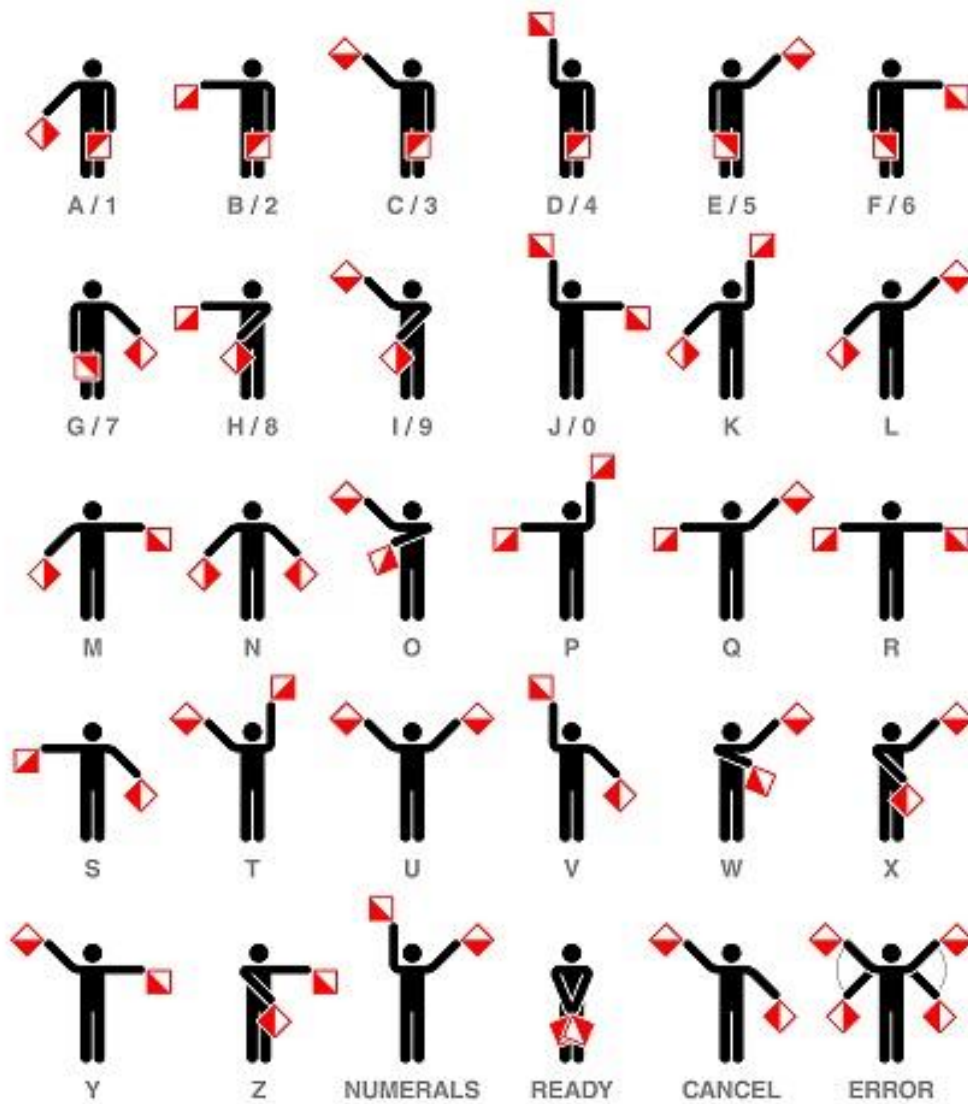


FINDING THE RIGHT WORDS



A PK LIST PROJECT

EDITED BY JIM BENNETT

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WRITERS PROFILES

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JIM BENNETT

the phone call

I press the digits for the familiar number
and to my surprise get a ring tone
I only tried it because well who knows why
but in the day no more than four rings
and my mother with her phone voice would answer
not today though it carries on ringing

I imagine it ringing fifty years ago
echoing around the well-worn furniture
out into the kitchen across the hall
into the parlour best room in the house
kept clean and quiet for visitors
still no one answers

I wonder if the wallpaper has changed
what happened to the big tree in the garden
I used to climb a rope tied to a branch
and my father once tied one end of a hammock
to it and the other end to the fence
then I would lie and read swinging

and sometimes I heard a distant phone ring
the phone is still ringing no answer
but it is heard upstairs where my grandmother slept
and where aunty May came to stay
bringing the statues and pictures
that were on the landing

silent observers of our coming and going
whatever happened to all those things
to all those people and to all the years between
the phone stops ringing no one answered
now the silence is like the sound of the ocean
a distant breath of wind a train passing in the night

DOMINIC BOND

6:43pm

soz hun gunna be a l8 1 x

she has another glass
sniffs burnt garlic which mingles
with vape smoke and deepens the air

we'll do Lisbon x

she throws away peelings
turns up the volume and sings the words
deep from her throat

I love you x

she pokes the lamb
the potatoes aren't done yet
there is a need for a gravy

nite x

she turns on silence mode
kale softens in a steam bath
losing its flavour.

LESLEY BURT

Look again and again

Art is not what you see but what you make others see (Degas)

Van Gogh, says Hockney, writes that
Japanese people seek contrasts in taste –
such as salted sweets and fried ices –

believes, similarly counterintuitively,
one should display small pictures
in large rooms, and vice versa –

crams tiny rooms in the Yellow House
with enormous paintings he's made –
his own house, the municipal gardens

and, in the guest bedroom reserved
for Gauguin, two versions of *Sunflowers*.
Total immersion in Vincent,

says Hockney, who decides to fill
his Normandy house with paintings
of furniture, fireplace, flowerpots

and views outside windows – trees,
mountains, sky, in various seasons –
sends friends photos of his decor.

LESLEY BURT

The Name Game

The receptionist wrinkles his forehead, attempts: *Mrs Mmmm*. The patient smiles, repeats it slowly: *Mah-oon-ga-nid-zay*. *Moor-ganzy*, says the receptionist.

The patient smiles, repeats, writes it for him to copy. When the nurse calls: *Mrs Mar-ganzy*, the patient stands, smiles, repeats her name.

The consultant looks up from her desk. *Hello, Mrs. Er*. Examines her. *See the receptionist for an X-ray appointment*.

The receptionist wrinkles his forehead. Says: *Right*. The patient says, *Just call me Elizabeth*. *OK Lizzie*, says the receptionist: *Let's find a date and time*.

BOB COOPER

Channel Four's rejection letter

Dear... One-Earring Will? No – Dear William, (be polite!)
This, as usual, is a gave-us-all-a-good-giggle read –
your un-comical clowns, your inverse transvestites –
and like your sonnets, it's all page-turning stuff. But we need
to make the point, and ironically be blunt (if you follow our wit):
long soliloquies are too complex for our viewers' attention
though we recognise, now, you've less ambiguous smut.
Well done. You've worked on previous reasons for rejection
but you need to know those in our management's offices
love innuendo – they'll find adverts for figs. They're sly.
Now, back to your script. There's a few speeches
that characters memorably shout or whisper as asides
which may become book titles, cliches. So, in this play
we'd prefer the actors had plainer things to say.

(Previously published in *Listening, listening* in 2023 by Naked Eye Publishing.)

JAN HARRIS

In freezing weather, two people sand a door

The door lies quietly on two saw-horse trestles
missing its brass hinges and reeded knobs
while she, a spring flower in violet beret
and soft green gloves, eases the rough edges.
The power sander hums, content in her hands.

He, a blue sky, in faded denim jeans
and bomber jacket, follows with fine sandpaper
wrapped around an ergonomic block.
Neither speaks nor falters to proceed in turn
with fluent moves to smooth the mullions, panels

lock rail and frame, until the patient door
is ready to be painted and re-hung
in the doorway of a room where they will lie
quietly, side by side, on an old divan,
or hum contentedly in each other's arms.

FRANCESCA HUNT

They didn't tell me...

I didn't watch the King's Christmas
message to his loyal subjects
instead I folded wrapping paper
ready to use again

when my sons spoke in whispers
I thought it impolite
but gave them cake and wished
them a Happy New Year

strong men carried out furniture
they took coins from under my bed
I made them coffee
but forgot their two sugars

seat belted rug over my knees
I smiled and watched the trees
pass at speed
a lady with a cheery smile welcomed

me on the doorstep
I hadn't been to Rose Cottage
before I didn't know then
I wouldn't be going back home

DAPHNE MILNE

**Saturday night syncopations
in conversation with a jazz musician**

Crepuscule with Nellie

Do you know how much time
we spend chatting on Facetime?

Time on my hands

I'd forgotten how hairy you are.

I'm a fool to want you

Sorry about the tummy gurgling
it must have been the jazz.

I hear music

Nice boxers by the way
colour co-ordinated with the T
I guess for you that's a necessity.

Perdido

My collection of odd socks is awesome.

These foolish things

Don't worry my subversions are strictly
between ourselves — and the bass player
the saxophonist the piano player
cum clarinetist and my chap
from Gongawoola with the feathers.

The summer knows

Pink is so not his colour but flamingos
only come that way — maybe peacock
bluey/green would match his eyes.

My favourite things

Not sure if there are peacocks in Australia.
I'll have to go on a *Phasianidae* hunt.

Take the A train

Will update you next time we chat.

I'll be seeing you

PS have you got a white T shirt
with bright green spots? I remember ...
No — perhaps I'd better not.

The lady is a tramp

PPS the drummer doesn't wear socks.

Only a paper moon

DAPHNE MILNE

Codex interruptus

You can see people
on the other side of the glass wall
They move in mysterious ways
follow rhythms and un-patterns
that make no sense
There's no order
no logic in their perambulations
And all the time it's as if they're speaking Latin
vast areas of incomprehension
then an odd word half recognised
codex interruptus
Seemingly without volume control
they shout and shout and shout
How do they bear it
piling up bricks of sound
why don't their heads explode
If you concentrate you can learn
enough Latin to pass to belong
to seem to understand
that's when they start speaking ancient Greek
and Assyrian and hieroglyphs or Esperanto
still they shout — too loud too loud
The inside of your head expands
and then implodes

DAPHNE MILNE

When planets collide

I love him
the strength/length of him
does he love me

I hear her
voice a symphony
of introspection

I love him
the silence of him
the night cries

I see her
a column of stillness
giving nothing

I love him
the leanness/meanness of him
an arrow in the light

I smell her
musty like the sea
without its savour

I love him
the youth of him
juicy in the dark

I taste her
lemon sweet
a bitter sun

I love him
the edges of him
hard as rock

I feel her
hands on my heart
binding me

binding us

DAPHNE MILNE

Sometime in another place

1.

He's upcountry now — umpteen miles
doesn't facebook telephones
or zooms in to Saturday poetry club
we exchange poems give feedback
in forensic detail line by line
nice chap — he's particular with words
precise as any dictionary or lawyer

so when he calls me 'Darling'
it's unexpected to say the least
not a word he utters casually
flattering and repeated in the night
I realise he's the same age as my daughter
he's coming back next month
what do I do — I've known him years

2.

Thank you for the love
I love you too but
it wouldn't work
not the way you hope

and telling me that every bloke I meet
is gay doesn't work either
especially when I was at boarding school
with their wives and know
that said wife/wives are fully female
and only interested in men
I know I've seen them naked —
there's no privacy at boarding school

and no you are not going
to see me naked I don't
do that any more
Anyway Alice would not approve
she's a very conventional town
Did I mention the age gap
Alice wouldn't like that either

and even if none of the above applied
9000 miles is far too far
It wouldn't work
Believe me I know

DAPHNE MILNE

re: The Morning Post

My Father always signed his name
in blue ink, Quink not Stevens,
black was not for gentlemen.

Not being a gentleman, black
is my ink of choice although Quink,
my favourite, washes out and fades
to indigo with amber edges.

This morning's post a cornucopia
of envelopes — unusual for this time of year.
I know the senders by the ink

blue biro, daddy-long-legs spiked,
Mother's in her manic phase again.
Green fountain pen, emerald and looped,
Uncle Cissy's re-reading Oscar Wilde.

Plain black, upright, typed,
the Bank Manager or a plea
for funds from Charity Central.

Mauve or purple, take your choice,
Dear Postman, please, please please
do not bother to deliver these

Disgusted of Tunbridge Wells
or his sister, Auntie Poison Pen,
say nothing I would want to read.

WENDY WEBB

MOUNTING CONCERN AND HEARTS

!on travel posting hearts

PIC: woodpecker on trunk startled

remaining like yesterday last week last month

hope you are feeling better and return soon

from where? no communication by modern media

accidents injuries hospital operations goodbyes

family posting final curtains rip woodpecker, please tap

you are missed no response nothing mist/missed/remiss

commission omission remission *safe journey*

where social media fails to meet *be safe and enjoy*

!thank you posting hearts

have fun like watching paint dry *have a wonderful time*

enjoy your travels where? incommunicado on the moon?

Awesome *that's a long trip* *let me know when you return*

hope she's ok *missing your presence* absence/absentia/absentee

missing you here *missing you* trunk call woodpecker

hope all's well *I hope you will keep well*

we hope you're ok – *can you send a sign?*

hope you are well *dear friend* *I miss you*

hope you are feeling better and return soon

you are missed only woodpecker remains, pecking

nine weeks and counting...

WENDY WEBB

SAY IT WITH SCISSORS AND SELLOTAPE

Wow, it's big, must be a gift, something special.
But who? No name on the outside, just M&S.
Food, meals for two with wine, seasonal sales...
Scissors, Sellotape, cardboard, fixing anchors.
Tricky. Cut, extract undamaged. What is it?
Of course, that too, a card. Who's it from?
Exciting, I can guess. But, unlikely, because...
London address. Head office, no frank.
Who could send such a surprise?
More curious than happy. Celebrating, of course.
Who's it from? A name (first), that's it.
No address. No surname. Which one could send,
well, none of them. Card, maybe. But this.
Glorious. A big bouquet. Girlie pink.
What luxury, box of chocs. The lady loves...
Still, who's it from? It's special, not that special,
an ordinary year. Well, not ordinary, the year
from hell. A year to forget.
Uplifting, inspiring. Not a relative, then...
How to ask, which one? Friend, the best.

WENDY WEBB

WILD WOMAN GIFTS AND SPARKLE

It was said with flowers the name mislaid
pink roses and chocolates but what message?

A quick-scribbled card they were badgered to sign
crying for history but didn't see its flourish

One square box padded it travelled far
expected a recycled reused gift not some mass-produced souvenir mug

Her Wild Woman verse personalised with photos
understood that message but didn't feel brave

Worried letter from friend's daughter Care Home happy update
disguised as a Birthday card now I'm sad

Two books – unread – favourite Milk Tray a smile a sigh
sparkle of jewellery stars or fizz woman dreams on

Sea air, red eyes cuppa and read a magazine
D'Arcy's luxury pied-à-terre is nothing to a poet.

GRANT van WINGERDEN

Curse of the Cursive

Look at that lovely old loping style
the end of an individual in the way they dot their i's
The jaunty jutting dash across the page

This sees you well ere a will and graveside wail
Your character shows in t's with bows
lots of dots lets us feel indebted
in the time you took

II

Beleagured bloggers can only look on
message board correspondents
exasperated into the ether expired
emails saved on a lonely cloud

tapped out on the typeface
typists once transcribed
social medium casting runes

III

The extra scrawl in every corner. PPPS
casual conversational the cause of all
I can recall

WRITERS PROFILES

JIM BENNETT

Jim Bennett, has written 79 books and numerous chapbooks and pamphlets in a 50 year career as a writer and poet. Jim lives near Liverpool in the UK and tours giving readings of his work throughout the year. He is widely published and has won many competitions and awards for poetry and performance. He runs www.poetrykit.org one of the world's most successful internet sites for poets.

DOMINIC BOND

LESLEY BURT

Lesley's poetry has appeared in magazines and online over the years. Her pamphlet, *Mr & Mrs Andrews Reframed*, was published by Templar Poetry in 2023.

BOB COOPER

Bob Cooper's latest collection, *Listening, listening* is available from Naked Eye - <https://nakedeyepublishing.co.uk/uncategorized/listening-listening-2/>. He lives on the Wirral, UK.

JAN HARRIS

Jan Harris's poems have appeared in literary journals including Acumen, Envoi, Iamb and Poetry Wales, and in various anthologies, including several e-books published by Poetry Kit. Jan was awarded third place in the Wales Poetry Award, 2019. Her first collection, *Mute Swans on the Cam*, was published in July 2020 by Oversteps Books.

FRANCESCA HUNT

Francesca is a retired Chemistry teacher living in mid-Wales, 30 miles west of Shrewsbury. She enjoys all forms of writing, but poetry is my *raison d'être*. She has had poems published online, in magazines and in anthologies. She has won minor competitions, been short-listed for a collection, and is currently putting together a book of poems for publication this Spring.

DAPHNE MILNE

Daphne Milne is back in the UK after five years in Australia. She was a Katharine Susannah Pritchard fellow for 2021. Nominated for the Forward Prize for 2022. Her pamphlet *The Blue Boob Club* [Indigo Dreams Publishing] was selected as book of the month by Poetry Kit where Daphne was also invited to be a Contemporary Poet for 2020. A microchapbook of jazz poems *Dancing With Mr. Dapperman* was published by Origami Press 2023. Her pamphlet *The Busy Life of Buttons* is to be published by Jawbone Press in 2024

WENDY WEBB

Wendy Webb: Born in the Midlands, Wendy found home and family life in Norfolk. She has edited Star Tips poetry magazine 2001-2021. Published in poetry magazines on and offline, winning a number of poetry competitions and self-publishing biography and poetry. Recently she has dabbled in local radio broadcasting and online poetry publications. She loves nature, the garden, the sea, photography and is always creative. Published recently in: Seventh Quarry, Reach, Sarasvati, Crystal, The Journal, Autumn Voices, Wildfire Words, Lothlorien, Littoral, Poetry Wivenhoe, Drawn to the Light, Dreich, Leicester Literary Review and Poetry Kit.

Her two latest publications with Inherit the Earth:-

LANDSCAPES (joint poetry collection with David Norris-Kay & Wendy Webb)

Landscapes: Amazon.co.uk: Webb, Wendy Ann, Norris-Kay, David, Meek, CT, Meek, Norris-Kay, David: 9798851001659: Books

LOVE'S FLORELOQUENCE (Wendy Ann Webb)

Love's Floreloquence: Amazon.co.uk: Webb, Wendy Ann, Meek, CT, Meek: 9798850867003: Books

GRANT van WINGERDEN

Grant van Wingerden grew up on "Pine Grove Farm". His grandfather was the third pioneer in the district and his father, a Dutch athlete, coached the school team. There were thirty two families when he left and thirteen children in the school. There are fewer people living there now than live on his side of the street and the school's no longer there.

Grant's checkered career included stints as a gas meter reader on Sydney's north shore and an aluminium racker in Brisbane's West End. In the office, he helped process FOI requests for immigrants and later worked across the road in Perth's business district as an AUSTUDY assessor. Contract work as a records management consultant took him into places where files go to die. In his last proper job before retiring, he was student records co-ordinator at a major Sydney university.

He is happy to now be at arm's length from the intense social environment of former abodes. Birdwatching from the deck and tackling the wild garden are current interests, along with a game where you guess songs before the other player. He has been in bands with musical friends though he can't play a note.

Grant has kept an active interest in the poetry scene and has been a member of PK for over twenty years.