

## BUXTON POETRY COMPETITION 2017



### 2017 winners

#### Open Category

##### First Prize

Camomile Tea  
by Peter Burgham

It happened overnight, out of nowhere.  
The doctors were puzzled. It was many months  
before we saw you again in the office,  
light duties. You'd sit quietly at your old desk

like a stranger on a train gazing out of the window.  
You'd pass invoices to Jean in accounts and fix  
her printer. You'd do crosswords at lunchtime  
and chat to Dave about the weather.

Whenever we passed in the corridor I'd say hello,  
you'd stare for just a moment as if  
trying to fathom a shape in the shadows  
then you'd potter along to file statements.

As winter deepened, we yearned for a sight  
of the first snowdrops. Like a patrol  
of plucky soldiers venturing out, risking  
ambush from the morning frost.

That day when Kev forgot his wallet and  
quipped: *'I'll forget my own name next'*  
we caught our breath, but you smiled,  
a thin smile, the first shoot of spring.

And when the auditor made her annual visit  
you remembered her name, you remembered  
she liked camomile tea, you talked about herbs.  
The dew sparkled on the quivering grass.

But then one day your mind got lost  
in the fog and you didn't turn up for work.  
Jean rang, but your answer  
was like a paper fluttering in the wind.

We wait for the snowdrops, John,  
we file documents, we tidy our desks.

**Second Place** – Joe Caldwell, *When I Wake Up In Southampton Travelodge*

**Third Place** – Marion Bond, *Rude Awakening*

**Highly Commended** – Roger Elkin, *Waking, I turn to see you slipping into your jeans ...*

**Commended** – Helen Storey, *Street Life*