk/newsblogs.html)

Sunday, 27 September 2009

## Gonzo Dreams In Ol' Appledore (1)

*I enjoy catching snatches of conversations: not getting the complete picture. It creates inner tension and sets one's mind into detection mode.*

### My Paradise Lost (1)

beached window frame -  
letting in the sea, the mist  
and a curlew's cry

We can do it.  
We *can* do it.  
We can all write stuff we call poetry...  
at some level anyway.  
All we need is the freedom  
to experiment  
and make mistakes.  
Creation is the motivation  
to carry on.

" You cannot write and fill up a blank piece of paper unless you love what you're doing. You need time and space to develop."  
- Michael Morpurgo.

Luckily we live particularized lives  
and we all have experiences worthy of note.  
Nobody else could begin to imagine

what's held our own deepest thoughts.  
Every one of us has an exclusive insight  
into this, outwardly crazy, messed-up  
and slowing to a sticky end,  
old world of ours.

" What keeps us alive? What keeps us going? Well, you need a clear plan, a clear intention and a belief in yourself and a belief in what you are doing. At times you need to ask yourself, 'Is it worth hanging on? It's not all about dying, but about how many times you live.' " - Benedict Allen.

for a while the  
universe was balancing  
on my head

Poetry is about sharing one's world view,  
and I'm pleased to say  
that *my* poetry has often been described  
as 'honest,' and 'containing real values;  
not hype and pretentiousness.'

Apart from highlighting  
the Appledore Book Festival,  
I see my role as Writer-in-Residence  
as being, on the one hand...  
a kind of gentle demolition man,  
attempting to break down,  
or reduce, the many barriers  
that have been erected over many years  
by those bods  
who used to inhabit the stuffy,  
ivory-towered world of academia.

The problem is...  
there's still some building  
going on. Continued by others who,  
at readings up and down the country,  
regularly disappear up their own  
tight trouser legs,  
leaving their dwindling audiences  
befuddled, cold and neglected.

And on the other hand...  
as an encourager of the unsure:  
the ones who say, 'I can't do that.'

Poetry shouldn't be confined  
to the classroom, but be read and enjoyed  
in bars and on the streets too.  
Let's get it done!  
The remarkable gift of poetry  
(something created from language)  
is to enlarge all our imaginations.  
Let's start to think big!

"When I was bored in class, I used to look up at a poster on  
the wall. On the poster was Blake's poem, 'The Tyger'." -  
Michael Morpurgo.

a short silence -  
just a vapour trail  
linking clouds

*To be continued.*

Eccentrically.  
Colin.

**Monday, 28 September 2009**

## **Gonzo Dreams In Ol' Appledore (2)**

*I was driving down to Appledore and I was on edge. My eyes were constantly darting to the left, to the right, and up and down. I suppose you could describe my actions as manic! I had to be so careful: I didn't want to squash a jaywalking Peter Rabbit, or run-over a ruminating Rupert Bear! How on earth would I break the news to Mary Cadogan if I'd injured, or killed them?*

## **My Paradise Lost (2)**

checking-in  
at Coca-Cola Hotel -  
little land crab

I was glad to be there, head high  
in the freshening September haze,  
down by the cool, bird-lined  
and neatly pointed old stone quayside  
at people-packed Appledore...  
doing little,  
other than sitting quietly  
and dreamily deliberating  
on what I could write next.

I was unintentionally lending an ear  
to the low munching and mumbling  
a few ambling peacock-people were making,  
and to the distant tut-tut-tutting  
of small outboard motors  
complaining their weary way  
from left to right...  
and then from right to left.

"It takes about a year-and-a-half to write a book: twelve  
months to think about it and six months to write it. I like to  
get all the characters set firmly in my mind first. It's then like  
taking dictation when I write it down: like a 'False Memory.'" -  
Patrick Gale

A 'False Memory.' I love the sound of that.

I know Appledore pretty well.  
It's the sort of place  
where you can take the weight  
off your feet for a while and reflect  
on whatever you want to reflect upon,  
or talk to strangers, read a good book;  
maybe just take-in the striking views.  
Then again,  
you don't need to get involved  
in anything if you don't want to.

a small child  
holding on to a feather -  
learning to fly

I'd completed my stint of deep reflecting  
for one day and come up with the same ol'  
well-worn conclusion:  
'You gotta read more. The answer  
is in a book somewhere, and you ain't  
come nowhere near finding it yet.'

For some reason, the image of an old  
page marker of mine came to mind:  
a photograph of a creased Hawaiian maiden.  
She was lightly holding on to the neck  
of a brightly painted ukulele.

She sat there,  
like a beautiful rounded statue:  
grass skirted...  
leaning back on her heels,  
on soft, manicured grass  
under a shady palm.  
A thin strip of blue,  
which was the ocean  
(and I swear I could hear it)  
was the backdrop to her lovely smiling face.

The page marker was a favourite of mine.  
I bought it on Waikiki Beach  
from a pretty girl wearing little more  
than a couple of coconut shells.  
A tourist trap, but...  
I always keep that page marker handy  
when I'm reading.  
As I said, I'm always searching  
for something else.  
Well, that time it must have been the period  
when I was searching for...  
Paradise.

How stupid was that?  
What the hell!  
It was the Appledore Book Festival  
and I was there.  
That was all that mattered.  
If there was such a place as Paradise,  
surely it was to be found there  
in those narrow twisting streets?

I'm sure I'm going to find it this time!

Surrounding me were authors, readers,  
performers and books!  
Books, books and more books!  
Yes, this is Paradise enough for me alright.

" You can never get your writing perfect. We can all improve.  
Somebody always knows the facts that you don't." - Kate  
Furnivall.

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**Tuesday, 29 September 2009**

## **Cold Step Notes: Appledore**

*I spent most of last night propped up in a chair in the sitting room, lungs burning and fighting to get a decent breath. I couldn't sleep properly. I could only drift for short periods. I travelled far though. I travelled beyond Australia, to a place where everyone swam in total darkness and communicated by tapping their fingers on what I imagined, was tiny drum-like instruments. As yet, I don't know what this night journey was all about. Maybe I'll never find out, but maybe I will.*

"Sometimes to make a difference you have to go on a journey you never expected to take... The journey being the point and not the destination... Be the change you want to see." - Barbara Haddrill.

"First they ignore you,  
then they laugh at you,  
then they fight you,  
then you win."

Mahatma Gandhi.

### **Gonzo Notes From A Cold Step In Appledore**

There will always be a perimeter:  
a place where the weak will be pushed and forsaken.  
Or a corner where one will not be noticed as much  
as any new arrival in the pack.

As a kid I sat on many a cold step -  
It all started outside our own back door.  
I'd be put out there 'til I stopped crying...  
and I didn't always know why I cried.

As I'd sit out there, on the step, sobbing,  
I'd hear laughter and talking from inside.  
I was sure that everyone was laughing at me.  
I felt as if I was the outsider.

After a while, the door became my shield.  
It was solid, green and reliable.  
I could lean against it and gain support.  
I had no fear of it bursting open.

That old back door would never let me down.  
Once, I stood up and kicked it damned hard,  
but it didn't make any difference.  
It absorbed my frustrations and stood firm.

Even now, the sounds of muffled laughter  
can make my blood run cold. Never,  
I'll never shake off those old memories.  
I'll always be the one who's looking in.

I can sit on any icy step and  
get some comfort out of doing just that.  
On a cold step, with my back to a door ...  
Yep, it was as good as it got for me, then.

But lately, I've been thinking about things:  
about them Pearly Gates. Will they open  
when I get to rest my back against them?  
Maybe I'll just have to look through the bars.

"Leaving is the hardest part." - Barbara Haddrill.

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**/Wednesday, 30 September 2009**

## **Strong Coffee: My Midnight Muse**

*I needed to stay awake. The aches and pains that come after sleeping in a chair are almost as painful as the unforgiving cough that forced me to sit up all night - in forced exile - in the first place.*

*Nights can be so long too. Luckily, I was awake enough to read through the Appledore Book Festival events list. It was then that I came to realize just how many wonderful speakers and events I'd missed. Not because I didn't want to listen to them, but because there just wasn't enough time. Please forgive me:*

*Have I Got (Devon) News For You, Peter Christie, Gardeners Question Time, David Carter, Tanya Landman, Victoria Glendenning, Jazz Evening, Tania Crosse, Charlie Elder, Sam Llewellyn and Commander Ade Orchard, RN.*

Charles Kingsley Called Appledore a "Little White Fishing Village." With its crazy maze of narrow streets and little fishermen's cottages dating back to the Elizabethan age, it surely is a living, breathing picture-postcard community.

**A Few Of Appledore's Poetic Street Names. (As they**

**arrived at 5 am.)**

Odun Place  
summons  
Irsha Street

Pitt Hill  
descends  
The Path

Long Lane  
surveys  
Marine Parade

Backfield  
circumnavigates  
The Quay

One End Street  
jabbers  
Churchill Way

Yeo Drive  
remembers  
Primrose Lane

Staddon Road  
calling  
Bude Street

The Mount  
on  
Western Avenue

Vernons Lane  
asks  
Myra Court

Tomouth Road

tries  
Mariners Way

Alpha Place  
chooses  
Meeting Street

Gibbs Lane  
marches  
Torridge Road

Kingsley Avenue  
strolling  
Whitehouse Lane

Myrtle Street  
loves  
Ivy Court

Scott Avenue  
sings  
Jubilee Road

Green Lane  
shouts  
Polywell!

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**Thursday, 1 October 2009**

## **Appledore Library: 150 Years Old This Year!**

### **A Literary Genre Poem**

*Gonzo dream in Appledore Library*

Detective  
Graphic Novels  
Mystery -  
'My Twin Was A Russian Spy'

Fantasy  
Court Room Drama  
Memoir -  
'Avoiding Accidents With One's Fly'

Fiction  
Christian Classics  
Noir -  
'I Got Them Deviant Low Down Blues'

Romance  
Autobiography  
Travel -  
'An Alien Ran Off With My Shoes'

Drama  
Indigenous People  
Erotica -  
'Body Painting With Home Made Jam'

Forensics  
Science Fiction  
Folklore -  
'The Sex Life Of An Appledore Clam'

Poetry  
Romantic Comedy  
Horror -  
'Coping With A Troublesome Niece'

Westerns  
Picture Books  
Suspense -  
'I Was Released By The Leith Police'

Taxidermy  
Sports  
Whodunit -  
'Let's Start Another Filthy War'

And Fortunately  
the last one that I've got  
is entitled:  
'Avoiding The 'List Poet' Bore'

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**Friday, 2 October 2009**

## **Fishermen's Cottages In Appledore**

### **I Listen To What You Say.**

*I've really enjoyed Appledore with its creative and friendly people! My time as Writer-in-Residence has been an experience I would have hated to have missed. I have talked to so many people and listened very closely to the tales they had to tell.*

### **Fishermen's Cottages**

You won't find  
many local fishermen  
in Appledore's  
fishermen's cottages:  
that's what we say.

They've been sold on  
to lots of well-off people  
who weren't born here,  
but up the road, away.

For years and years

we've been trading  
and fishing.  
Now it's nearly all gone -  
Us locals are wishing  
the old days would return  
to what it was, back-along.

Not back to the days  
of that 'Hubba the Dane':  
he wanted to burn  
the whole place down,  
but to those times  
when you knew the names  
of most of the people  
who walked around.

Still, one good thing  
this Book Festival's done  
I suppose, is to draw in folk  
whether it's wet,  
or we've got a bit of sun.

We've had some well-known  
people down here, you know.  
They come to perform:  
reading from their books,  
or putting on little plays.

Some have been back here  
several times now.  
We're even getting to know them  
by name...  
Just like the good ol' days!

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**Monday, 5 October 2009**

# The Book Sellers Of Appledore

## Thank You Appledore

*My time as Writer-in Residence at the Appledore Book Festival has finally run out. It was an experience I'll never forget. I met so many kind and creative people and made a lot of new friends too. The Festival could not have run so smoothly without meticulous planning by the Committee members and the hard work of the Volunteers. Well done everyone!*

September swaggered in,  
holding on to its pledges  
and settled  
without fan-fare,  
to share  
its treasure-filled time.

A stretch was offered  
for me to take  
so, without too much thought,  
took it of course  
and was soon strolling  
the narrow streets  
and many rises  
of ol' twisty Appledore.

I slowly breathed-in  
the invigorating whiff  
of freshly brewed coffee,  
pasties, beer  
fish... and books.  
All this  
and the fresh tang of salt  
on the bell-ringing tide.

They were there okay,  
protruding proudly  
from plenty of pockets,  
or held lovingly in local hands

and teetering perilously tall  
on tables.

Books! Books! Books!  
Books that drew me  
and offered me back my youth  
(if only for a fleeting moment) -  
O, what would I have become  
without those crazy,  
literate, jazzed-up Beats?  
New books are great:  
just fine,  
but if you close your eyes  
you just don't know they're around.

As far as I'm concerned,  
a book's gotta smell right.  
Yes, weird maybe,  
but some old books, to me,  
are triggers to the remembered summers  
of the 50s: adventurous,  
new and blisteringly hot;  
raging like raw Rockabilly  
on a Memphis radio -  
Promising us something new  
and exciting.

I slipped out of my 'Sun Sessions' reverie  
and felt that I was being clocked  
by various writers and broadcasters.  
They were gazing out  
from a multitude of posters.  
Then...  
from the corner of my eye,  
I saw... William-bloomin'-Blake!  
Yep, ol' visionary Blake...  
in Appledore!

He was nuzzled-up  
(neat and cozy like)  
next to that other crazy ol' traveller,  
Jack Kerouac.  
Two spiritual beings  
who'd made it big.

They were leaning there,  
doing nothing: speechless,  
spine next to perfect spine,  
like a couple of resting Angels.  
Two towering pillars  
of the literary community,  
still demanding attention  
without bawling,  
or using billious colours.  
Not there in the flesh of course,  
but they were there,  
just the same.

They were both looking a little...  
a little ragged around the edges:  
weary from loving  
and some fighting, I suppose.

This is what I like  
about old paperbacks -  
They mirror life for real!

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