



Swire Ridgeway Arts Prize 2021 Written entries 2021

Watcher On The Way

Watcher on the way
Impassive, still.
Enigma.
Half-hidden horse
Curling across the turf.
Above, amid downland flowers
The dug ditches evidence the past
And the Way ribbons through the millennia
Under clouds of lark song.

Mystery steed – Ridgeway equus
All seeing with your grassy eye
Scouring the land and the endless sky.
Tethered in time, yet ready
To gallop West to the standing stones.
West past Wayland for your shoeing
West through the counties of ancient secrets.

Shake your tether loose and slip away
Follow the moon and sun
but return to stillness above the winding road below
and the waves of chalk

Time shifts
Clouds pass
Day and night.
Time passes
Wind shakes the harebells on
Liminal land.

The horse breathes, in its own place -
Not yours, not mine
But reaching through time
Escaping past and present.

Trackway through high air and spun chalk
Summer breeze and biting winds,
Blue, white, green and tender sun.
Palimpsest of ages
Feet treading where others have trodden

And more will follow.

They are there, the Ridgeway spirits.
Larks cascade above, trees sway, sarsens brood.
The Downs shift and resettle Into their folds.
The white horse melts back into
Their accepting embrace, ready to tolerate the
Endless footsteps
And the click of the shutter
Pinning horse and hills into
Digital immortality.

It will outlive us all
The Way goes on.

Helen Willson
