

Quiz master Arthur, head chef Gill and walk leader Dave relax after an eventful AGM which featured, for the first time, orienteering, climbing instruction and pot-holing, with Kossie (from Manchester) as ace auctioneer helping the legendary Sock Exchange make over £80 for club funds! N.B. The active ingredient in Gill's lovingly demolished Thorpe Farm ice-cream remains a mystery...



red rope: as recommended by surreal sheep

thorpe farm agm 2011

This was the first RR trip I've been on so I didn't know what to expect by way of comfort or people. The gossip on London walks had been that I might be in for an difficult time. On the Saturday and Sunday, there were a variety of activities on offer during the day, from caving, climbing and walking or visiting a local pub to watch sports TV!

I have always wanted to climb, so I joined the climbing group going to Stanage Edge, the largest and most impressive of the gritstone edges. The group divided, with the more experienced climbers going further on – and one coming back later covered in bloody grazes from head to foot – while Colin and Chris generously agreed to use much of their climbing time to show me how to climb two ascents graded 'difficult'.

They were the ideal people to help a first timer get to grips with climbing basics and do some real climbing. Despite managing to forget how to tie a rope almost immediately I was shown, they never lost their patience and were quietly encouraging of my slow ascent. I'm still basking in the glow of achievement after finally climbing some real rocks and thinking of how I can get more experience whilst living in central London. The brave souls who tried caving for the first time were equally pleased with the tuition they received.

On the Sunday, I went on a walk and found out from Humphrey why he wanted wicking underwear to be on the route card. It turned out to be

werner ullah

more than a personal peccadillo! There are definite benefits in terms of comfort and body temperature which I had not understood. This raised for me the issue of how you learn how to walk and climb safely with RR – the general attitude that we are all adults who've signed away our rights and are on our own isn't good enough.

The main meeting was a little trying; the format of deciding policy by motions lends itself to adversarial dialogue, even when there were no serious differences between those 'for' and 'against'. Some people got more stuck into the motions, and those who disagreed with them, than was merited. Several people mentioned that this was nothing compared to recent AGMs hut discussions!

Saturday evening started with a terrific meal, followed by an entertaining quiz and an even more entertaining bring and buy (the 'Sock Exchange') conducted by the inimitable Kos - imagine John Cooper Clarke presenting a funkier Antiques Roadshow. Come back next year, Kossie!

The bunkhouse was basic, but adequate, as there were fewer people than the bed spaces we had booked. Getting to know some of the other London RRers better was also well worthwhile. **WA**

It was good to hear that membership has increased to 320. The club has booked Thorpe Farm, which is in the Peaks, near Hathersage, for this year's AGM, so please bear it in mind, particularly if you could lead an activity or would like to cook a meal for 40 famished outdoor types! Ed.



tyndrum caravan: use it or lose it! richard toon

You may know that we only have until December 2012 to use the caravan in Tyndrum. We've been given notice to move by then, as has everyone else on the site. We are looking for an alternative. So now is the time to make the most of what is a fantastic facility!

Everything is working well at the moment: hot shower; the best drying room in Scotland; microwave oven; lots of heaters, etc., etc. It sleeps 8 easily and around 12 at a push. Bigger groups could overflow into the bunk house on the same site – pre-booking necessary and it's around £14 p.p.p.n. compared with our £4 p.p.p.n. for LMC and Red Rope members in the caravan.

I was there recently, arriving by train at Tyndrum Lower station. It's all of a couple of hundred metres to the 'van from the train! If you caught the overnight sleeper from southern England to Fort William, you'd get off at Tyndrum Upper, about a 20 minute walk. The two rail lines give access to a fantastic number of great walks and mountain bike rides – just look at the map!

Glencoe, for climbing or skiing, is about half an hour by car. You can make the car park for the big stuff on Ben Nevis in exactly an hour. There is plenty to do south of Tyndrum, if you come by car, on the way home.

Remember that it's first-come-first-served so get there early! Mid-week I've never known there to be many people there. The odd weekend might be busy, especially if there is a fixed LMC meet - check on the LMC website: lancsmc.org.

Our trusty hut warden is Dave Lomas: david_karenlomas@btinternet.com. It's a heck of a long way from deepest Yorkshire to the 'van, so Dave can only get there every few months to do any essential repairs, so if the bog-roll runs out, buy some, do any small jobs that need doing and keep the 'van clean.

MOST IMPORTANTLY, drain the water properly over the winter months – we were frozen up and then had a mega burst last winter. There is a pub with meals and an even better eating place a few minutes walk away, as well as the well-known Green Welly Shop – you can get everything you could possibly want there (OK, sorry no ice screws!)

So, come on folks, let's use it before we lose it!

r.toon@talk21.com



from top: the Tyndrum caravan, near Crianlarich, then the Loft and the Solitary, both near Blea Tarn, between the Langdales. These are the Lancashire M.C. huts which we can now use in a similar way as the LMC's members. See over for the latest on the Beddgelert hut.

red rope news - all the stuff, none of the fluff!



beddgelert hut

Here is photographic evidence that the Beddgelert LMC/Red Rope hut is being built! A group of RRs on the January Bristol trip saw it near the Sygun Copper Mine Museum: for such an inauspicious sight it created great excitement! John Toon, LMC treasurer, said in December, "Planning problems have been resolved and the building team are gung-ho for an early start on construction in the new year". Red Rope has now handed over our £10,000 contribution.

a message from bristol...

As you may know, the RR website is being redesigned. We are looking for 10-15 high quality, inspiring images to rotate on the front page. Can you help out?

We want photos which represent the diverse range of exciting activities our members take part in, such as summer and winter walking and climbing, camping, skiing, canoeing etc. We are also keen to appeal to a varied demographic, and as such would like to have pictures on the front page representing both sexes, all age groups, and a range of ethnicities.

Send your photos to mdemenis@hotmail.com

Thanks, Mike Demenis

Mike is one of the Bristol group who have been given responsibility for using the £1000 which the AGM agreed should be spent on a new website. The design will be done by professionals who will be commissioned after the group and the National Committee agree on what is required. Quite a lot of technical work has already been done by the previous 'webdev' party, so hopefully the new model will be operational fairly soon. Bristol RR welcome fab photos and ace ideas!

reduced transport charges

Since trip transport rates have been linked to petrol costs, the charges have risen considerably. The NC have decided that these had become higher than was necessary to cover drivers' costs. An ad-hoc set of reduced charges was introduced last year, with a definitive set of new rates promised for 2012. The new formula for calculating charges takes account of changing petrol prices, but the contribution towards maintenance remains fixed (at least for the time being!). The ratio of charges across the bands has not changed and the payments to drivers are still based on the E Band charge. The new matrix of rates, which are in general slightly lower than those introduced last year, can be found on the club web-site here: <http://redrope.gn.apc.org/resource/trip/revise%20trip%20travel%20charges.pdf>.

hello campers!

Smaller camp sites (e.g. farms) sometimes open only around the summer school holiday period and the late May half term. This is to avoid bureaucratic problems, because if they open for more than sixty days in a year they have to have a licence from the local council.

However, if a club wanting to make a booking has obtained a 'Camping Exemption Certificate' the camp site or farm can allow them to camp at any time outside these periods without any fear of hassle from the Council. The certificate, issued by Natural England under the Public Health Act, 1936, briefly confirms that the club concerned are experienced campers who know what they are doing and won't annoy the neighbours!

Red Rope has now been granted a Camping Exemption Certificate. If you should want to book a camp site and find the site owner says they can only allow the booking if you have one, you can get a copy of the Red Rope's shiny new certificate from Don Kinnibrugh:

ramblers@redrope.org.uk

bulletin

Many thanks to all contributors. However, it has been a struggle to land enough material for this edition. The bulletin is what you make it, so please be more forthcoming in future! The next deadline is the end of June. Cheers, David Symonds:

bulletin@redrope.org.uk

review: the con-dems and the countryside

('The Natural Choice: Securing the Value of Nature' (CM8082) – Dept. of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, June 2011)

After listening to a lacklustre speech in the House of Commons, Churchill once remarked: "That speech contained every cliché except 'God is love' and 'Please adjust your dress before leaving!'"

A reading of the Government's White Paper on the natural environment, published last June, leaves one with a similar feeling. The Con-Dems will, we are told, 'move from net biodiversity loss to net gain' by 'supporting healthy, well-functioning ecosystems and coherent ecological networks.' (One wonders if Environment Secretary C. Spelman really understood the goals she was setting!)

Next, the Government will set up 'an independent Natural Capital Committee to advise on 'the state of natural capital in England', and a 'business led Ecosystem Markets Task Force will review the trade in green goods and the market for sustainable natural services.' (The what?)

Besides setting up a lot of new organisations – e.g. Local Nature Partnerships (LNPs) and Nature Improvement Areas (NIAs) apparently to do work currently done by local councils and existing conservation agencies, the White Paper promises 'a new, voluntary approach to biodiversity offsets' – whatever that means!

All this, however, is of little interest to Red Ropers until one comes to the chapter on 'Reconnecting People and Nature by Improving Access to the Countryside.' Coming just after last April's cuts to councils' rights of way teams and public transport, the White Paper claims it wants to 'improve and extend' the footpath and bridleway network, and 'to see a shift away from people using cars to ... get to beauty spots, with more people using public transport ...'

Government policy statements sometimes give away their real intentions more by what they omit to mention than by what they actually say. Wrapped up as it is in a blanket of eco-speak, the Paper completely fails to mention the existing legal provision for access on foot to wild open spaces, in particular the CROW Act 2000 and the 2009 Marine and Coastal Access Act. The implementation under the latter of a long-distance path round the coast of England – requiring a timetable for opening up sections of the coast each year - has currently stalled, and the government refuses to say whether or not they will allow it to continue.

And, as the BMC pointed out in their response, the Government have simply ignored the importance of 'access to our moorlands, mountains, wild spaces, cliffs and rock faces' as a recreational experience. (With so many old Etonians in the Government, it seems unlikely that they could have been unaware of the health benefits of moorland walking, with or without a shotgun!)

Also wrapped in eco-bull**** is a brief announcement of the Government's proposed changes to the planning system, subsequently set out in the draft National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The aim of this is to promote economic growth by allowing developers' projects (industrial or housing) to receive planning permission, provided they can be shown to be 'sustainable'. Since no operational definition of 'sustainability' or 'sustainable development' exists, there is in many cases no way permission can be refused! Many people and organisations have spoken out against these 'reforms', including the director-general of the National Trust, Fiona Reynolds, who said they threaten the places that are special to people the length and breadth of England.

A year ago the Government's proposal to privatise the Forestry Commission was greeted with such a storm of opposition that they were forced to back down and hand over the decision on the future of our woodlands to an independent committee. This time they are being more circumspect. If their intention is to backtrack on countryside protection, and access gains, this is at least partially concealed, or otherwise justified, by vacuous ecology-babble. Watch this space.

don kinniburgh rr ramblers and campaigns rep.



art, life and a palette knife

david symonds

The degree of interest in the David Hockney exhibition of work depicting the East Yorkshire Wolds, currently at the Royal Academy, would seem to show that there is still an audience for both painting and landscape.

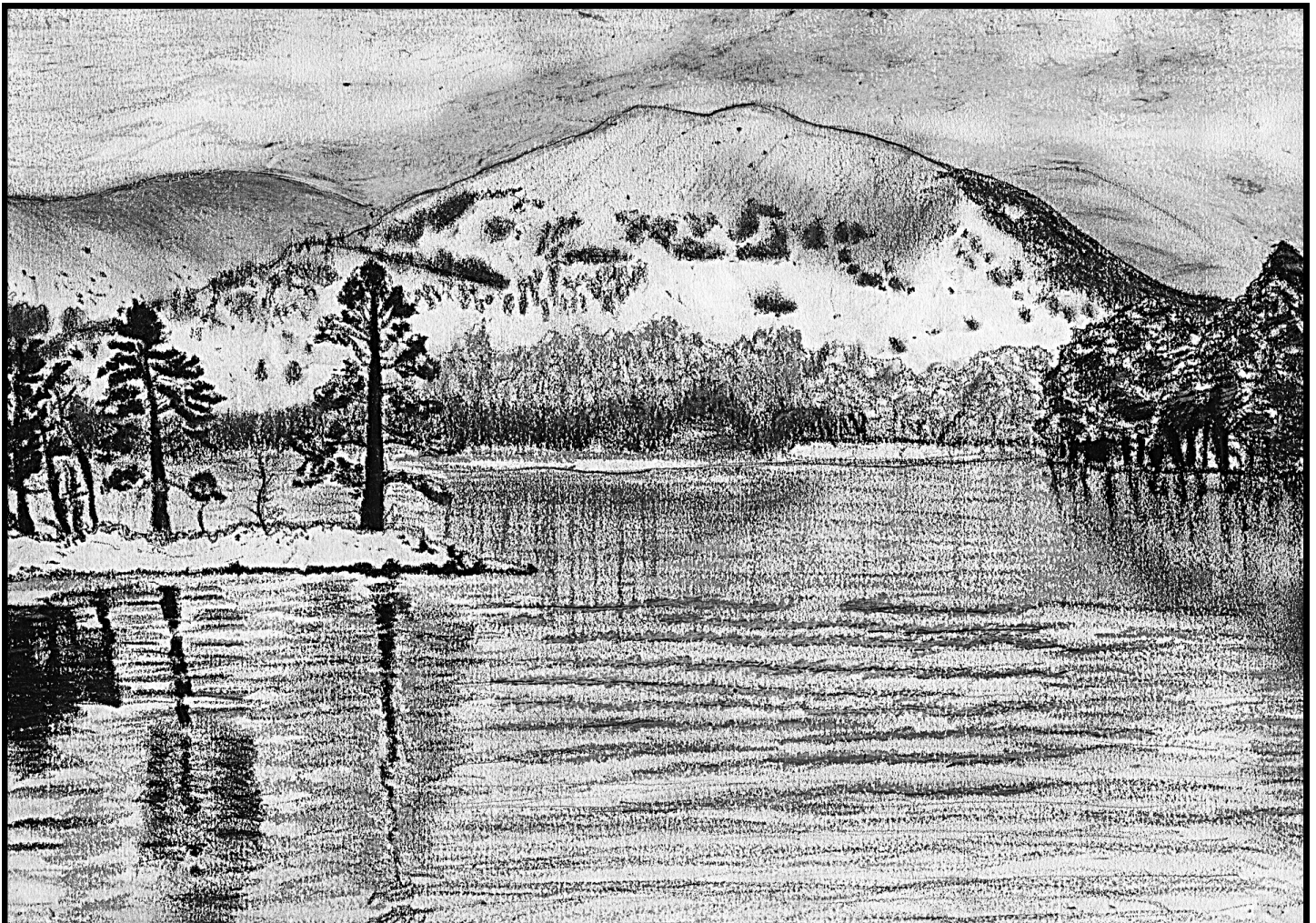
Hockney is a very popular artist, approaching 'national treasure' status, so any new show of his would draw a crowd; perhaps the idea of a former 'enfant terrible' taking on an apparently old-fashioned genre has an appeal in itself. A simpler explanation is that we expect to be able to appreciate and enjoy a talented artist's interpretation of a scenic, secluded area of the countryside. However, that does not answer a bigger question: why do we find such views, and being in the outdoors, so compelling in the first place?

In 'Landscape and Western Art' Malcolm Andrews summarises a variety of explanations, primarily that we learn to appreciate landscapes as part of our culture, going all the way back to the concept of the Garden of Eden. Another proposal is that an idyllic landscape suggests what our ancestors would have considered a highly desirable environment for settlement and that we still retain a 'race memory' which values that kind of setting.

John Constable said that he had never seen anything in nature which was ugly. John Ruskin was critical of Claude's habit of 'improving' scenes by dropping in the occasional ruined castle for romantic effect. This was the same Ruskin who had trees planted in the grounds of 'Brantwood', his country house, in order to frame the view of the Coniston fells! How much does the notion of the picturesque - an interesting term in this context - affect our response to the natural environment? Before the Enlightenment mountainous areas were often thought of as demonic, certainly not tourist attractions.

So what is it that attracts us to walking and climbing in these environments? One obvious explanation is that it returns us to the physical and 'natural' when many of us lead sedentary, urban lives. We select areas with great views. Is this to do with the same visual sense that we use in a gallery, or even in choosing combinations of clothes? Aesthetics vary greatly from culture to culture, which seems to support the 'learnt response' argument, but it's hard not to think that something more basic is happening when we lurch into the great outdoors! **DS**

Illustration by Emma Carroll. Emma and Bernadine, whose work is on the back page, both attend Archbishop Blanch School, Liverpool.



national trips 2012

This year 23 members benefited from a 10% discount on February trip bookings made three months in advance, so if you're thinking of joining a National Trip this year get yourself booked on so it is in the bag to look forward to! These week-long trips relax the pace of exploring an area and are a great way to get to know members from other regions. We are often able to meet requests to travel by public transport if trains can be booked early and offer a full refund on nightly charges for cancellations made up to one month before the trip.

Easter in Crianlarich, April 7th – 14th

Not so far to travel to this one and accessible by public transport, Inverardran Cottage is a comfortable and recently extended hut described on the website as 'possibly the best appointed mountaineering hut in Scotland', see www.ochils.com. Next to a train station, on a bus route, with a hotel, pub, cafe and shop this trip will appeal to those looking for variety. It's a good base for Munros as well as lower level walks/biking with the West Highland Way nearby. Possible excursions include train trips to Fort William, Oban and across Rannoch Moor.

Contact jjdickie@hotmail.com

The Skye Trip, May 26th – June 2nd

The Glen Brittle War Memorial Hut www.gbmh.co.uk is another comfortable and spacious hut with great facilities and the majestic Cuillin ridge rising above it. Low level walks from Glenbrittle are limited so this trip will appeal to experienced mountaineers or those keen to extend their mountain skills. Walk, scramble or climb on the most challenging mountains in the UK.

Contact sherry.macliver@blueyonder.co.uk

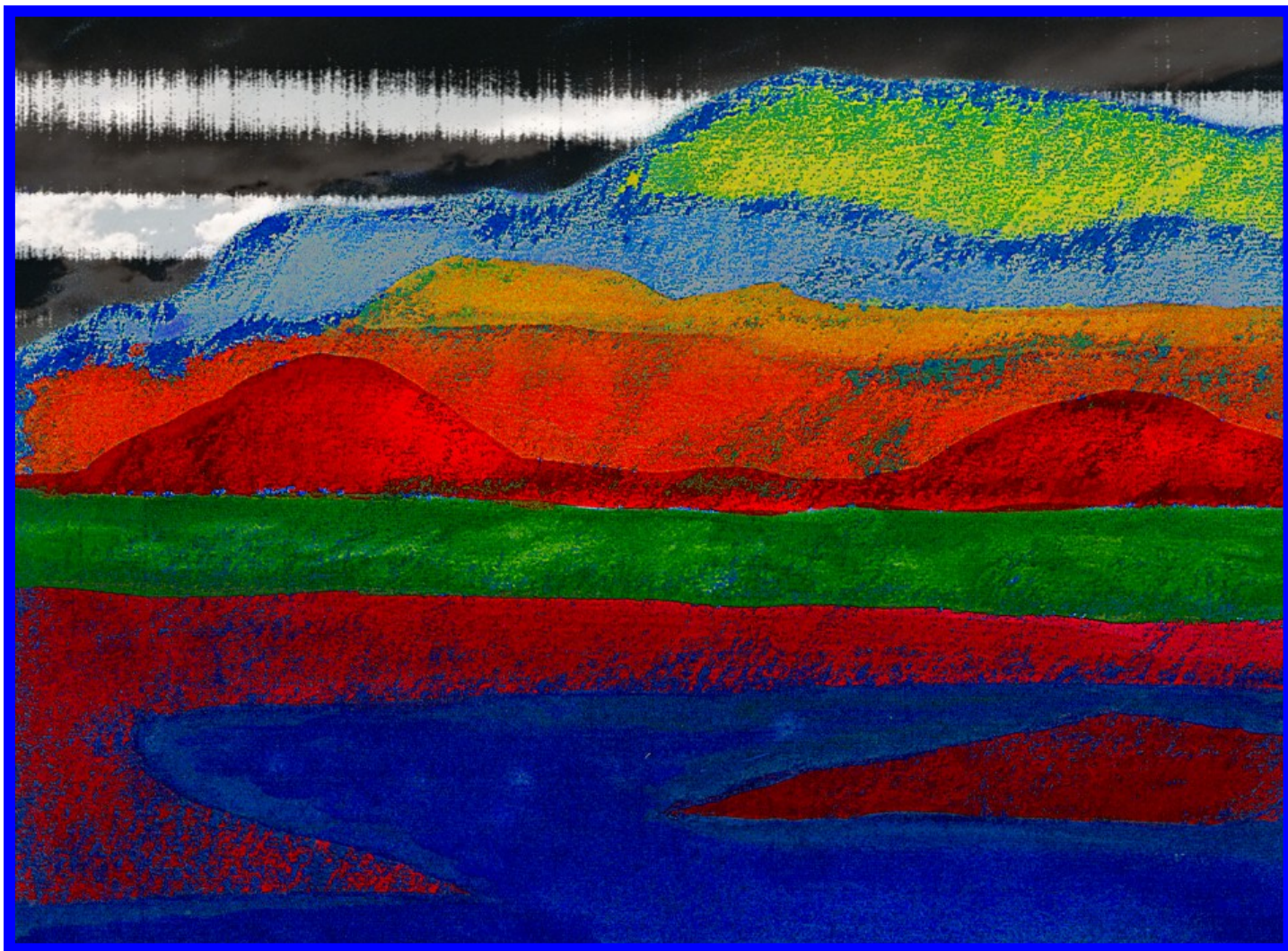
Lake District, August 25th – Sept 1st

This two-centre trip is a repeat from last year but with one change of location. It offers 5 nights at Bowderstone in beautiful Borrowdale followed by 3 nights at George Starkey in Patterdale, a large hut with all mod cons. Walks at all levels, scrambling, climbing, swimming, boating and mountain biking from both huts without the need for cars.

becky bates



Inverardran Cottage, Crianlarich. Places still available, book soon!



Winter sky

Early evening and the sky smoulders
on the hill-top – cadmium orange,
rose madder, poppy-red – a shovelful
of starlings thrown, like coals,
towards the blaze.

A wind douses the flames with crow-
wings and night takes over – raw umber,
sepia, lamp-black – hooding the sky
till, one by one, stars pierce holes
with pins of light.

Moira Andrew has kindly written this poem for the bulletin in response to Bernadine Nirenga's illustration. She has a new collection of poems, 'Firebird', from Indigo Dreams Publishing, at a very reasonable £7.99! This will be her fourth collection and contains her poem 'Night's Spy-glass' which won last year's Welsh Poetry Competition. Moira was a teacher and lecturer with a particular interest in promoting a creative approach to the teaching of literacy. She is now semi-retired and playing an active role in Cornwall's literary life.

Late February

First blue day of the year,
grape hyacinths splashed
across grey gardens, high sweet
birds, sky trying on springtime
silks, wind-flowers scattered,
like shadows, in corners.

Daffodils, 95p

They open
paper petals
like bright butterflies
trapped in the corner
of the room.

Their buttered
pouting mouths
kiss-kiss the air with
promises of spring, cheap
at the price.

Moira Andrew