

# Memories and Hope

A collection of  
poems about  
memories, loss  
and finding hope

**Cruse**  
Bereavement  
Support

The  
**ExtraCare**  
Charitable Trust

 **COMMUNITY  
FUND**

This booklet was produced following a series of poetry workshops with residents living in ExtraCare villages. Each workshop was led by poet Francesca Kay and delivered virtually to give residents a chance to reflect on coming out of lockdown.

The booklet has been produced by the Bereavement Supporter project, a partnership between Cruse Bereavement Support and The ExtraCare Charitable Trust, funded by The National Lottery Community Fund. The project improves bereavement support for older people living in ExtraCare retirement villages and housing schemes.

“I was delighted to share my love of words, ideas and poetry in these workshops. I hope you enjoy these heartfelt poems, and thanks and love to all the poets.”

*Francesca Kay*

[www.francescakay.co.uk](http://www.francescakay.co.uk)

September 2021



## *Small kindnesses*

(My very first day, in the Reception area,  
I announce my presence to staff.)

Jacquie steps out to greet me as I enter  
the Village and gives me a hug.

I have arrived!

*Joanna Francis,  
Earlsdon Park village.*

*Thanks to Jacquie McCormack,  
Former ExtraCare Administrator*



## *Things that make me laugh*

I laugh when others laugh a trigger ripples  
I laugh at contorting kittens making shapes  
I laugh at toddlers' wobbly gait and their sheer joy

I laugh at blackbirds delving deep to find  
nesting materials

I laugh when words reverse themselves and  
change that meaning

I laugh and laugh more when joy bubbles and flows

Now I can find humour in some of past pains

Now I can see that loss can bring gains

And laughter can rise, and rise again

*Pam Fortune,  
Stoke Gifford village*



## *How I miss my brother*

I miss my brother Fergus, the way he gently smiled:

I miss the way he told rude jokes while looking  
meek and mild.

I miss the way he cut his hair, the way he tied his tie,  
The way he looked askance at things and slightly  
raised one eye.

I miss his love of nature, particularly birds;

I miss the way he talked to me,  
his clever choice of words.

He passed away nine years ago,  
the victim of a tumour

But how I miss his hearty laugh  
and his wicked sense of humour!

*Jack Dinsdale,  
Lovat Fields village  
In memory of my  
brother, Fergus Dinsdale*



## ***What makes me happy***

Smiling, I know it's time for my daily dark  
chocolate treat

Snoozing in my hammock, sunny afternoon

Clustering with school friends in our den,  
deep in the haystack

## ***Best of times***

Joyful gatherings of friends

Family new borns, anniversaries shared

Remembering the hugs and smiles

*Joanna Francis,  
Earlsdon Park village*



## Loss

I miss family  
Near and far  
Oz, New Zealand, London Town  
I miss my family

*Irene Casey,  
Reeve Court village*



## I miss

Chatting to my lovely Gran on the phone  
Visiting her colourful fragrant garden  
Checking the bounty of her allotment

## Ways I continue the memory of my Gran

Watering the tomato plants  
Handwriting cards and letters  
Using phrases from a time gone by

*Eve Wilson, Project Manager, Cruse  
In memory of my Gran, Noreen Gallagher*



## *What makes me happy*

I like the sunshine on my face in the morning

Swimming in the afternoon

Eating a bag of chips on the way home



## *Best of times*

Having a grill with family and friends

Enjoying their company and laughter

Going swimming, anticipating the joy  
of the rest of the day

## *Small kindnesses*

A smile

A kind look

A thank you

*Janet Vaughan,  
Earlsdon Park village*



## *I wish – after lockdown*

I wish I was gangly  
I wish I was lithe  
I wish I was sprightly  
And still my old size.

I miss outdoor space  
Being able to race  
I miss stretching myself  
And increasing my health.

I miss being thin  
Getting into my clothes  
In even my shoes  
I can't wiggle my toes.



## *Living*

Start the day with a smile  
See every day as a new page  
Think of a joke each day  
Read or think something happy before sleep



*Jean Dinsdale,  
Lovat Fields village*

## ***Best of times***

Walking with grandad around the castle walls

Playing with my son

In the castle ford

## ***Small kindnesses***

What can you do with an act of kindness?

What can you say with a hold of a hand?

What might be different with the warmth of a hug?

*Michael Wilkes-Spellman, Dementia  
and Mental Wellbeing Lead, ExtraCare*

*In memory of my grandparents  
George and Vera Baughan*



## The Sea

The rock that stands inside the waves  
With darkened edge and taverned caves  
The sea surrounds it carefully  
You can't get near there is no quay

The seagulls sit upon its peak  
Through wind and gales they always squeak  
Beneath the rough and rugged sea  
A silent life that frightens me

In stillness quiet with skies above  
It took the lives that people loved  
Beneath its dark and powerful waves  
Who knows the story in the graves

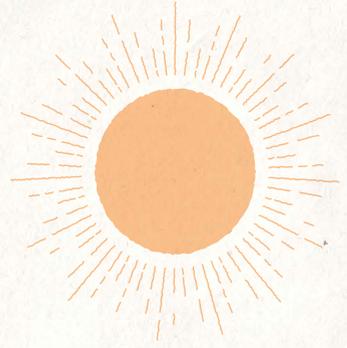
Off slated rock of black and green  
Many lie with untold dreams  
I stand upon the sandy shore  
And think of lives there are no more

*Mary Gilbertson,  
Lovat Fields village*



# Happy

Gardener: I am away from it all  
Quality time to myself  
Sunshine on my back



## Best of times

International Women's Day: Girls, girls, girls  
Food, food, food  
Talking, laughing, sharing fun and joy  
Togetherness

## Small kindnesses

Hello, a smile  
Have a nice day

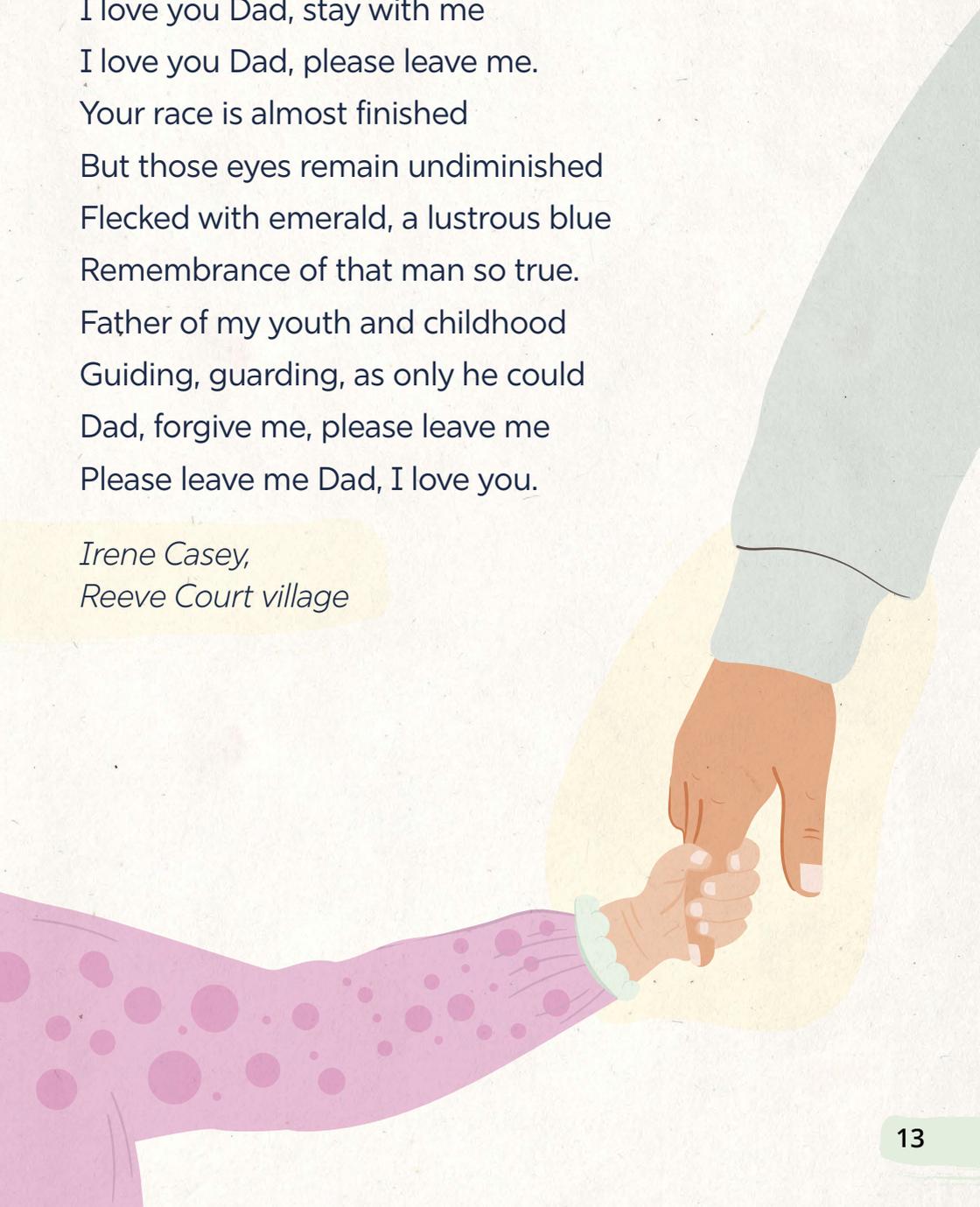
*Millicent Gobbinsingh,  
Pannel Croft village*



## *To Dad (14th July 1995)*

I love you Dad, stay with me  
I love you Dad, please leave me.  
Your race is almost finished  
But those eyes remain undiminished  
Flecked with emerald, a lustrous blue  
Remembrance of that man so true.  
Father of my youth and childhood  
Guiding, guarding, as only he could  
Dad, forgive me, please leave me  
Please leave me Dad, I love you.

*Irene Casey,  
Reeve Court village*



## *What makes me happy*

The sun is beckoning  
I have stirred in my bed  
Off my dog and I go to the park



## *Best of times*

People laughing, talking  
Sharing, tasting and  
All around the table



## *Small kindnesses*

An unexpected call  
An open ear  
Space to hear yourself

*Jennifer Kirton,  
Earlsdon Park village*



## *My mind wanderings, of what I miss*

My travel as a merchant seaman, all those foreign lands, and different smells and colourful sights. While travelling the high seas the beautiful dawns and sunsets over the ships horizons, and then the peace of a calm sea, and the terror of a stormy sea. One dream was a mirage of an oasis in the desert, visualised while passing through the Suez canal.

Molly brings me many a dream,  
before our joint life  
together and our  
children. That dance on  
a Saturday night at the  
local youth club and  
then in the dance hall  
at Wetherby listening  
to the strict tempo  
music played  
by the dance bank,  
and Wurlitzer organ.  
Just a step or two.

*David W Freeman,  
Lovat Fields village  
For his wife Molly*



## ***My favourite season***

Looking forward to Spring  
Makes my heart sing  
To find little buds  
And shoots peeping through  
Smiles are back on human faces  
Men can relax take off their braces  
The grass needs a cut  
Empty the water butt

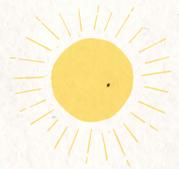
*Rita Spokes, Stoke Gifford village*



## ***Things that make me happy***

Watching the boats float down the harbour  
and squinting in the sun  
Watching the dogs run and play with joy  
And the bright yellow daffodils

*ExtraCare staff member*



## *What makes me happy*

Sunshine is good  
But it burns my neck  
So I wear a hat  
But my hair is long  
And my hat doesn't fit

## *Best of times*

I loved to fish  
Once I caught a bat with my fly rod  
Another I hooked an eel  
Best of all I caught a trout  
With worms!

## *Small kindnesses*

Parking my car in Spain  
The cards rejected  
A passer-by used his  
And promptly disappeared

*John Akers,  
Bournville Gardens village*



## *Where is Kathy*

I wonder what's happened to Kathy  
A woman I once knew so well  
We met in the Police in Liverpool  
But in romance there's nothing to tell

She married a Sergeant much older  
And this caused a bit of a stir  
But it was a happy occasion  
And I was quite happy for her

Our paths crossed quite often in service  
Our friendship remaining quite strong  
I had my retirement party  
Delighted that she came along

Then her husband died of cancer  
I went to his funeral to see  
If Kathy was alright and coping  
And she was so pleased to see me

I told her where I was now living  
And she said she'd come and see me  
At this I was quite flabbergasted  
But secretly filled with glee

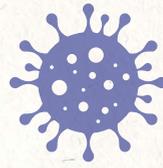


But Covid then came to the party  
And put paid to all of our plans  
And we kept in touch by a phone call  
Cause we had this time on our hands

We chatted for ten months quite often  
Then suddenly she was gone  
I just can't find out what happened  
By landline or mobile phone

It is now eight months since we've spoken  
I think on it every day  
It's a mystery I'm no nearer to solving  
But I do hope that she is O.K.

*Don Whittaker,  
Reeve Court village*



# Spring

New life bursting all around  
Daffodils defying March winds  
Streets lined with pink blossom turning into confetti

## *Things that make me happy*

Grandchildren, bubbly babies,  
fun loving teenagers, delightful adults  
Friends listening, laughing, supportive  
Roses, climbing Rambling Rector,  
growing higher where it will

*Ann Hay,  
Bournville Gardens village  
In memory of my sister, Jane Whitwell*



## *Things that make me happy*

A hug makes one happy

The sound of sea on shingle brings happy memories

Memories of people and places are precious treasure

Dancing inside makes my spirit free

Clean sheets are soothing and wrap us in care

Someone being there for us makes us happy

Sharing makes me happy

*Pam Fortune,  
Stoke Gifford village*

## *Happiness*

Relations are wonderful assets

And friends are a bonus for sure.

Relate to them warmly and often

And love will pass through your front door.

Try to have plenty of patience

And listen and learn through your day.

Be kind, good natured and caring

And sing and laugh all the way.

*Pat Jenkins, Lovat Fields village*



## Positive

Quietly on I pass,  
To all my loved ones a kiss  
You all I will miss.

*David W Freeman,  
Lovat Fields village  
For his wife Molly*



# Supporting yourself after bereavement

One of the most helpful things is to talk about the person who has died and your relationship with them. Who you talk to will depend on you. It may be your family, friends, a faith/spiritual adviser, your GP or a support organisation.

## Do.....

- Talk to other people about the person who has died, about your memories and your feelings.
- Look after yourself. Eat properly and try to get enough rest (even if you can't sleep).
- Give yourself time and permission to grieve.
- Seek help and support if you feel you need it.
- Tell people what you need.

## Don't....

- Isolate yourself (unless you have to, e.g. due to illness).
- Keep your emotions bottled up.
- Think you are weak for needing help.
- Feel guilty if you are struggling to cope.
- Rely on drugs or alcohol – the relief will only be temporary.



**Cruse Bereavement Support is the leading national charity for bereaved people in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.**

We help people through one of the most painful times in life – with bereavement support, information and campaigning.

**For more information:**

[www.cruse.org.uk](http://www.cruse.org.uk)

**Freephone National helpline number:**

0808 808 1677



**Find us on Facebook:**  
@crusebereavementsupport



**Follow us on Twitter:**  
@CruseSupport



**Follow us on Instagram**  
crusesupport