

Two poems by Harry Matlay, submitted to Positive Images Festival Poetry 2023

1.

“Swanswell Pool, in Autumn”

Low clouds are relentlessly pursued
across grey autumn skies, high above
the medieval Swanswell Pool.

A carpet of multicoloured dead leaves
shift uneasily along the ground, chased
by chilled, autumnal winds.

A lone, widowed swan stands defiantly
on its small island, motionless in self
imposed, solitary exile.

Occasionally, an aged female Muscovy
duck joins the grieving swan, keeping at
a safe, respectful distance.

A mass of wild ducks and Canada geese
parade up and down the crinkled surface
of the life giving pool.

In a corner, under the great weeping willow,
an old fisherman sits patiently, intent upon
catching a phantom carp.

Small groups of environmental volunteers
gather up various bits of discarded items,
keeping the pool user friendly.

2.

”A Walk Along Coventry Canal”

Once a week, I undertake my environmentally friendly
duty of walking along Coventry canal. It is an enjoyable
and useful task, picking up litter along the meandering,
well trodden towpath. Occasionally, I meet fishermen
and boat owners, and we pause briefly, to chat about
environmental aspects and challenges. It is impressive
how many people still care about the canal and its vicinity.

Resident swans and sundry water birds watch peacefully as
I trespass, at leisure, across their territory. There are many
features to enjoy, old and new, and the day passes quickly.

In the evening, I call my collection partner, who takes over
the litter bags and delivers me safely home, to a welcoming
dinner, a dram of Scotch whisky, and a well deserved rest.