


Black Gold

for Burns' Day – 25 January 2006



Into our dreams some nights
the great black waggon rolls
to rumble our easy sleeping
and spread choking dust
on our bolsters
that bathes us
in a hot perspiring

What is the measurement
of a miner's sweat?
No rainbow forms
in the waterfalls we leach
at the coalface heat
a town's length
beneath their feet

We toil like Lascars
and we work for hearth and home-
the ones we love-
and in our sleep
half-guilty memories
of friends sair hurt
in that vast deep
or happier ones
of lunchtimes shared
and jokes half-gasped
two hundred feet
beneath the Forth

And think of the folks above,
the comrades from another shift
as they yatter away
along at The Goth

Death dresses us
but not in fear
each time we drop
beneath the pit-head gear

We toil because
our fathers did with honour,
without complaint
for these are the facts of life
and by our graft
our families gain.

So we picture the warm clean hearths
in the rows of houses
far above
whiles we howk black gold
below
for the ones we love.

*John Lindsay
Prestongrange Poet Laureate*

