

STONE BY STEPPING STONE

***From 'landfill' to 'lapwing'
requires more than a dip in the alphabet,
more than just a leap of faith
yet it begins
and it begins not letter by letter
but hedge by fattening hedge.***

***It begins as small as a bird table
and grows as wide as a field, as long as a ridge.
It begins amongst foxgloves and figwort,
in a morning of meadowsweet
and though no wild boar witness it
it is noted by hairstreak and peregrine,
by badger and owl.***

***It begins stone by stepping stone
and who would have thought such stones
could be engineered and sown?
Who would have thought
they could be dreamt, mapped and moulded
into more than fancy, more than symbol?***

***Still, it begins. From Frodsham to Bulkeley Hill.
From corridor to green corridor
a land found and refashioned
reclaims itself and swells until each corridor
is no longer measured by the wing span of a hawk
but by the circumference of its flight.***

***Born of a glacial shift –
a sandstone ridge,
red raw with promise,
skirts hill fort and castle.
A raven hunches like age
against the gathering mist.***

***Put an ear to the earth,
hear a seed splitting with new life.
Cast an eye to the hills,
see elms able again to stretch and touch fingers.
Woodland and heathland –
all are a heartland
and it is a heart that beats from Beacon Hill
to Bickerton and beyond.***

***It is a heart thought still,
jumpstarted by other hearts:
by landlord and farmer,
by owner and tenant,
by craftsman and labourer,
by the you and me we call a community.***

***It is a heart that drums
in the small frame of newt,
the slick casing of otter,
the sensual hide of deer
and grows louder,
like the echo of those lost skylarks
who went with the grassland
but now sing of recovery, sing of return.***

***John Lindley, Cheshire Poet Laureate, May 2004
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