

## **BHAC 2019 Sussex Poetry Competition**

Runner up – Veronique Batten

### **The Rookery**

I sit on a wooden seat  
Where you never sat  
But where you will always be now  
Your name proudly etched  
Scored deeply into seasoned wood  
Scored deeply in my heart  
Since nineteen sixty seven - since I last touched you

You loved that place, I loved that person  
You love this person, I love this place.  
We trod flagstones together - crossed the babbling rivulet  
Spanned the chasm of generations - shared one another

I sit here in your place - scanning landscapes you loved  
Showing the man beside me - Unknown to you -  
Those joys you shared with me.  
He has only pictures, places and my heartful of memories  
To know you

Did we watch tadpoles wriggle  
Smell heavy-scented primulas  
As we trudged uphill to catch a bus  
Licking sun-warmed cornets ?  
You - borrowing my ears  
To catch each phrase of shared time

Come beat me playing tiddlywinks  
Suck bitter lemons, let the sherbert popple our tongues  
While I touch the Omo-soft whiteness of your hair.  
Tuck me into your bolster-puffed bed  
Wrap me in cotton-wool safety  
And I will bring you skuttles of coal  
As you press three-penny bits in my palm

And when the 37 bus hoots outside  
We will clasp our memories together  
Relive adventures  
Secrets never to be told of  
Flesh coloured corsets drying on the bath,  
Sardine and tomato fishpaste,  
China dogs and hospital beds,  
A shared nakedness of loving