

Parallel lives

by Charlie Burnand

Two lives in parallel - my own and my habitat's.
As I grow up, two stories to tell.
One of the child, constantly growing.
One of the rivers and fields where I dwell.

Fields where I learned how to walk and to run,
Hiding amongst all that golden corn.
Taking delight in the bright red poppies,
Taking delight in where I'd been born.

One day it all changed, a new farmer in charge,
Bringing my world under his new scheme,
Lying in bed, my sleep was shattered
By thudding machinery ruining my dream.

Hammering stakes to form prison walls,
Brutal barbed wire demarcating my fields,
All in the interests of modern farm-management,
All in the interests of increasing yields.

Not only the fields wore striped prison gear,
But liberty torn from their visitors too.
Running through corn, a vanishing memory,
Cruelly harrowing the world that I knew.

Gone were the picnics we'd had by the river,
Running through buttercups down to the Thames.
Flashing their branches like whips go the willows,
Flashing blue kingfishers glinting like gems.

But reaching the river restores future hope,
As the Thames and the Thame are now 'Rivers of Life'.
A rewilding project for biodiversity,
Improved water quality, fit for wildlife.

People and nature working in unison
Seek to undo the harm that's been done
By deep channels ploughed for Thames navigation,
By deep channels hidden away from the sun.

**Harming the backwaters, home to so many,
But now the rewilding is bringing them back.
Handing the riverbanks over to nature,
Allowing the wetlands to get back on track.**

**Little Wittenham Wood, home to great crested newts
Water reeds reaching right up to the skies,
Life's rich tapestry - voles and stag-beetles,
Life's rich tapestry - bright dragonflies.**

**Slowing the flow of the great river Isis,
Filtering the water and making it clean.
Letting the wetlands become re-established,
Capturing carbon to make the world green.**

**Seeing the realm of my childhood restored,
That beautiful world where Thames and Thame meet,
Historic landscape where kings once were christened;
Historic landscape, my memory so sweet.**

**Restored by the Earth Trust, these rivers are thriving,
Allowed to return to their natural state,
Natural habitats, man merely background,
Restoring the Golden Age before it's too late.**

**But my theme of relations between man and nature,
This theme of rewilding, man standing aside,
It works on all time-frames, both long-term and short,
It works on all levels to bring that same pride.**

**For now a new farmer has joined the rewilding,
No big project here, but my world still renewed.
Man versus nature - the gaoler turned good,
Alliance and harmony replacing that feud.**

**No more harsh stakes now cut off my fields,
No brutal boundaries remain to be seen,
From dangerous barbs that glinted with menace,
From dangerous barbs to a lattice of green.**

**A natural fence, interwoven with poppies,
A gentler barrier allows me to roam.
Papery red-heads graciously nodding,
An elegant sentinel guiding me home.**