

## Valerie Jewell

Valerie Jewell was born in Birmingham, surviving twin daughter of Gwendoline Bickerton (with two Welsh grandmothers from North Wales). Her father was a heraldic engraver, Hector Gordon Burbidge. She is married to Philip Macdonald Jewell, Truro, who worked in his father's coal merchant business in Truro and has two daughters, Rosalyn and Caroline, a paediatrician and marine biologist. She writes, 'I have been writing poetry for many years, and have a detective novel in progress and have published various articles over the years, using life experiences and travel tales.'



### **TRURO CATHEDRAL**

I always thought a church should be 'on high'. Like when Moses sought God on Sinai mountain, and came down with the graven rules on stone to find the Israelites, removed from their homes and out of control in the desert. To say the least, dishevelled and wanton before the golden calf.

But we here go down to pay our visit. I know two votives, keeping up tradition with selfless devotion - she stricken with a cruel disease, he a despised Northerner, seeking a place of acceptance.

No secrets now, a myriad explanations about the statues, carvings, tapestries, stained glass and soaring pillars. Lately, it's like a living body, and so it should be, trembling to the organ's throbbing base bass tones.

But it's harder to explain faith. The Wesley brothers set up camp next door, down-along, Now don't you forget! And we, the poets, sharpen our pens next the catacombs, and try to make words enclose it all.

*Val Jewell*

### **THE CORNISH CROSS**

When I was young, the mournful siren rent the blood red sky  
The bombs fell down and all around the guns replied nearby

Children died within their beds, with mothers who might pray,  
and all because of a swastika, the cross that ruled the day.

And so the cross became to me a symbol I must hate  
A father never seen again at the close of the garden gate.

But now in this sweet Cornish place everywhere I see  
a cross of hope on graves of brave and foolish speaks to me.  
The hearts now stilled beneath proclaim *This is our belief*

At the gate of the rich, and the church of the poor,  
A cross within a ring, a weaving knotted pattern, no beginning and no end.

A mystery of light sparkles on the ancient stone,  
where playful waves on sand meet vales of eternal spring.

While Saints still walk the hill to repel the pagan king,  
a thousand more will march across the land and feel  
the teasing of the wind.

*Val Jewell*

### **OBSERVATION IN THE CATHEDRAL**

What is it, this Cathedral?

Today, remarkable sights. A red-cloaked cleric raises his hands to inform a troupe of green blazered school-children. The young fragile looking organist, with a shock of inspired hair, feathers over the ancient keys of the 1525 organ. He is dwarfed by the portable tubes, while another patiently inflates the cotton bellows on a side table. It is a House to banish the mortal fact of death, but only if you believe in Christ.

Some run a mile, feeling lost in spite of artist's beauty, light and colour, the tapestries magnificently telling the tale made by nimble hands. They hear the toll of the bells counting the hours only.

We can make records on film of images, and spoken sounds, besides the records of the manuscripts and engravings on stone. God, too, a record keeps. His Son has knowledge of our groaning earth, place of our birth.

The older walls of St. Mary's with a humbler quarry tile floor, room for 120 only and the priests stairway, memories of a rector of 1591. Here the memorials are preserved well, but fade in the country churchyard. Equal in death, low as we can be.

At birth the breath of life forced in, at death the breath flying away to the giver. In this event what's left of me? I cry.

Dear Lord, forget-me-not.

*Valerie Jewell*

## **REQUIEM FOR A CHILD**

I must leave this place. If I was native-born I could endure it – long standing memories of past joys would sustain me.

Her helpless baby hands rise out of the water at my gate when darkness sucks away the light ...

They burned her but she will not sleep.

No place like this – restless waters come and go at moon's command, trees rise on gentle banks, the bright light of the South West lands give diamond tints – Heaven could claim no match.

Friends must be left to grieve, I give them my heart's treasure as a prize.

Our prayers for relief have had no answer, the golden-tinted day has snatched away her breath.

Old men weep as they climb through ancient burial stones to rest her ashes.

The talisman 'Resurrection' is brandished against the inexplicable. Her mother garlands the grave with strange brittleness, the glare before eternal heartbreak.

Only the Healer, Time, will sustain.

*V. Jewell*

## **SEPTEMBER DAY** (an extract)

A September day, Indian summer, the date engraved on my heart.

The boat was old, the cargo young and old. Two very young. Setting out for home from the beach. The old one should have protested! 'No, my handsome, you can't do that!' but he was too tired, drunk with the sun and the company he kept. Too late 'I want to row the boat back'..

She moved in an ill-considered way. The laws of nature would not be flouted - the boat flipped over, the children fell down, sinking into the water and mud - She pressed in by the greater weight. They shouted but a passing boat thought it was all in fun! A sharp observer from the far shore saw it all, pressed a boat into service rapidly, bringing back the drowned children but an agony of pumping chests could not alleviate the harm. The old ones wandering on along the shore to my house, but no-one was at home...

*Valerie Jewell*